Behind the Scenes

News from President Ray Sander & Executive Director Sheryl Swed

Welcome to the winter newsletter. We hope that everyone has had a chance to reflect upon the amazing achievement you all have helped accomplish – The Garden Gates were opened in September 2019. Through dedication, steady commitment and generosity, the eight-year-long dream has become a reality. None of this would have happened without our volunteers, staff, board members, generous supporters and committed business partners. Thank you!

We also want to thank those who participated in our end-of-the year giving opportunity. We are proud to announce that DBG received over $30,000 in this campaign. Thanks again!

Now in 2020 there are new challenges to be met – to make DBG financially sustainable, to staff our increased open hours of operations, and to continue to grow and motivate our great volunteers. Thank you, Ray and Sheryl.

The 2020 Season

Our Garden Stewards enhance the garden’s beauty, and our Hospitality Docents proudly host our guests with a smile and provide helpful information. Other volunteers do administrative tasks behind the scenes and keep the organization moving ahead. After a review of the 2019 nine-week season, the Board has agreed that the 2020 Season should be nine months long and should start on Tuesday March 17. As this newsletter goes to press, we are working to finalize our open days/hours.

We need our volunteers to step up as they did last year. Presently, we feel that this year, with many trained and experienced docents, we are a step ahead, but with expanded hours we will need additional docents and they and our veteran volunteers will need training. Carol McCloud, Volunteer Coordinator, will be scheduling new training sessions.
New Garden Features for 2020

New Azalea Collection – Among the features of a botanic garden are special collections of plants or trees. This past fall, Brian Trader, Deputy Executive Director and Director of Horticulture, collaborated with Ernest Koone, owner of Lazy K. Nursery in Pine Mountain, GA, to receive the donation of 65 native Azalea plants to DBG. Brian drove to Georgia to pick up the collection. On his return, Brian worked with Sam Cashdollar, Director of Grounds and Facilities, and Jeremy Cole, Gardener, to lay out the design for the new azalea collection. On December 2, volunteers Margaret Kimmel, Kurt Schaab, Angela Schaab, Jane Peters, George Hammon, Rob Wisniewski, and Mary Hall helped the staff plant DBG’s latest collection. A special thanks to former board member Ruth Clausen and to Kirk Brown of Magnolia Plantations for facilitating the network connection.

Living Shoreline Project – One of DBG’s most significant environmental efforts is the “Living Shoreline Project.” We are in the final design stage of the project protecting 300 feet of our 1,000-foot Pepper Creek tidal shoreline. We are excited about the goals of this project to reduce erosion of our shoreline, mitigate against invasive species by planting native plants, and provide a viewing platform for our guests to learn about the importance of living shorelines.

This project is being completed in partnership with Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) and the Center for Inland Bays (CIB).

The project work begins in spring 2020. Brian will discuss this project in his column below.
West Woodland Trail Expansion – This winter, Sam Cashdollar and Jeremy Cole, and several volunteers have been busy building the new quarter-mile expansion of the trail in the west woodlands, shown below in red on the newly revised Garden Map. The trail work includes clearing, leveling and mulching the new trails and placing logs along the sides of the new trail. Many thanks to Sam and Jeremy for leading the work in this cold weather.
Entry Garden – In 2020, we will be working to beautify the Entry Garden - Rhyne area, with such improvements as new irrigation systems, new seeding of grasses, thousands of new plantings, new trees, and some work on the two bridges over the Rhyne. Brian will have more details about this project, including the 35 new Red Maple trees, in his column.

Welcome Center Bathrooms – Work will begin this spring on the sewer connection and the bathrooms that will be located just southwest of the Welcome Center. Scott Edmonston of Sea Studio Architects in Bethany Beach has completed the initial bathroom design. Scott and Jen Edmonston designed the interior of the Welcome Center. We have awarded the sewer line project to Harry Caswell Inc. This project will take about three weeks once they begin. We plan to work with Contractors for a Cause on the actual bathroom construction.

Save the Dates – 2020 Events

We began the 2020 Program Schedule with a free admission Open House in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day on January 20. It was a success with over 200 guests even though it was a sunny, but cold and windy day. We have planned a busy schedule of events and suggest that you put the following first 5 months of garden events on your calendar. Always check the www.delawaregardens.org/new-events site for updated event details.

February:
- Volunteer Training, Cutting Back our Meadow – February 4
- “Floral Love is in the Air” – Workshop at Rehoboth Beach Library, February 11
• Member Appreciation Day – February 14. Gardens open from 10 a.m. to 1 pm

March:
• Volunteer Training, Delivering the Guest Experience – March 3
• Pi Day Celebration for Board and Volunteers – March 13
• Open the Garden Gates for 2020 Season – March 17
• Hens and Chicks Course – March 23
• Delaware Center for Horticulture hosts Delaware Botanic Gardens Lecture – March 31

April:
• Frolic in the Folly Event: A Celebration of Spring Bulbs – April 3
• Family Friendly Easter Egg Hunt – April 11
• Celebration of Earth Day and Arbor Day with Poetry – April 25

May:
• Spring Fling Volunteer Recruitment – May 4
• National Public Gardens Week – May 8-17
• Plant Identification Workshop – May 11
• Bugs & Beer Lecture in the Learning Garden – May 15

June:
• “Flowers and Founders” Fund for Women party in the Garden – June 4
• Volunteer Training, What’s in Bloom in the Meadow – June 8
• Schools Out Celebration in the Meadow – June 15
• Delaware Center for Horticulture tour of the Gardens – June 16
• Sip & Saunter through the Meadow – June 17

Jan Poli, Brian Trader & reporter Katie Zarilli on WBOC’s Delmarva Life as Jan demonstrates fresh flower arrangements to promote February 11 workshop
Getting Together

Sometimes we just need to get together and enjoy the friendships that DBG has fostered and discuss the accomplishments our DBG Family has made. The Welcome Center has become a sort of “DBG family room” where we gather from time to time to socialize.

**Holiday Pizza Party** – On December 12, many of us gathered around the Welcome Center’s holiday tree, which was decorated by Brian and Jan Poli. There was holiday cheer, pizza from Porto’s and homemade cookies. It was also a chance to thank some of our key supporters.

**Happy New Year** – As we began 2020 on New Year’s Day at high noon, a brave DBG family group welcomed the year with some bubbly. It was a sunny day at 45 degrees, and the discussion was focused on the busy 2020 year to come.

Happy New Year (l-r) Kathy Johnson, Brent Baker, Sheryl, Ray, Vincent & Paula Varrassi, Angie & Michael Phinney and Judy & Marty Martin
Recent Board News

Bob Batley moves to Advisory Council – Board Member Bob Batley has helped guide the DBG for the last several years. When Bob got involved with the gardens, he was at Bancroft Construction, which was one of our “reality team” lead construction companies. Bob not only brought his construction expertise to the Board, but was also co-chair of the Board’s Nominating Committee, and was responsible for recruiting and screening candidates for the DBG Board. Bob recently left Bancroft for another opportunity and can no longer devote the time he has given us in the past. He left the Board on January 1, but will move to the Advisory Council. President Ray Sander said, “Bob has been a valued Board member and we wanted to keep his wise advice and expertise on our team. Bob’s move to the Council allows us to do just that.”

Executive Director Sheryl Swed added, “Bob has a unique insight not only in construction matters but in overall operation of large and complex projects. We are honored that Bob has agreed to remain on our team.”

Ruth Rogers Clausen Retires – Board Member Ruth Rogers Clausen brought her special Horticultural experience to the Board and served on the Horticultural Committee. Ruth is a well-known Horticultural writer and lecturer. What many don’t know is that when Ruth “hit the road” doing her “Talks” about Horticulture, she also acted as a special roving DBG ambassador. Brian Trader, Deputy Executive Director and Director of Horticulture said, “Upon my arrival, I was made welcome by Ruth, who was able to fill me in on what was going on and address horticultural goals. She introduced me to the planting history of DBG. Ruth is a true professional!” Ray Sander said, “During Ruth’s 3 ½ years of commitment to the DBG Board, she generously gave of her many talents and shared her extensive horticultural knowledge. Having Ruth publicly associated with this great endeavor gave our project considerable horticultural credibility when we needed it the most in our early days. We hope that in her travels Ruth will continue to spread the good word about DBG.” Sheryl Swed added, “Thank you Ruth for all you have done in support of Delaware Botanic Gardens. We deeply appreciate your many contributions! You will be missed.”

LeDee Wakefield elected to Board of Directors – LeDee Lickle Wakefield joined the DBG Advisory Council in 2018. She was elected to the DBG Board of Directors on January 21, 2020. For the last decade, LeDee has served as comptroller for her family’s businesses, The Inn at Montchanin Village and Spa / Krazy Kats, Back Burner Restaurant and Everything but the Kitchen Sink specialty shop.
In mid-2019, she became the managing director of this enterprise group. Her responsibilities include the detailed oversight of the day-to-day operations, the management of the four businesses, financial planning and execution, hiring key employees, and assessing potential acquisitions and expansions.

As a native Delawarean, giving back to the community has always been a strong family value. LeDee has extensive experience on the Boards of Preservation Delaware, Young Friends of the Brandywine River Museum, Delaware Guidance Services for Children and Youth, and Paws for People. LeDee has been a generous supporter of DBG over the years. Sheryl Swed said, “LeDee comes to us with an impressive background of service on non-profit boards, has served on the DBG Advisory Council, and has generously supported several DBG fund raising events. We are all excited about the guidance and support she will bring to our board.”

**Recent Staff and Volunteer News**

**Thanks, Kelly & Welcome Angie** – First, we want to thank Kelly Sheridan, who has served as our long time membership and donor record keeper. Kelly had many behind the scenes roles including staffing the major event sign-in tables and preparing event materials such as name badges. Sheryl Swed said, “Thanks Kelly for all the records you kept and details you followed up on over the years. We could not have done what we have done without you. I will miss your ‘can do’ attitude and professionalism.” At the same time, Sheryl welcomed Angie Phinney, one of our veteran volunteers who took over Kelly’s part-time-staff duties on January 1, 2020. “Angie is doing a great job.”

**Welcome Jeremy Cole** – Jeremy Cole joined our staff part-time as a gardener in summer 2019. He quickly became a valued member of our garden maintenance team. We are proud to announce that Jeremy joined our full-time staff on December 30, 2019.

We now have a wonderful three-person staff of hard working professionals. If all goes well, we will be building our staff as our operations increase in scope in 2020-2021, subject to available funding.
Volunteers & Tours Update

News from Carol McCloud, DBG Vice President

Volunteers – Sheryl Swed notes, Carol is recovering from surgery as this newsletter is published. We wish Carol a speedy recovery and hope to see her back onsite soon. We miss her smiles and endless energy. I would be remiss if I didn’t give Carol a special salute for her selfless devotion to the DBG family. We simply would not have had the success in our Grand Opening in 2019 without her leadership of all our volunteers. She organized new hospitality docent training and was onsite almost every day we were open and gave many guided tours. We are so proud of Carol and all the volunteers. Her tours were a significant revenue generator in 2019. Again, we all send Carol our best for a quick recovery.

Hoop House Volunteers – It may be winter, but there is work to be done to prepare the gardens for spring. Two hoop houses are tucked into the maintenance area at DBG. As the gardens rest in winter, the hoop houses come alive as a new “inside growing season” begins. In October 2019, there were 10-12 stewards working in the hoop houses sorting seedlings, planting seeds and carefully organizing the plants. For example, there are tender young ferns being grown for the Knoll garden. Angela Schaab, one of the task leaders said, “The hoop houses are a great asset. We can buy plant stock in smaller sizes and grow them ourselves. We can collect seeds from the gardens, and grow our own replacement plants. We have a seed collection for replacement of our plants or for sale. We can preserve our annuals in the hot house and use them over and over again. Finally, if a plant jumps its bed and is not where we want it, we can dig it up and bring those plants in here for later use in the garden.” Careful records are kept as to where each plant will be planted in the spring, or where the annuals (that were brought inside) will be replanted. Task leaders Jan Poli and Craig Haggerty are also working in the hoop houses.

DBG is indebted to Brent Baker for his generosity, which empowered DBG to make the Hoop House all weather facilities.

Hoop House stewards: L/R Judy Marshall, Maureen Morano, Jane Stokes, Jan Poli, Jeremy Cole, Angela Schaab, Craig Haggerty & Jamie Healey
Jeremy Cole, staff gardener, begins his winter days by checking the plants in the hoop houses. There are two hoop houses: one is hot (65 degrees) with annuals taken from the gardens (such as Agave from the Folly) to winter over and one is cold (45 - 50 degrees) and has perennial plants begun from seed or taken from the corral stock we already had. All these plants will be planted or prepared for sale in the spring. Maureen Morano said, “What I like about working in the hoop house is I can stand and don’t have to get down on my knees. It’s fun to start the plants, see them grow and visualize them out in the gardens.”

Tours – We again are offering a series of individual guest tours (in groups of 20 to 25) to the public. When we open on March 17, we will offer daily guest tours at 10:00 a.m. each day that we were open. Visitors can go to our website (delawaregardens.org) to make a reservation. The cost of the tour on open days is $10 plus the price of admission. If you come to the gardens without a tour reservation, you can sign-up and pay for the tour and admission, if there is availability. As we did last year, if your business, garden club or other organization would like to know more about small group tour availability or book a group tour, you may contact Carol McCloud at (carol.mccloud@delawaregardens.org).

Horticultural Happenings

News from Brian Trader, Deputy Executive Director and Director of Horticulture

Our gardens are resting now in anticipation of a very busy and showy spring. Or are they? With such a mild winter here in southern Delaware, I have watched the flower buds on our shrubs and trees swell, while the leaves of our bulbs sneak up from the soil. I am hopeful that our plants will hold and be patient, as I watch another week forecasted for unseasonably warm temperatures.

While our gardens have been resting, the garden team has been very busy! Since our last newsletter, we have planted a collection of native azaleas, constructed and opened new paths throughout our Woodland Gardens, designed new garden areas and envisioned a robust educational program for 2020. With so much to look forward to in the coming months, who can blame our plants for trying to get an early start on spring? While our dedicated volunteers cut back the Meadow Garden and the Woodland Edge, we are literally trying not to step on emerging bulbs or frogs.

On the topic of adding to our plant collections, Delaware Botanic Gardens was fortunate enough to be included on the donor list for the Mid-Atlantic Nursery and Trade Show (MANTS). Each year this show, hosted in Baltimore, celebrates the title of largest nursery show on the east coast. Exhibitors from around the country and abroad feature their best nursery stock at the show. We were
fortunate this year to have over $10,000 of plant materials donated to our gardens at the conclusion of the show. Donated materials included mature trees, beautiful and rare shrubs, and over 10,000 daffodil bulbs. A special shout-out to Sam Cashdollar and Jeremy Cole for assisting in the loading, transport and unloading of our new, precious cargo. Our dedicated and passionate volunteers have already helped plant many of the donated bulbs and shrubs in the garden. Please come visit the gardens in the spring to see the new plants.

Another exciting spring project is the planting of our Rhyne Garden. Delaware Botanic Gardens received a grant from the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control in December to plant the stormwater dry basins along Piney Neck Road and our Rhyne Garden with perennials, shrubs and trees. The planting will help slow runoff from our parking areas and serve as an educational resource in support of our gardens’ mission. The stormwater basin work is being conducted in collaboration with Envirotech and will begin in February. We will be planting the Rhyne Garden from March-May with native perennials and plant the native trees and shrubs in the fall of 2020. Genera of plants featured include *Baptisia*, *Echinacea*, *Phlox*, *Monarda*, and *Coreopsis*.

In addition to all of the new plants and garden features, we have dreamt a robust programming calendar for 2020. The goals of the programming are to fulfill our mission of education and inspiration, achieve our values of community focus, provide professional development for all of our team, engage our growing membership, and generate revenue. We look forward to implementing training for our volunteers, offering workshops and courses to the public, and delighting the community with outreach. We’ve already implemented the programming with a special community open house on Martin Luther King Day. Thanks to some very dedicated volunteers, we welcomed over 200 guests on the coldest day of the year. Thank you to the many volunteers who have agreed to participate in our programming and teach some of the workshops and courses. We wouldn’t be able to offer this education and outreach without you!

I look forward to seeing you in the gardens as we gear up for, as a colleague stated it, a BIG EXCITING YEAR!
Help Wanted

New Volunteers Wanted – As we grow and are an operational garden the administrative workload has increased dramatically. We have a pressing need for new volunteers in the administrative, financial, technical and communications-marketing areas as follows.

Administration: Help with event planning, invitations and working at events, such as staffing the check-in table, etc. Contact Sheryl Swed at sherylswed@delawaregardens.org.

Financial: Tasks include making bank deposits, paying bills as they come due, preparing reports of transactions, and communicating with DBG’s bookkeeping firm so that transactions are properly reported according to the current chart of accounts. Contact Kathy Johnson at kathyjohnson@delawaregardens.org.

Technical: Need volunteers with technical background to support DBG online applications. Areas include website content creation, back-office applications and hardware and software management. Contact Tom Bason at webmaster@delawaregardens.org.

Communications-Marketing: All phases of public relations-marketing including news media liaison; drafting news releases and writing for DBG’s quarterly newsletter; making contacts with publications to place advertising making sure DBG events are published in newspaper community calendars. Contact Brent Baker at brent.baker@delawaregardens.org.

The Learning Garden in winter (Photo by Ray “Ansel Adams” Bojarski)

Forward to March 17, 2020 – Our First Full Year Season

Our mission is to create a world-class, inspirational, educational, and sustainable public botanic garden in southern Delaware for the benefit and enjoyment of all.

All photographs by Ray Bojarski except as cited.