



*College of the Environment
School of Forest Resources*

November 14, 2011

Dear CUH Alumni,

You may have heard the news...**one of us is now in charge!** Yes, an alumnus of the Center for Urban Horticulture's graduate program is calling the shots at UW Botanic Gardens. In July, I became the Orin and Althea Soest Chair for Urban Horticulture, and Director of the University of Washington Botanic Gardens which includes the Center for Urban Horticulture (CUH) and the Washington Park Arboretum (WPA).

I am indebted to my predecessors (Drs. Tukey, Hamilton, Hinckley, Mabberley, Wott, and Ms. Lier) for their visions and the strong organization that I have inherited. The superior graduate program that we enjoyed is still a place where students come to learn not only about their disciplines, but also about themselves and their abilities. This is a place where friendships that can last a lifetime are forged and students gain the confidence to become leaders in their fields.

Our current graduate students continue to do stimulating and relevant research. Just a few examples:

- Katie Murphy has been looking at urban soils, especially parking strips, to determine if they are appropriate for food production. Katie has found a correlation between high-traffic roads and contamination of lead, suggesting that no, or modified, food production methods should be used in those locations.
- Drew Zwart is examining the potential for soil-incorporated biochar to induce resistance in trees against a common group of plant pathogens. Biochar is an organic by-product of bioenergy production which, when incorporated into soils, has been shown to improve a number of factors related to plant health and productivity.
- Eric Delvin is investigating ways to rapidly restore large areas of prairie and create habitat for a suite of rare plants and butterflies.
- Andrew Fraser is working in the Union Bay Natural Area, testing methods of solarizing blackberry and broom seeds in the soil seed bank.

And our graduating students also continue to get jobs that are personally stimulating and contribute to our knowledge and management of the environment. You are an impressive bunch – you can be found at universities; federal, state and local governments; top public gardens; and influential non-profits organizations – you are changing the world!

As I plan for the future of UW Botanic Gardens **I am guided by four basic principles.** First, we must **provide more value to students** through education, research, and recreation. Students continue to work in the Union Bay Natural Area, the Herbarium and the Arboretum on management issues, but we are also

University of Washington Botanic Gardens

Washington Park Arboretum • Union Bay Gardens • Union Bay Natural Area

Center for Urban Horticulture • Elisabeth C. Miller Library • Otis Douglas Hyde Herbarium

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working with art students to provide visual and performing arts at both sites (CUH and WPA). Look for an installation on “The Music of Trees” in the Arboretum next fall. At the Center we have plowed nearly an acre for the Seattle Youth Garden Works (a program that works with homeless and at-risk youth) and UW students to farm, while learning about nature, food production, marketing, and self-reliance. We are engaging students from the UW museology program, the business school, the iSchool, and across campus.

Second, we need to **enhance the experience of visitors** at both sites. We are planning changes to the Graham Visitor Center that will make it a more informative and pleasant place to visit. I would **love** to see the non-functioning greenhouse in WPA remodeled to include a small café and a charming atrium for our education programs to use. We are also expanding our popular Weekend Walks to be held every weekend instead of twice a month. At both sites we intend to make public health a priority, with trails designated for fitness walking, while also providing interpretation of the plants and landscape for the walkers.

My third guiding principle is that we must **strive for innovation in everything we do** – we *are* the University of Washington after all! We are planning to completely redo our mapping system, moving to GIS and tying our collections database to a spatial database. In a few years, you will be able to create a custom map of the plants you want to see as well as information about their history at the Arboretum. We also tie the plant collections data to our Miller Library catalog as well as the specimen inventory in the Hyde Herbarium. A one-stop resource for our valuable plant collection!

These all need to be coupled with my final guiding principle: **Increasing our self-sufficiency** through gifts, endowments, and revenue. We need a future that does not rely on the ups and downs of the state’s economy. This will be a challenge, but it is necessary for us to survive. You may be contacted periodically by the UW, asking you to make a gift. Please consider directing your annual giving to the UWBG to help sustain our future – gifts to students to help fund projects and travel to meetings, gifts to keep our gardens beautiful, gifts to buy books for the Library or supplies for the Herbarium– all are greatly appreciated (more information can be found here: <http://bit.ly/uwbg-gift>). And, as you plan your estate, consider including the UWBG in your plans. Contact us for more information.

I hope you will all be a part of our future, as you have been a part of our past. We believe that once you have been a student here, you are always a part of us. Please come to see us and please let me know what you think about our plans. Your opinions are important to me, and I never forget that our students are what make this place vital and exciting. Together we are part of something great.

Best Wishes!



Sarah H. Reichard, Ph.D. (‘81, ‘89, ‘94)
Orin & Althea Soest Professor and Director
UW Botanic Gardens
(aka Center for Urban Horticulture & Washington Park Arboretum)

P.S. For those of you who studied here in the last 15 or so years: 4 pm on Friday still means Journal Club before heading out for the weekend. If you are in the area, stop by and join us. Meet today’s students and talk about current topics in plant science!