

Tacoma Garden Club

Northwest Native Plant Garden History

Slide 1




2023 marks the 60th anniversary of the creation of the Northwest Native Plant Garden at Point Defiance Park.

Slide 2



Our members have planned, designed, built, and nurtured the garden.

“THIS NEW PROJECT
WILL, IT SEEMS,
ADMIRABLY FULFILL
THE PURPOSE OF THE
GARDEN CLUB OF
AMERICA IN THAT IT
SHOULD STIMULATE
KNOWLEDGE OF AND
PROTECTION FOR,
NATIVE PLANTS
THROUGH CIVIC
PLANTING.”
EULALIE WAGNER



In 1960 a group of Tacoma Garden Club members lead by Mrs. Corydon Wagner (Eulalie) began to envision a garden to showcase our region's native plants. Despite the conservation mission of the Garden Club of America, they were ahead of their time in their desire to display, teach about, and protect native plants. There was little public interest in native plants and their role in our natural ecosystems.



The committee looked at numerous locations before settling on a five-acre site near the entrance to Point Defiance Park. The park's current map still shows the Northwest Native Plant Garden's area as the five acres Metro Parks allotted for the garden in 1963, although we only use two acres today.



2023 Aerial Photo

This recent aerial photo shows the extent of the native plant garden area today. Woodland mostly covers the original five-acre garden site, with the exceptions of a zoo parking lot and our meadow. The yellow line indicates the approximate location of today's fenced garden, which covers exactly 2.02 acres. There is no indication that the club ever maintained the remaining three acres of the original five allotted by Metro Parks to use for the native plant garden.



Before the site was selected for the native plant garden, the meadow and likely more of the site had been used from 1908 to 1930 as pasture for the zoo's buffalo, (American bison), then quite rare. The zoo was founded in 1905. The ASARCO copper smelter smokestack is clearly visible in the background. Note the fence posts.

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Just within our southern fence line stands one of the original seven-foot concrete fence posts, once used to fence the buffalo and later, horses. Barbed wire still adorns the post. If you hunt for them, more of these old fence posts can be found nearby in the woods and the zoo parking lot.



This 1931 aerial photo shows how this part of Point Defiance Park looked at the end of the buffalo era. The red line encloses approximately the five acres first assigned to the club to use for the native plant garden in 1963. While most of the site was pasture, some trees are located at the eastern end, in the vicinity of today's parking lot and forest area.



1933- 1964 Point Defiance Riding Academy

The Point Defiance Riding Academy took over the buffalo barn and pastures in 1933 and continued until the barn burned in 1964. There were 12 miles of riding trails in the park.



This picture of part of the native plant garden was taken just after the site was selected in 1963.

The site was described in a newspaper article as a "secluded, neglected hillside" that "included a natural ravine, a bit of meadow and a number of native trees." The Tacoma Garden Club board approved the location on February 12, 1963. The Park Board unanimously approved the project on June 28, 1963.



Another picture of the site before garden development, likely with some of the original native plant garden committee members. The first chair of the committee was Helen Child, and the 17-member committee had subcommittees for horticulture, shopping, docents, and plant identification. There were about 70 active Tacoma Garden Club members at the time, so the committee represented a substantial proportion of the active members.



After consulting with landscape designers, a professor at the University of Puget Sound, and the director of the Washington Arboretum, the committee developed a plan to showcase a variety of Washington's plant eco-zones: moist bog, high alpine and scree, subalpine, moist coastal forest, dry eastern Cascades, and the San Juan Islands. Our historic garden sign was erected in 1973 to show the the location of the garden's eco-zones.



Early 1964 – Meeting to Pick Location for Pond and Waterfall

By early 1964, committee chair Helen Child on the left, and committee members were meeting with Howard Harmon, the Parks Department's Director of Horticulture (in the middle), and Ray Prentice, landscape designer (on the right), to select the site for the first project, a pond and waterfall, which would take advantage of the natural ravine.



Summer 1964 – Pond and
Waterfall Construction

Construction of the pond and waterfall began in June 1964.



Summer 1964 – Pond and Waterfall
Construction

Construction cost \$4,200 and involved placing many large rocks. Today, a number of these rocks are partially covered by soil.



The pond towards the end of construction. The basin looks different from the current pond because the pond was rebuilt in 1978 – not sure why.



Conferring on Design and Planting

After pond and waterfall construction, the native plant garden committee continued to consult with landscape designers John Fischer and Ray Prentice as well as other experts on species for planting and garden design.



Fall 1964 – Planting the New Garden

As part of construction, some trees were removed, and leaf mold and sand were added to the clay soil to condition it for planting.

In fall 1964, our members began to plant.

The plants came from our members' own properties, salvage sites where development was taking place, donations, scouting trips they made to the mountains and the San Juan Islands, propagation, and purchases.



The planting plans emphasized individual species rather than aiming for the harmonious groupings found in many gardens. They treated the plants more as specimens to be used for teaching.

By 1970, there were 675 specimens in the garden, many with identification signs.



Waterfall after Construction

The waterfall and a path after construction and some planting. Early construction and planting did not go beyond the limits of the "bowl" – the ravine and basin within which the waterfall, pond, and gazebo nestle.



Progress on the native plant garden was heralded in the local newspapers, such as this article from the Tacoma News Tribune in 1966, which described how the Tacoma Garden Club was developing the garden.



There were many fundraising events to pay for the garden. This fundraising effort at Eulalie Wagner's home, Lakewold, in May 1966 raised a substantial amount of money and was reported over several pages in the Tacoma News-Tribune newspaper. Members propagated large numbers of plants for sale, and a considerable effort on the club's part was described.



Fundraisers

In addition to the benefit at Lakewold, there were also money-raising cocktail parties, garden walks, flower shows, and plant sales.



Events in the Garden

Over the years, the club held many events in the lower part of the garden adjoining the parking lot, including meetings, lectures, plant sales, and picnics.



August 1964 – First Meeting in Garden

This was reported to be the first meeting in the garden in August 1964, which appears to be a picnic. Carrying food from car to table certainly was easier then!



Picnic

Another view of the same gathering showing the pond.



A lecture in the garden.

Notice how open this view of the garden is with much sun and few trees evident.



1978 – Plant Sale in the Garden

A garden sale in 1978.

It appears that during the years after 1963, wearing pants for social events had become acceptable.



From the time of the first native plant garden committee, which had a docent subcommittee, one of the garden's main purposes has been to teach the community about native plants. Over the years there are mentions in our history of docents leading groups, especially school groups, through the garden. This last summer, for example, native plant garden committee members lead tours for the public over two days for the Point Defiance Flower and Garden Festival.



Club marks 10th year for garden

It has been 10 years since the Tacoma Garden Club transformed a barren Point Defiance Park gorge into a garden and botanical center.

Garden club members gathered there for a picnic recently to celebrate the day they started work on the project.

As they ate in the upper area of the park they were able to view their handiwork — a winding waterway, an arboretum, a native garden, a water pond and a remarkable array of plants, shrubs and flowers gathered from all over the world.

The garden is one of the few sites in the Puget Sound area that includes native plants from a wide range of biotic zones.

A sunny spot has been selected for plants typical of the western region of the Pacific Northwest. A sloping hillside covered with low-lying plants shows monkey and mountainous plants from 1971.

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Native garden enthusiasts

Mrs. William Shabo, Fredrick Kordon, Norval Lajmer and Gerald Clark enjoyed a recent sunny day in Point Defiance Park's Northwest native garden, a project of the Tacoma Garden Club.

Family reunion

Mr. and Mrs. Leonard the family has been the family reunion with the family at the time.

Backyard carnival

A neighborhood carnival was held in the backyard of the family at the time.

Garden's 10th Anniversary

The garden's 10th Anniversary was noted in a newspaper article, which recounted the development of the garden and listed the committee chairs.



In 1973 it was decided that the garden needed a focal point and a place to meet out of the weather. Eulalie Wagner brought in Thomas Church, famed California landscape architect, who was working on her garden at Lakewold, to pick a spot. The result was our gazebo, built in 1974. Mr. and Mrs. Wagner gifted the gazebo to the club.

The tabletop within the gazebo showed the planting eco-zones but was later covered because of vandalism.

1974 – Totem Pole
Commissioned



In 1974, Paul Luvera, an Italian-American totem pole carver from Anacortes, was commissioned by the private Wallace Foundation to carve a totem pole for the garden.

Along with the gazebo, the totem pole became an emblem of the garden. It was the last of the projects originally planned for the garden.



According to a newspaper article, the totem pole was controversial from the beginning because it was not carved by a Native American. Over the years it suffered from vandalism and insect damage. Metro Parks took the totem pole down when it became unsafe and is storing it.



In this picture Metro Parks Tacoma's crew has just finish erecting the totem pole. Metro Parks has been our partner in the native plant garden from the beginning. In the early years, their personnel helped with cleanup, watering, planting, path maintenance, maintenance of equipment, and later with the gazebo.

The tall young man on the upper left is Lee Fellenberg at the beginning of his career with Metro Parks. Committed to native plants, he was a charter member of the Washington Native Plant Society. He worked with us on the garden in many different ways until 2001, when he was transferred to another unit.

Our very helpful Metro Parks coordinator for the last decade has been Ross Wilton, now head of horticulture for Metro Parks.



This item in a Tacoma newspaper welcomed the Garden Club of America's 1977 Annual Meeting members to the native plant garden. Held in Seattle, the GCA Annual Meeting featured a tour of the native plant garden. Helen Child and Vera Hawkins, who was co-chair of the GCA meeting and one of the original native garden committee members, were given a special vote of thanks by the TGC members for a "job well done" for all the work they did to prepare for the garden tour.



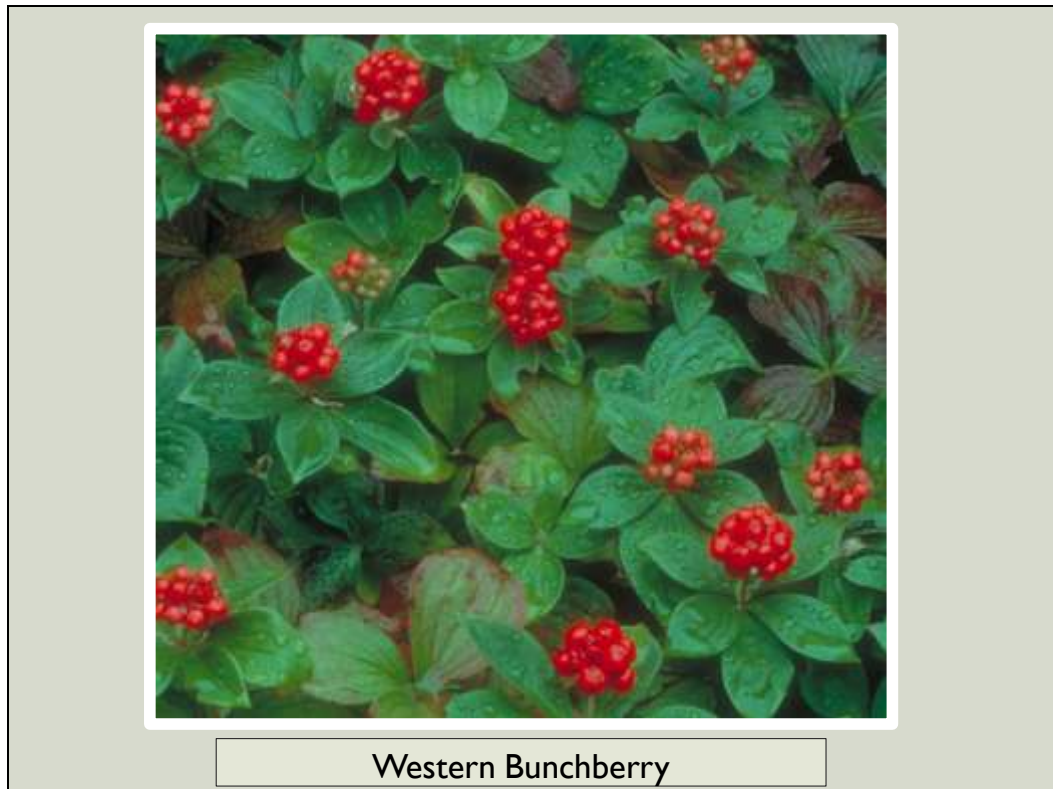
1970s – Work Parties Twice a Month

By the later 1970s, work parties were held on the second and last Mondays of the month. Other than switching to the fourth Monday of the month to avoid Memorial Day, this schedule remains. What doesn't remain is that work parties continued to work through December! Today we break from November through February.

At that time, two associate (now called provisional) members were responsible for a "weed and learn" morning, held each month. The associates would identify and describe the plants in one of the zones for the members who were present. This was to be training for the associates to become docents when they became active members.



By the early 1980s, lack of a fence meant deer browsed freely and people stole plants. The eco-zones planted in the 1960s had lost many plants because of the deer, theft, increased shade, and the loss of plants not well adapted to our coastal environment.



Merrilee Day and Winnie Elliot set out to remedy this by replanting areas of the garden. Merrilee Day reminiscing in the Potting Shed in 2001 talked about her excursions with Winnie Elliott : “On alternate Mondays we would pile boxes and shovels into the car and head out to scour the countryside for native plant material for the garden. We dug in bogs, prairies, gully, and woods all over Puget Sound....Winnie propagated thousands of seeds in her workshop for the garden.”

In 1987, Merrilee and Winnie received club awards for their work to restore the garden. Metro Parks’ Lee Fellenberg, “who worked tirelessly with Merilee and Winnie,” was given a club award in 1988.

While we don’t have pictures of Merilee and Winnie, pictured is western bunchberry, which was once found around the historic garden sign. We have planted it liberally in the new demonstration garden.



Non-native Chinese
Small-leaved
Rhododendron

In the mid 1980s, “Bring Your Plant to Lunch” was the theme of a party held in the garden. After coffee and dessert, the plants were planted in the garden. Prizes were awarded for the “most” and “unusual” plants. This likely led to some of the non-native shrubs and trees found in the garden today, such as a half dozen of the rhododendrons, among them this lovely small-leaved Chinese rhododendron, which can be found in the forest garden. We are leaving them for now until we can replant the sites they occupy.



The photo shows two of our members, perhaps either Betty Pinkerton, Betty Shaub, or Mary Williams, prospecting with Metro Parks' Lee Fellenberg on a basalt rock selection trip in the east Cascades. The reason for the trip was to select basalt rocks for a new East Cascade Zone in the garden, built in 1985.

The project cost \$11,700, paid for by TGC memorial donations and a cocktail party at Eulalie Wagner's.



Shown are the basalt columns just after placement in the East Cascade zone, which was designed by Ray Prentice. Later, they added a basin with more rocks at the foot of the larger rocks to replicate a rockfall or talus slope. The small rocks shown surrounding the basalt columns have disappeared over the years. Because this garden feature is popular with climbers, growing plants near the columns is challenging.

Also visible in this picture are the quaking aspen trees we spent 2012 to 2016 eradicating because they were spreading out of control – they're the trees on the right with light-colored trunks. They were appropriate to the East Cascade zone but liked our garden a bit too much.

Tacoma Garden Club

Northwest Native Plant Garden History, Part 2

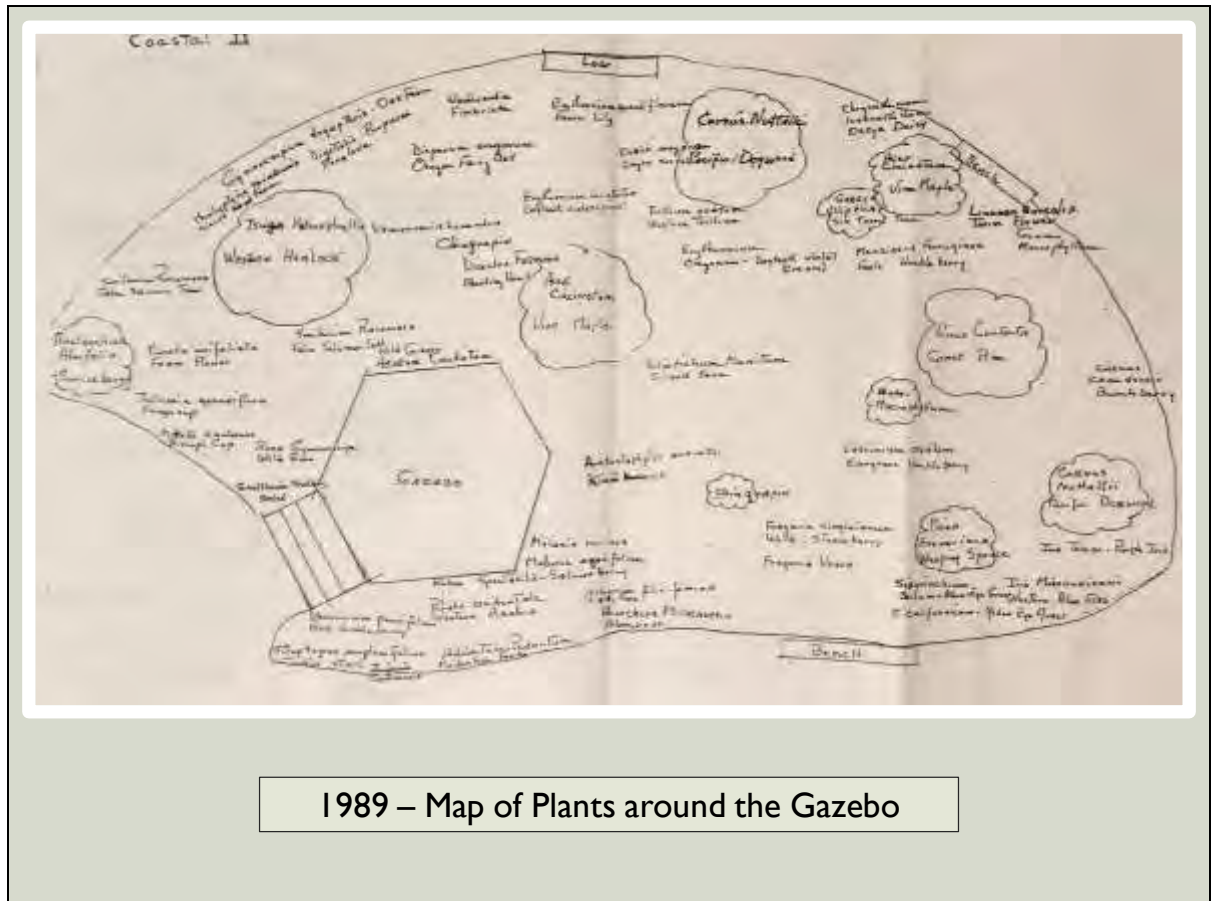
Slide 1



1986 – Cleanup for Zone XII Meeting

Hosting a GCA Zone XII meeting that included a visit to the garden in 1986 spurred a major cleanup of the garden. The garden was reported to look beautiful for the meeting with delegates complimenting the club. Zone XII gifted us with money to buy two Alaskan yellow cedars, which grace the garden to the right of the main trail to this day.

The well-dressed member in this picture likely brought the landscape helper with her to do the dirty work, which members were known to do occasionally.



In the late 1980s, the committee inventoried the plant species in the garden and made hand-drawn maps showing the location of garden plants by eco-zone. Here's a map of their Coastal Forest Zone 2, located around the gazebo. Some of the plants are still with us today, such as the western azalea, maidenhair fern and western hemlock around the gazebo, and the weeping Brewer's spruce and the silk tassel, but most shown are gone and have been replaced



Eulalie Wagner Memorial Bench

Eulalie Wager died in 1991, and her inspiration for and devotion to the garden was memorialized with a bench sculpted by Dan Robinson facing the pond near the gazebo. She was a horticultural powerhouse – in addition to founding the native plant garden, she was a TGC club president, served on the GCA's board for 15 years, won the GCA's prestigious Montague Medal, helped to found the Rhododendron Species Foundation, and left her 10-acre garden, Lakewold, to the public.

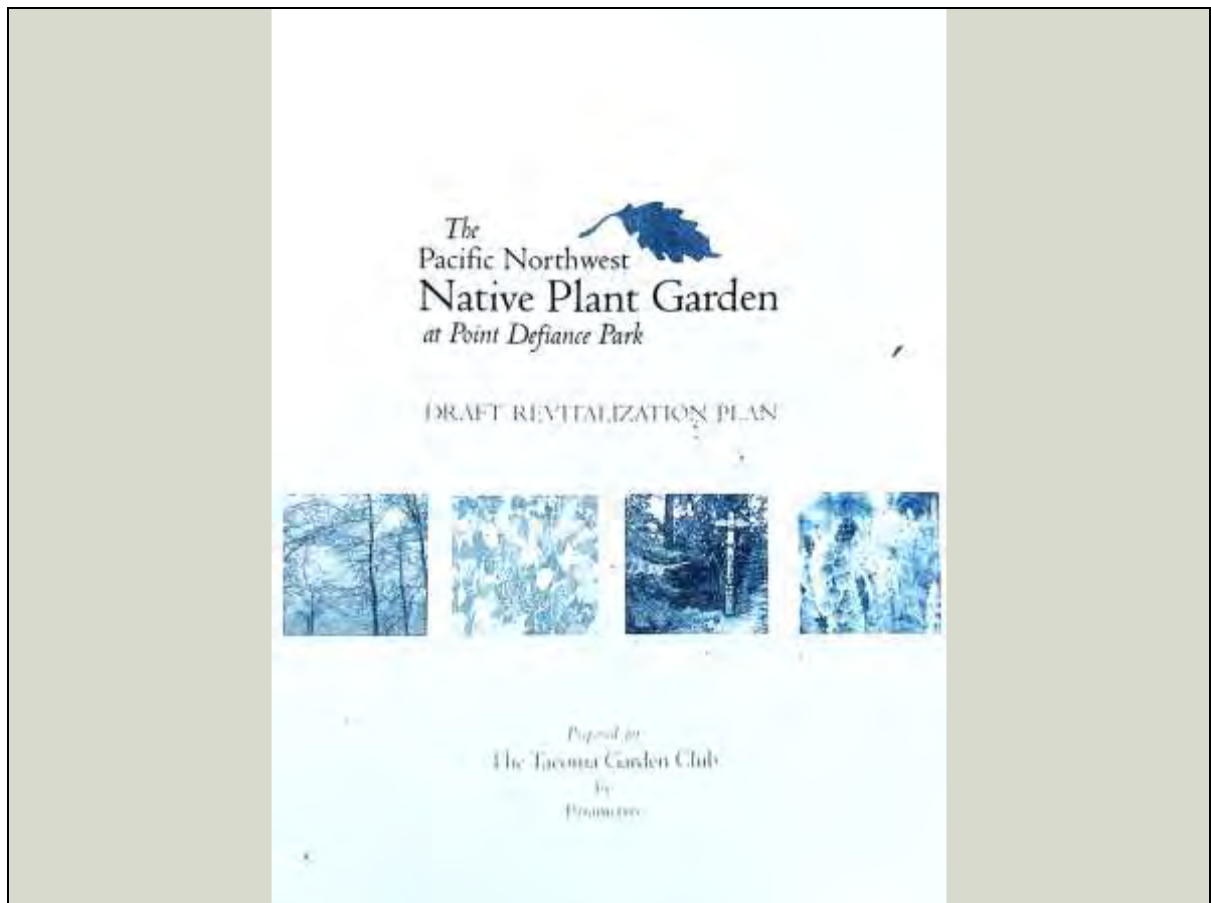
1999 – Garden
Hard to Maintain
and Eco-zones
Reverting to
Coastal Forest



By 1999, the club was seeking ways to reduce maintenance and incorporate aesthetically pleasing areas of interest. The distinctive eco-zones of the 1960s were increasingly looking like the rest of Point Defiance's coastal forest.

Some members were not sure we should keep the garden. It was put to a vote, and two-thirds of our members voted to keep it but work to improve it.

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To address the garden's issues, the club hired a firm, Parametrix, to prepare a revitalization plan for the garden.

PARAMETRIX 1999 PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Refocus the garden's zones away from eco-zones and towards attractive displays of native plants in a horticultural setting.
- Select plants from northern California to British Columbia from the coast to the foothills.
- Develop a distinctive entry to the garden.
- Redesign garden areas to mass plants and make more use of groundcovers and vertical layering.
- Simplify the pathways.
- Fence the garden.
- Incorporate educational signs.

In their draft revitalization plan, Parametrix recommended changes to the garden and the way it was being maintained.



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& Mary Williams
Perennial Advisor: Phyllis Pierce

Visit us on our web
tacomagardenclub.org

\$800,000 Campaign Begins for Pt. Defiance NW Native Plant Garden

For the past two years members of the Tacoma Garden Club have been imagining things and when their visions become reality, the citizens and environment of Tacoma and the Puget Sound region will be the beneficiaries.

Club members have developed an ambitious \$800,000 plan to enhance the five-acre Northwest Native Plant Garden in Pt. Defiance Park that not only will become a proud city landmark, but will have a markedly positive impact on the environment.

The project will focus on educating people of all ages on how to use native plants in their home and office landscapes that are water wise, salmon-friendly, and that are not harmful to water quality or wildlife. The plan includes a new Welcome Plaza, a redesign and refurbishing of paths, adding interpretive signs, plant labels, walking tour brochures, new plants, renovating the waterfall, pond and gazebo, fencing to protect the plants from deer. Docent-led garden walks are also expected.

The Tacoma Garden Club's Northwest Native Plant Garden is Washington's oldest and largest collection of mature native plants in the Northwest,* according to Clayton Antieau, horticulturist, botanist, and a recognized authority on Northwest native plants. For nearly 20 years Antieau has been an educator, lecturer and specialist in native plants and is a member of the landscape architectural team, Parametrix, the design firm for the development of the Native Plant Garden.

For the past 35 years, Tacoma Garden Club members have provided most of the labor to maintain and develop the garden in conjunction with the Metropolitan Park District. Antieau credits the volunteer work provided by the members of the Tacoma Garden Club when he said, "For several decades, this garden has been extremely successful in cultivating a great diversity of our native species."

A part of the \$800,000 campaign includes a fund raising goal of \$250,000 endowment to provide ongoing funding for maintenance.

The Tacoma Garden Club, a member of The Garden Club of America, is a non-profit, charitable 501(c)3 organization so contributions are tax deductible. Contributions may be sent to:

Native Garden Project,
Tacoma Garden Club,
P.O. Box 64235
University Place, WA 98464-0235

By Evonne Agnello

This is from a special edition of the Potting Shed in 2001 designed to raise money for the plans. To fully implement the plan would have cost approximately \$800,000, including the \$250,000 endowment fund for maintenance. Despite extensive fund-raising efforts, only a part of this sum was raised. The expensive plans for a new entrance plaza and reconfiguration of the pathways went by the wayside.



2002 – Garden Fenced

However, in the ensuing years, many of the plan's recommendations were accomplished. In 2002, a 2-acre area was fenced and is locked by Metro Parks at night. This made maintenance immeasurably easier and protected the plants from deer depredation and unwelcome human activity, which had plagued our work parties with the pickup of undesirable debris.

LOCAL SOURCES for NATIVE PLANTS

Tacoma Native Plant Nursery
Fall & Spring Sale
1919 South Tyler, Tacoma, WA 98402
T: 253-881-6439
www.tacomanativeplants.com

Pierce County Conservation District
Annual Native Plant Sale
WACD Plant Materials Center
1410 Bradley Road, Bow, WA 98222
T: 253-845-9770
www.piercecountyod.org/plm.htm

Garden Sphere
3370 North Proctor, Tacoma, WA 98407
T: 253-781-7536
www.gardensphere.biz

Woodbrook Nursery
Gig Harbor, WA 98335
T: 253-265-6271 F: 253-265-6471
www.woodbrook.net

Judd Creek Nursery
29929 111th Ave. SW, Vashon Island, WA 98080
T: 206-463-9681 (call for appointment)
juddjenn@twittr.net

Colvins Creek Nursery
PO Box 1512, Vashon, WA 98070
T: 206-749-0505 F: 206-749-0446
midsouthspring.com

Periwinkle Gardens
5502 Welochel Drive NW, Gig Harbor, WA 98335
T: 253-8981115 F: 253-851-4111
www.periwinklegarden.com

Fansley's Nursery
21715 Pacific Hwy S, Des Moines, WA 98108-6867
T: 206-424-0834 F: 206-878-0973
www.fansleysnursery.com

Black Lake Nursery
4711 Black Lake Blvd. SW, Olympia, WA 98512
T: 360-766-0507 F: 360-357-6286
www.blacklakenursery.com

Sound Native Plants
Retail & wholesale by appointment
PO Box 7505, Olympia, WA 98507
T: 360-352-4122 F: 360-867-0607
www.soundnativeplants.com

Islands Passage
Specialty seed service; retail; online; retail; wholesale
PO Box 639, Port Townsend, WA 98368-0639
T: 360-385-6114 or 1-800-361-6657
F: 360-385-5160
www.islands passageseeds.com

Freely Hollow Ecological Restoration & Seeds
Mail order; retail & wholesale by appointment
PO Box 57, Island County, Langley, WA 98258-0057
T: 360-579-2332 F: 360-579-4088
www.freelyhollow.com

For more native plant sources visit:
www.wnps.org/nurserylist.html

NATIVE PLANTS REFERENCES

The following books will further your knowledge of the native plants of our region and help you choose the right plants for your gardening projects.

Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast: Washington, Oregon, British Columbia, and Alaska
by Jim Pajot and Ardy MacKenzie

Gardening with Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest
by Arthur Knudsen

Native Plants in the Coastal Garden: A Guide for Gardeners in the Pacific Northwest
by April Portinger

Landscaping for Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest
by Russell Link

Artwork by Lucie Harmon

www.pacificnwplantsociety.org

www.tacomanativeplants.com

www.fansleysnursery.com

www.periwinklegarden.com

www.woodbrook.net

www.gardensphere.biz

www.juddcreek.com

www.colvinscreek.com

www.midsouthspring.com

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The 2003 map of the garden still indicates an eco-zone for alpine species. Today, only one of the alpine species listed, which is actually sub-alpine, mountain hemlock, still lives in this area. However, 20 years later, the distinctive identity of the waterfall garden, woodland garden, dry garden, and alpine garden are obscure or have vanished entirely.



2003 – New Entrance Sign

We also adopted the recommendation that going forward, we only plant natives found along the Pacific coast from northern California to British Columbia, from the ocean to the foothills of the mountain ranges. The left side of the 2003 entrance sign indicates this.



2007 – Assistance with Maintenance

In 2007 we hired our first independent contractor to assist our volunteers with garden maintenance, which gave a big boost to the look of the garden. In 2010 our current gardener, Kristin Hemmelgarn, began. She currently works 24 hours a month in the garden, undertakes a wide range of tasks, including heavier-duty ones, works with our volunteers, and is very knowledgeable about the plants in the garden. Today, Kristin, our volunteers, and Metro Parks keep the garden looking great!.

Kristin is on the right and our provisional chair, Neel Parikh, is on the left in this picture of a garden work party around the entrance sign.

WHY DO PLANTS AND ANIMALS HAVE TWO NAMES?

The **common** name of a plant or animal is a "nick-name" people give them. It could be a short version of the scientific name or could refer to the shape, color or where it is found. A bird's common name can even be the sound of its song!

Every plant and animal on earth is given a two-part **scientific** name in Latin. The first part is the generic name or **genus**. The second part is the specific name or **species**. Both are written in *italics* with the genus name capitalized. Example: bear grass-*Xerophyllum tenax*. *Xerophyllum* is the genus, *tenax* the species.

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS


1. Frond
2. Bears
3. Deer
4. Canoes, homes, tools, masks, baskets, clothing and diapers
5. In summer, after flowering
6. Pacific rhododendron
7. Three-leaf clover
8. A plant with leaves that stay green all year
9. The inner bark
10. Nurse Log

LOOK FOR BIRDS IN THE GARDEN

Find these birds in the garden. They use the native plants for food and shelter, and in return help the plants to reproduce.


The Anna's Hummingbird
Calypte anna

Is a non-migratory bird that goes into a deep sleep when it is very cold. It is only 4 inches long. Males have a rose red head and females have a rose red throat. It drinks nectar from flowers and catches insects. In winter and spring females build tiny 1.5 inch nests held together with spider webs in shrubs, trees and vines.




The American Robin
Turdus migratorius

Is a migratory bird. It builds a nest with grass, twigs, paper, and feathers, then lines it with mud and lines it with soft material like grass. Their favorite food is earth worms.



The Black-capped Chickadee
Parus atricapillus

is a non-migratory bird whose common name comes from its "chick-a-dee-dee" call. It eats seeds, insects and berries. The chickadee has a great memory and remembers where it hid its food for up to 28 days!



LEARN NEW WORDS

Annual: A plant that lives for one year.

Blossom: Flower. Could be a noun or a verb.

Conifer: A tree or shrub bearing cones and evergreen leaves (also called needles). From the Latin words, *conus* (cone) + *ferre* (to bear).

Deciduous: A tree or shrub which loses its leaves in the fall, growing new leaves the following spring. From the Latin word *deciduous* (falling).

Evergreen: A plant with leaves that stay green all year.

Foliage: Plant leaves.

Frond: The name of a fern leaf.

Migratory: An animal which moves to warmer places during the winter months and returns in the spring.

Nectar: A sugary liquid produced mostly by flowers. Butterflies, bees, hummingbirds and bats feed on nectar.

Oval: Shaped like an egg.

Perennial: A plant that lives for more than two years. From the Latin words *per* (through) + *annus* (year).


Pit Oven: Also earth oven. A hole in the ground used to bake, smoke, or steam food.

Shrub: A woody plant which has several stems growing from the base, not a single trunk like a tree.

Nursery: The nursery is the fallen tree providing water, shade and protection from disease.

NW NATIVE PLANT GARDEN at Point Defiance Park

Children's Discovery Guide A TREASURE HUNT



Welcome to the NW Native Plant Garden where you are going on a treasure hunt to find some very special plants called "native plants".

They are called "native plants" because they have been growing in the Pacific Northwest for centuries. These plants have adapted to the Pacific NW climate and have become resistant to the Pacific NW insects and plant diseases. Native plants are healthy and easy to grow. They provide food and homes for the animals who live here. The NW Coastal Native Americans used them for food, clothing, shelter and medicine.

Find some of these special plants in this garden. Learn more about them by going on this treasure hunt!

The NW Native Plant Garden was started in 1963 by the **Tacoma Garden Club**, a member of the Garden Club of America. It is maintained in partnership with Metro Parks Tacoma. The Greater Tacoma Community Foundation contributed to this revised brochure.

Printed February 2012 - Revised June 2020

Learn more at www.TacomaGardenClub.org

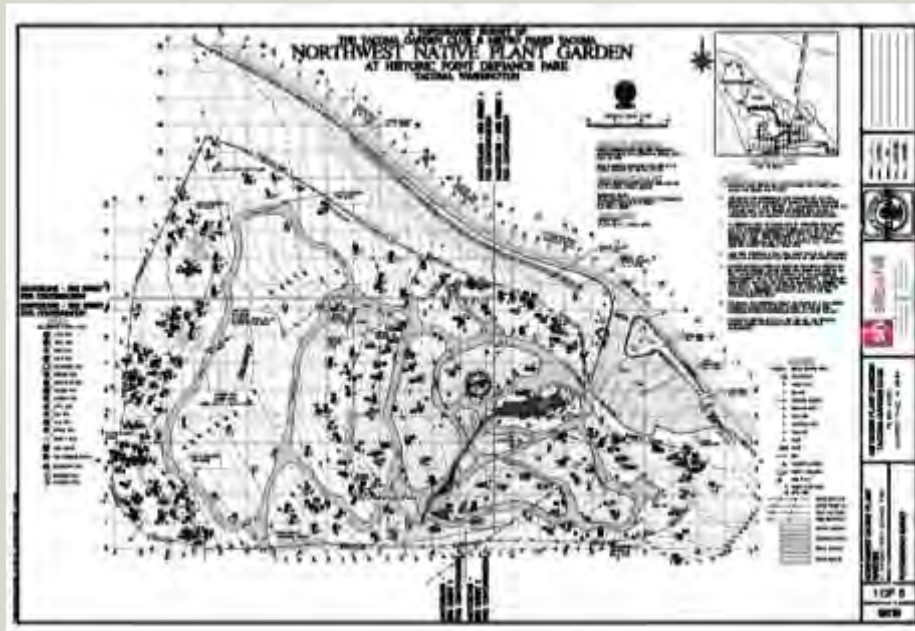
2011 – Children's Discovery Guide

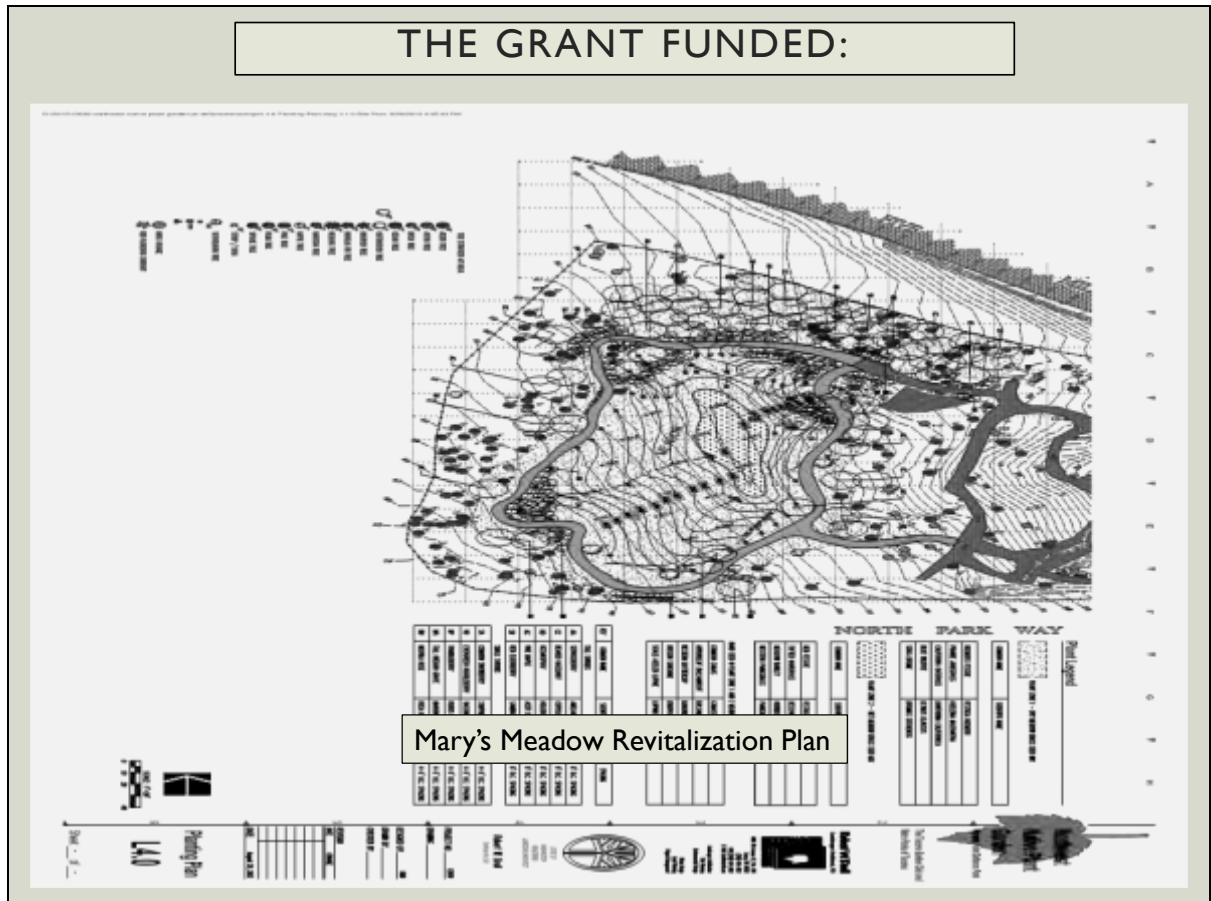
In 2011 a Children's Discovery Guide was developed, which was a treasure hunt game where children searched for markers in the garden, each with an interesting story.



In 2012, lead by Barb Dalton, the native plant garden committee applied for and received a \$155,000 grant from the Mary E. Williams Horticultural Fund of the Greater Tacoma Community Foundation for revitalization of the meadow area. The picture shows a generic meadow, not ours.

- Creation of a topographic survey as a base for the design, updated in 2021 to reflect the 2014 changes to the meadow.





The Grant funded: Mary's Meadow Revitalization Plan prepared by landscape architect Robert Droll with assistance from Sound Native Plants, a company specializing in prairie plants and plant restoration.

THE GRANT FUNDED:

- Removing and replacing meadow soil contaminated with lead and arsenic, the result of the operations of the ASARCO copper smelter.
- Regrading the meadow to create a drainage basin and placing drains at the upper edge of and in the meadow to catch rainwater flooding from the forest above.



This picture was taken in 2014, just after construction of the features of the meadow project and shows the drainage basin.

THE GRANT FUNDED:

- Building paths around the meadow.
- Adding an irrigation system (which today is used only for the new demonstration garden).
- Planting with native meadow grasses and perennials.
- Planting with small native trees and shrubs on the periphery of the meadow.



Pictured are one of the meadow paths created in 2014 plus snowberry shrubs planted along the inner edge of the meadow and vine maples planted along the outer edge of the meadow path.



Mary E. Williams Sitting in the Center

Mary E. Williams, whose fund paid for the meadow revitalization, was a long-time TGC member who was devoted to the native plant garden and spent many hours working there. In this picture from 2003, from left to right are Kathryn Van Wagenen, Mary Williams, Sally Flaherty, and Jacquie Boyd.



2016 – Chairs to Commemorate Mary E. Williams

Phase 1 of the Mary's Meadow revitalization was completed in 2016 with installation of two hand-wrought metal chairs in the upper meadow to commemorate Mary E. Williams.



In 2017 we undertook Phase 2 of the Mary's Meadow Enhancement Plan developed by Sound Native Plants to add more colorful perennials to the meadow. Our members weeded six test plots using three different methods to determine the most effective way to add perennials. We planted more than 800 bulbs and seedlings of 35 different species to see what could compete with the grasses and thrive in the meadow.



October 2017 – Planting Perennials

We planted in October 2017.



October 2017 – Planting Perennials

Of the three methods we tried for preparing the sites for planting, completely digging out the competing grass by shovel turned out to be most effective but also the most work. The other methods tried – rototilling and grubbing or removing grasses with hand tools – were not effective. Both actually encouraged the grasses and helped to multiply one of our worst weeds, creeping buttercup, rather than eradicate them.



Some of the species we planted did well for a year or two, like Puget Sound gumweed, but then vanished. Today, we have about 25 species of perennials in the meadow, some of them increasing in number every year with little help.

Increasing rapidly is great camas, which puts on quite a show in May. When the seeds dry every year, we fling them around the meadow. This picture shows deep blue great camas with pink sea blush, both planted in 2017.

The only species that remains from the 2014 planting is western buttercup, which is increasing on its own every year.

Riverbank Lupine and
Henderson's
Checkermallow



Other perennials are slowly spreading in the meadow. Henderson's checkermallow and riverbank lupine are two of the most striking but require some assistance to spread.



2019 – Survey of Native Grasses

In 2019, Clay Antieau, a grass expert, surveyed the grasses in the meadow to determine the species and the proportion of natives five years after the planting in 2014. Along his two survey lines he found that fewer than half of the species were native. Natives typically are bunch grasses, which allow room for perennials to grow. Non-natives include species that spread to take over areas of turf, excluding perennials. He commented that it's hard to keep non-natives out – they come with the wind, birds, and our feet. He recommended overseeding with native grasses annually.



2020 – Garden Areas Less Distinctive

Pictured is the waterfall obscured by shrubs that likely were never planted here but have encroached on their own.

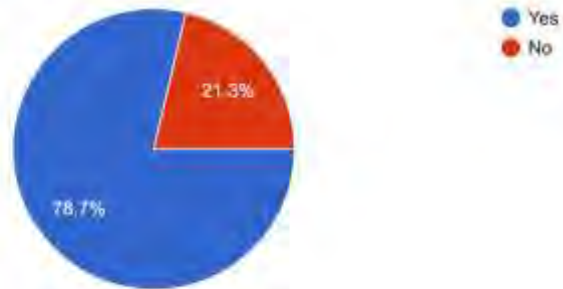
By the year 2020, there was growing consensus that the garden revitalization envisioned in 1999 had only been carried out in part and more work was needed. A common criticism was that areas of the garden lacked the distinctiveness that the original designers sought. Many areas looked a bit too much the same, with the same shrubs intruding. Another criticism was that the garden would be more attractive if garden design principles, such as massing and layering, were applied to plantings.

The native plant garden committee conducted a survey of TGC members' thoughts on the garden, as a prelude to reevaluating the mission of the garden and developing plans for restoring and enhancing the garden.

WHEN ASKED IN THE SURVEY IF THE
GARDEN REMAINS AND IMPORTANT
COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT FOR THE
TACOMA GARDEN CLUB,
**79% OF THE RESPONDENTS SAID
“YES.”**

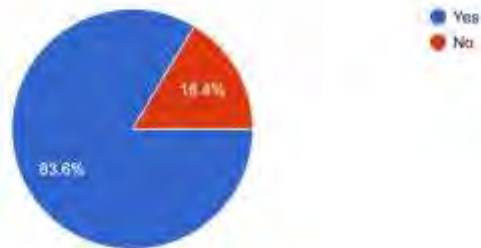
1. In 1963 the garden was founded by forward-thinking TGC members to "Stimulate knowledge of, and protection for, native plants through civic pla...community service project for the Tacoma Garden Club?

61 responses



SHOULD WE FOCUS ON THE DESIGN AND
DISPLAY OF NATIVE PLANTS IN A GARDEN
SETTING, APPLYING GARDEN DESIGN
PRINCIPLES TO STRUCTURE PLANTINGS AND
MAKE THEM MORE ATTRACTIVE?
83.6% RESPONDED “YES.”

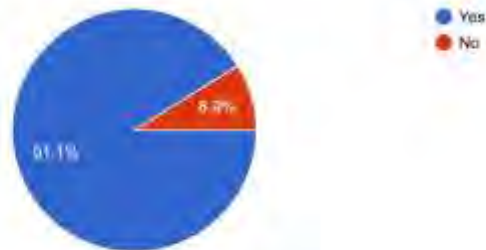
17. In our future plantings and replantings, should we focus on the design and display of native plants in a garden setting, applying garden design...structure plantings and make them more attractive?
61 responses



SHOULD WE BUILD A DEMONSTRATION
GARDEN IN THE AREA NEXT TO THE
MEADOW DISTURBED BY A WATERMAIN
BREAK IN 2020?

91% RESPONDED “YES.”

18. Where the water main break occurred in the northwest corner of the garden in 2020, we now have a "blank slate" that needs to be planted to for...riety of plants that would have a longer bloom time.
56 responses

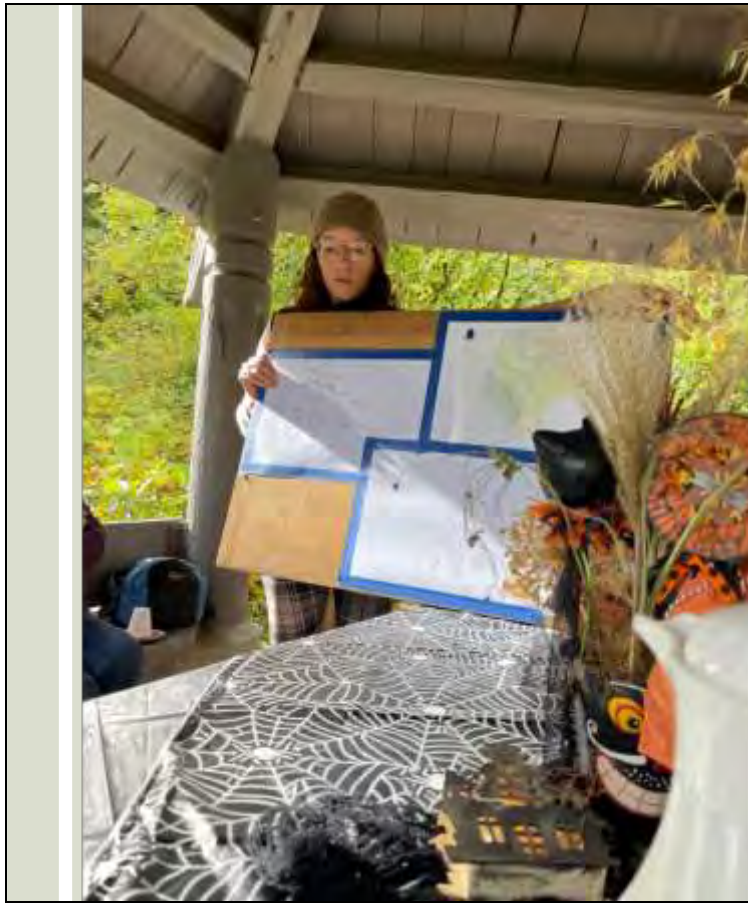


NWNPG MISSION/PURPOSE
APPROVED BY THE TACOMA GARDEN
CLUB BOARD IN 2021

Foster the bond between garden visitors and the natural world by presenting an inviting garden retreat focused on native plants for the enjoyment and education of our greater community.

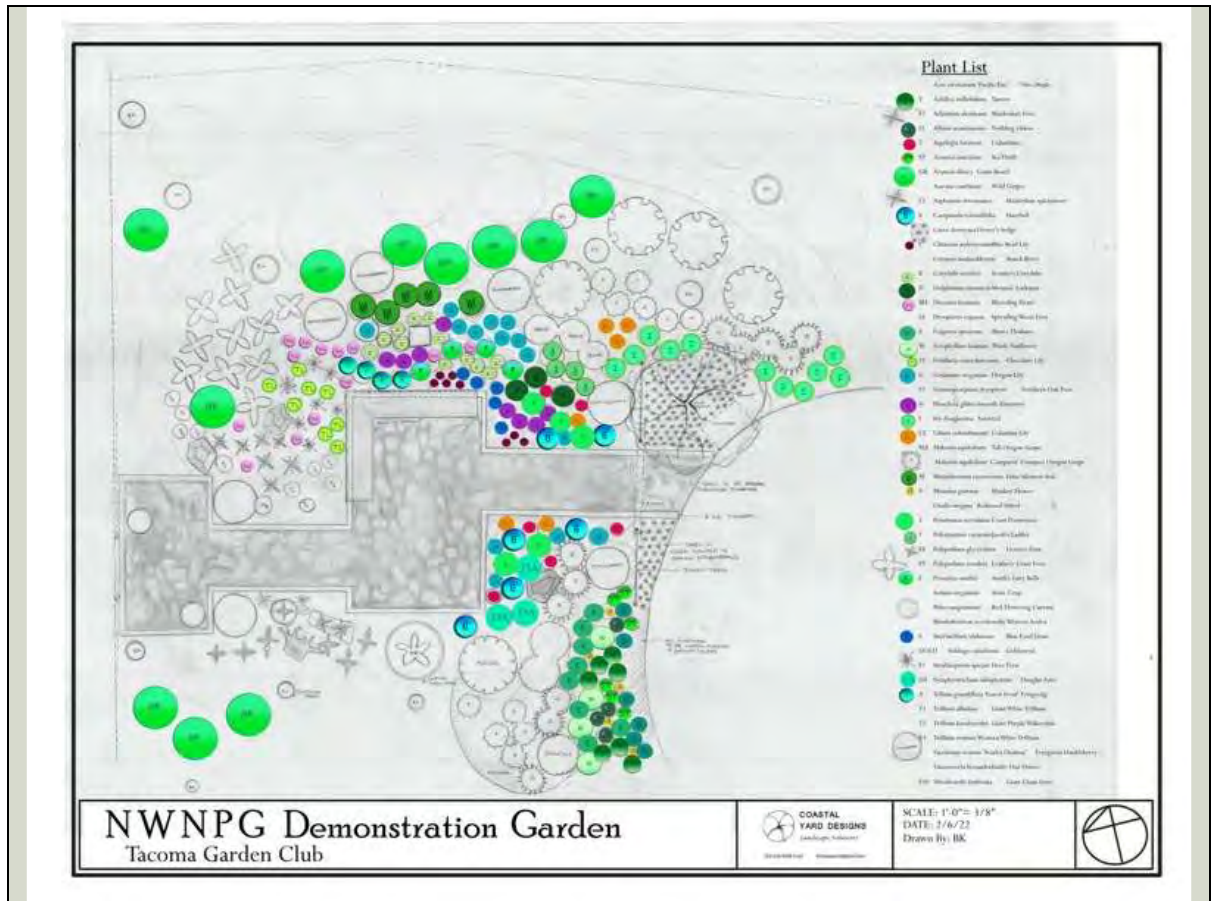


As a result of the survey, particularly on the responses to the question about purposes for the garden, the committee proposed a new statement of purpose, or mission, for the native plant garden to the TGC Board. They approved it in 2021.



2021 –
Demonstration
Garden Design
Review

Despite the pandemic, we proceeded to plan for a demonstration garden in the water main break area in the northeast corner of the garden, adjacent to the meadow path. We hired a garden designer, Brie Kappert, and groups of our members met with her to hear her ideas at two stages of the planning.



The selected plan centered on the gate in the fence, treating it like the front door to a house, and the garden was what you might plant in your front yard leading up to the door, but using native plants.



2023 – Layout for
Demonstration
Garden
Construction

We hired a landscape contractor, EarthDance Organics. Bill Peregrine is measuring the design to layout the footprint for construction.



Demonstration Garden Construction

Construction in early October 2022.



October 2022 – Demonstration Garden Planting

The plants were transported to the site by native plant garden committee members Kim Smart, Debbie Crawford, and Meagan Foley, with Kristin Hemmelgarn on the left.



Placing Plants for Planting

Plants were placed.



Planting

And planting day! October 24, 2022.



Planting

Our members planted about 440 plants of 65 species, including 14 species of ferns.



Planting Done!

The plants came from nurseries far and wide, most that specialized in natives. The South Sound Chapter of the Washington Native Plant Society helped us by including our plant ordering list with theirs as they purchased at wholesale prices for a spring plant sale.



September 2023 – Demonstration Garden

The demonstration garden in September 2023, starting to fill in despite being trod upon and played with by some of our younger visitors.

THE FUTURE: METRO PARKS' PLANS

Two Metro Parks plans may affect the native plant garden:

Plans for a pedestrian and bicycle trail to the west of and fairly close to the meadow. This is in the permitting stage.

Plans to make Five Mile Drive two way next to the north side of the garden to facilitate movement to and from the zoo parking lots, but this expensive project is not on their list of projects for the near future.

IN THE COMING YEAR
WE PLAN TO:

Update our visitor brochure

Restore plant signs, many of which are broken, or the plant names have changed

Develop signs for the demonstration garden

Rethink our entrance sign, which is no longer accurate

Plan for the restoration of the gazebo, pond, and waterfall area

