Training the Next Generation of Leaders in Botanic Gardens

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Melanie Sifton, Vice President of Horticulture and Facilities, Brooklyn Botanic Garden
Sonja M. Skelly, Ph.D., Director of Education, Cornell Plantations and Adjunct Assistant Professor
Brian W. Trader, Ph.D., Interim-Director of Longwood Graduate Program and Coordinator of Domestic and International Studies
Overview of American Public Horticulture Education

• 1990’s
  – Awareness as a profession increases in academia

• Early 2000’s
  – Universities begin implementing Public Hort. majors, concentrations, and emphasis
  – Purdue University, University of Delaware and University of Minnesota as examples

• 2005-2010
  – Decline in horticulture student enrollment
  – Consolidation of Horticulture programs
Environmental Scan

Public Horticulture in U.S. Academia

• Fewer than 10 institutions have opportunities for focus in public horticulture

• 5 programs have undergraduate public horticulture
  – California Polytechnic State University – San Luis Obispo
  – Purdue University
  – Iowa State University
  – Oklahoma State University
  – University of Tennessee - Knoxville
US Public Horticulture Graduate Programs

- Auburn University
- Cornell University
- Longwood Graduate Program
- University of Nebraska – Lincoln
- University of Tennessee - Knoxville
Challenges

• Fewer students entering horticulture as a profession
• Fewer faculty teaching horticulture
• Public Horticulture programs are disappearing
  – University of Florida
  – Kansas State University
Challenges

- Business administration
- Leadership and management
- Fundraising
- Hospitality
- Union workforces

- Human resources
- Insurance
- Health and safety
- Leadership transitions
- Global conservation
- Government and politics
THE LONGWOOD GRADUATE PROGRAM IN PUBLIC HORTICULTURE

Brian W. Trader, Ph.D.
Interim-Director of Longwood Graduate Program
Coordinator of Domestic and International Studies
Longwood Graduate Program (est. 1967)

• Master of Science in Public Horticulture
  – Two-year academic program at the University of Delaware
    • Experiential learning at Longwood Gardens and other public gardens
  – Ten fully funded fellowships per year
Past Evolution

- 1967–1987: M.S. in Ornamental Horticulture
  - “...providing qualified graduates to work into the top management positions of arboreta, botanical gardens, public display gardens and other horticultural establishments...” - May 17, 1966 memorandum from Russell J. Seibert to Trustees, Longwood Foundation, Inc.

- 1988–1997: M.S. in Public Horticulture Administration
  - Fellows eligible for Certificate in Museum Studies

- 1998–present: M.S. in Public Horticulture
Highlights of the Fellowship

• Summer immersion and retreat
• MS research thesis
• Professional Outreach Project
• Symposium Development
• International Experience: Project-based learning
• Professional Development/outreach
• Board representation
• Mentorship Program
• Diverse curriculum opportunities
Heritage Objects

The Heritage Object Display of the 2015 Longwood Graduate Program Symposium consists of eleven items from regional institutions, reflecting several centuries of history through a variety of materials. Each object represents an important part of its organization’s heritage. Included are items used, designed, or owned by the founders of these lending organizations. Other items represent the land, the spirit, and the vision of their institutions. These objects help keep important memories alive and inspire possibilities for the future.

Heritage Objects contributed by:

- The Chanticleer Foundation
- Delaware Nature Society
- Hagley Museum & Library
- Jenkins Arboretum & Gardens
- Longwood Gardens
- The Longwood Graduate Program in Public Horticulture
- The Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania
- The Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College
- Tyler Arboretum
- Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library
- Wyck Historic House, Garden & Farm
Longwood Gardens
KENNETT SQUARE, PENNSYLVANIA

Brass Fountain Head circa 1930s

Created to fit the No. 1 jet on Longwood's Main Fountain Garden, this sphere-shaped fountain head features 140 evenly-spaced holes around its circumference. The spray effects of this head are unknown as it has not been installed on the fountain in recent memory. Some speculate that it may have been special-ordered by Mr. du Pont as an experimental nozzle.
Longwood Graduate Program:
Amy Hoffmann Mawby - Class of 2008
Career Training in Public Horticulture: Networking and Experiential Learning
Career Training in Public Horticulture:

Group Project Management
Career Training in Public Horticulture: Special Events Coordination
Bowman’s Hill Wildflower Preserve

**Education Coordinator**
(2008 – 2013)

Tyler Arboretum

**Director of Public Programs**
(2013 – present)
Preparing Future Leaders...
The Cornell Public Garden Leadership Program

Sonja M. Skelly, Ph.D.
Director of Education, Cornell Plantations
Adjunct Assistant Professor, Horticulture Section
Need

• Professionals in seek of graduate level education to advance or for a career change.
• Refining expertise
• Flexibility
• Developing knowledge and skills
  – Conservation
  – Sustainability
  – Leadership & business acumen
  – Hospitality
  – Union relations & human resources
  – Communications & marketing

Cornell University
Cornell University

- Internationally recognized, top ranked University
- 4,000 courses across 100 departments
- Expertise:
  - Plant Science
  - Sustainability
  - Hospitality
  - Labor relations
  - Business
  - Communications & marketing
Cornell Plantations

- Botanical gardens, arboretum, natural areas
- 3500 acres, 42 staff
- Cultivation
- Conservation
- Education
Public Garden Leadership Program

• Program started in 2000
• Partnership: Cornell Plantations & Department of Horticulture
Masters of Professional Studies

- MPS program designed for those who want to build skills but are not interested in research careers
- Professionals embarked on careers who want to continue to learn
- Emphasis is on coursework not research
- Problem-solving or applied project

Cornell University
Public Garden Leadership Program

• MPS degree, 1-2 years
• Flexible course of study
• Leadership development
• Problem solving, applied project
• Professional development
SOIL HEALTH 
AND
THE SCOOP & DUMP
METHOD OF SOIL
REMEDIATION

Urban Horticulture Institute
Dept. of Horticulture
Public Garden Leadership Program

– Vice President Horticulture, Brooklyn Botanic Garden
– Executive Director, Ithaca Children’s Garden
– Assistant Director, Cheyenne Botanic Garden
– Director of Public Programs, NEWFS
– Public Programs Manager, Chanticleer
– Manager of Horticulture Standards, National Parks Board of Singapore
– Lecturer, University of Greenwich
2009 Graduate of the Cornell Plantations Public Garden Leadership Program

Melanie Sifton, 
Vice President, Horticulture & Facilities
Centre for Urban Ecology
Fast Facts on Brooklyn Botanic Garden (BBG):

Founded in 1910

Over 800,000 visitors a year

Brooklyn has around 2.5 million residents, with rising population

Constituents are a very diverse cultural melting pot both culturally and socio-economically

Equal funding from private, public support & income-earning activities
Notable collections include:
Bonsai
Japanese Hill & Pond Garden
Orchids
Cycads
Native Flora
Prunus (flowering cherries)
Roses
...and many more!

Plant collections comprised of:
17,313 accessions
+120,000 living plant specimens
+300,000 herbarium specimens
Valuable components of a public garden graduate program
Applied Research & Teaching
Fundraising

Support Brooklyn Botanic Garden

Brooklyn Botanic Garden thrives with the help of our closest friends. Support BBG through your membership or a general donation, bequest, tribute, or partnership. Help secure the Garden’s future as a member of the President’s Circle or with a donation to BBG’s Campaign for the Next Century.

Donate Online  Become a Member

Cultivate Growing Minds
Learn More

Support the Garden in the Next Century.
Learn More

President’s Circle
Learn More
Experience an insider’s view.

Corporate Partnership
Learn More
Support BBG and your employees.

Dedications & Tributes
Learn More
Celebrate a loved one through BBG.

Planned Giving
Learn More
Leave a lasting legacy at the Garden.
Understanding Government Support

Brooklyn Borough President Eric AdamsHon. Melissa Mark-Viverito, Speaker, and the New York City CouncilBrooklyn Delegation of the New York City CouncilNew York State AssemblyBrooklyn Delegation of the New York State AssemblyNew York State SenateBrooklyn Delegation of the New York State SenateInstitute of Museum and Library ServicesNew York City Department of Cultural AffairsNew York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic PreservationNew York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Brooklyn Botanic Garden
Other current leadership concerns
Businesses and public services, must provide reasonable accommodations to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of employment and access to services.
Labor & Union Relations

- Horticulture & Facilities
  - Plant Collections
    - Plant Records
    - Herbarium
      - GreenBridge Community Horticulture
      - NYC Compost Project in Brooklyn
  - Conservatories & Hort. Programs
  - Gardens & Grounds
    - Outdoor Gardens
    - Grounds Maintenance
    - Arboriculture
  - Facilities
    - Maintenance
    - Custodial
Managing venues for private events
Informal programs for families
Stay Connected

Subscribe to our monthly eNewsletter and connect with us on social media to find out about bloom updates, Garden news and events, and more.

eNews
Email Address
First Name Last Name Zip Code

Sign Up!

Note: Your email address will not be shared with other organizations or businesses.

Featured Event

Sakura Matsuri
Saturday, April 25–Sunday, April 26

Learn More

Plants in Bloom

Hamamelis × intermedia ‘Arnold Promise’ (witch hazel) in the Perennial Border. Photo by Sarah Schmidt. April 1, 2015

Social Networking
Challenges

- Business administration
- Leadership and management
- Fundraising
- Hospitality
- Union workforces
- Human resources
- Insurance
- Health and safety
- Leadership transitions
- Global conservation
- Government and politics