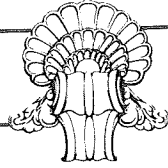


THE BLOEDEL RESERVE

Volume 4 Issue 2

Summer/Fall 1992



From the Director

In an abstract way, this issue features planning. The major article describes the various plans considered in development of the Moss Garden area. We also reference the inauguration of a new annual event titled the Virginia Merrill Bloedel Lecture Series where we intend to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to nature or humanity or to our understanding of science. Each of these topics, the Moss Garden and the Lecture Series, evolved to some extent by their own devices into features of far more substance than we ever originally envisioned. Perhaps some future issue will examine this fragile aspect of planning further in an attempt to discover if this can happen only by chance or whether there is a way to structure the process to promote it. In any event, we are proud to present these features of the Reserve to you and invite your response.

Richard A. Brown, Director

The Moss Garden

Few areas within the Reserve have the heritage of so many proposed, tried and abandoned landscape treatments as does the area we call the Moss Garden. Part of the problem was the site itself; part was the matter of wanting to do something special there, something fitting, something appropriately dramatic, but being uncertain as to what that action should be. Despite this history of slow or false starts, few areas within the Reserve achieved final design stability as fast as that space.

From all appearances, this area was logged approximately 50 years ago with many of the logs left to rot on the ground. By the mid 1970's, many of these logs were sufficiently decayed to



RAB Photo

support colonies of mosses, occasional ferns, huckleberries and even trees like hemlock, cedar and cascara. Between the logs and stumps, thickets of salmonberry quickly evolved. As often happens in newly logged spaces, alder trees quickly sprouted and grew to good proportions. A few conifers perhaps because they were too small to harvest or too imperfect for use at that time.

With the installation of the Reflection Pool (1970) came a trail through the space we now call the Moss Garden. This trail provided ready access to the Reflection Garden for those using the Guest House or visiting the Japanese Garden. This trail is not the trail one finds today, but rather a much wider, gravel surfaced service road arching directly from the nearby drive (present Moss Garden trail head) to the west side of the Reflection Garden. Richard Haag, consultant to Mr. and Mrs. Bloedel for development of the Reflection Garden, built the path following historic specifications for "water packed Macadam" roads.

Though not an undisturbed space initially, the area evolved by its own natural devices. To give some order to the space, maintenance crews routinely "pruned" all of the salmonberry back to a height of two feet which surely stimulated the plants to grow thicker and more vigorously, filling in every possible void of soil, and presenting the appearance of a hedge allowed to solidly fill an acre or so of ground. It was neat if not interesting.

Serious thoughts about improving the area were first verbalized in the late 1970's. As an outfall

of his work in the Japanese Garden, Richard Yamasaki, landscape contractor from Seattle, engaged annually to prune the specimens of that garden, began to study the site and proposed a treatment that came close to installation. It was his suggestion that the qualities of the terrain be exposed and amplified. Two drainages within the site at least seasonally carried water, merging their discharges just north of the Reflection Pool, adding to the flow heading towards the Japanese Garden. Mr. Yamasaki recognized the fact that these flows might be weak or non-existent at times and so was reluctant to "build" a scheme dependent upon them. He did propose, however, a design that would feature a "stream" even if seasonally dry. He suggested we strategically place large stones and through some minimal excavation develop an "ancient" stream bed. The whole area would be treated in a manner not unlike a Japanese Garden, though not as refined perhaps as the existing stroll garden further east and "down-stream".

Yamasaki's ideas were not without merit judging by the extent of Mr. Bloedel's consideration of them. From our conversations it was apparent that what concerned Mr. Bloedel was whether or not the space would seem natural by such a treatment. After all, just west of the area was a large, open meadow with grazing sheep and cattle. No stones (of size at least) occurred there. How, geologically speaking, could we explain the rather sudden outgrowth of a rocky stream, in a small wood, east of a relatively flat, dry meadow. I know too that Mr. Bloedel was concerned about whether it was appropriate to "expand" the Japanese Garden, as this treatment was perceived as such, to such extent. The realities of finding and installing stones of the size and quality described were not insurmountable complications, but merely challenges to be dealt with. Pondering was called for.

Mr. Bloedel took the next move some months later and proposed his own ideas for the space. Inte-

grating elements of Yamasaki's plan, Mr. Bloedel proposed featuring the water moving through the space, not by a rock lined stream, but by a series of shallow, narrow ponds accented with a limited (very few) number of carefully placed stones. His thinking seemed to settle around three variations of this theme, differing only by shape and number of ponds. To assist with his evaluation of the alternatives, staff prepared a very precise survey plan of the entire area showing topographic contours, wet areas and every log, stump and standing tree. On to this base plan, drawings were prepared showing his various pond proposals.

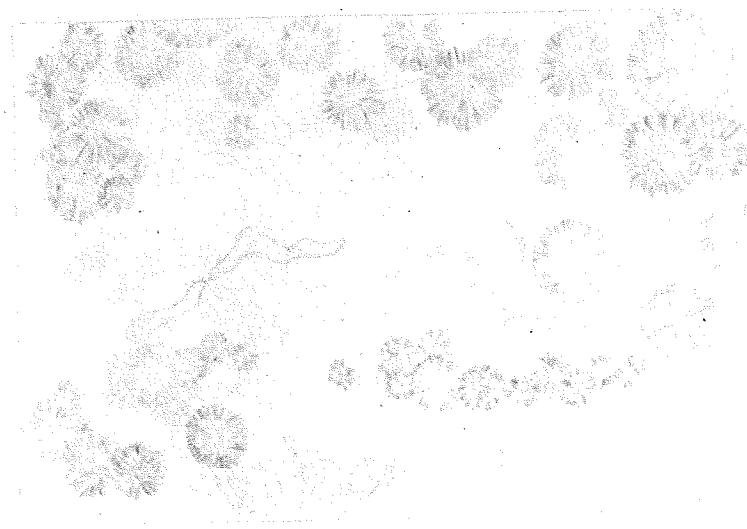
As we examined these pond alternatives the question naturally arose as to whether there was sufficient water within the site to fill and flow through the ponds. The plan that received first preference involved construction of two narrow, shallow ponds with a small waterfall between them. The amount of displayed water in the "falls" would relate directly to flows between the ponds. After weeks of gathering data about these flows, by actually measuring the water passing through a very small dammed pond, we engaged Dr. Thomas Dunne, of the University of Washington and one of his graduate students (William E. Detrich), to analyze this data and

report back on the issue of how much water we could expect to see in our proposed ponds. While he worked on that problem, we began drafting contract documents to guide a soon to be chosen landscape contractor.

The news was not good. Dr. Dunne reported that during the wettest months we might actually experience some water flow, but for the bulk of the year, there may be little or no flow at all. His closing remarks were "we suggest serious consideration be given to alternative ways to develop the area." (1) And so, as had happened before, in an atmosphere of general disappointment, plans were shelved.

Four years passed before we actively discussed this project area again. At a botanic garden meeting held in Vancouver, B.C., Canada in the spring of 1982, Richard Haag (our Landscape Architect at the time) and I were simultaneously impressed by the display of moss and native huckleberries within the Nitobe Botanical Garden at the University of British Columbia. On return, we proposed to Prentice Bloedel development of this area to feature the native huckleberries growing so abundantly there on the stumps and logs. Additionally, we suggested clearing out all of the low vegetation and establishment of moss as the ground cover for the entire space. I'm not sure which

An early Prentice Bloedel drawing formalized by Diane Steen.



Project Update

by Joseph Piccuch

BATS AND DUCKS

As of early August, it appears that none of the half-dozen bat houses installed on the grounds of the Reserve last winter, are inhabited by anything other than multitudes of large spiders. Bat Conservation International, supplier of the plans used in construction of the boxes, advises allowing at least a year before succumbing to frustration and the desire to relocate newly installed houses. It may be that moving the existing houses, rather than constructing new ones, will be on this year's winter projects list.

Nor is there any evidence that any of the Wood Duck nests boxes installed around the Bird Marsh were used for their intended purpose, although a relatively large number of male Wood Ducks were sighted both at the Bird Marsh and the Mid Pond late this spring. Perhaps the completion of the trail through the depression and the concurrent reduction in visitor traffic around the west side of the Bird Marsh will encourage these shy birds to employ the facilities we've provided them.

RAMPS

Access to several areas of the Reserve for persons with disabilities should be improved both logistically and esthetically by projects currently in progress. The stairs and temporary ramp leading down from the Moss Garden into the west side of the Reflection Pool have been replaced with a gently sloping trail. A sidewalk sweeping around the gate and step up into the Japanese Garden will replace the temporary ramp used at that location for the last few years; and a permanent ramp integrated into the structure of the Guest House deck will replace the temporary ramp in use there. These projects should be completed by early fall.

Garden Update

by Robert Braid

ACQUISITIONS

A very nice Dove Tree (*Davidia involucrata*) has been acquired and planted just off the exit road across from the Rhododendron Glen; six Siberian Spruce (*Picea omorika*) have been planted in the Japanese Garden to replace the alpine firs, which were lost to insect damage. Located in a bed just west of the Pear Apple, a variety of Maiden-hair fern, (*Adiantum venustum*) now has a home and a fall-flowering perennial from Japan (*Kirengeshmoma palmata*) has been planted along the Camellia Trail.

IPM

As part of the ongoing IPM (Integrated Pest Management) program at the Reserve, the problem of root weevils amongst the rhododendrons is one that is receiving considerable attention. Steve Martin, one of our student interns, has done an inventory of damaged plants and a treatment of beneficial nematodes will be applied following a careful evaluation of need. So far, serious or unacceptable damage to the plants has not been noted.

HEATHER

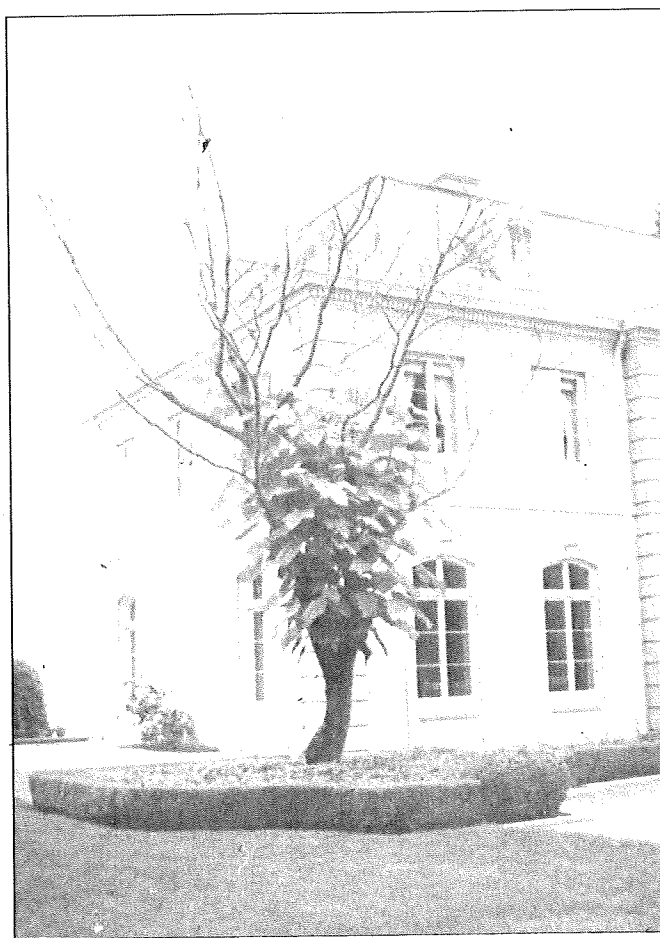
Plans for the installation of the

Heather Garden are still set for the summer of 1993, thus allowing the Shasta daisy display to continue for another season. As of now, the various varieties of heather are doing well in the holding beds.

EMPRESS TREE

Alas, the Empress Tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*) outside the Visitor Center, is showing laborious stress resulting from the transplanting of such a large specimen. We plan to contact the plant broker from whom we purchased the tree to come up with alternatives in the event of its demise. Presently, we are taking a wait and see attitude. As you pass by the tree, please give it words of encouragement!

Empress Tree struggling.



PMO Photo

Resource

NEW FACES

Sandy Gamman, who now serves as Administrative Assistant here at the Reserve, is doing a good job of sorting out the many details of her new position. We welcome Sandy and know that by the end of the summer, she will be fully initiated into the activity here at the Reserve!

VISITOR RESPONSE

It is a tribute to the long years of dreaming and planning which accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Bloedel's stewardship of this property that the comments in the guest book so closely reflect appreciation for the values that led to the creation of the Bloedel Reserve.

Visitors from 28 states and 30 foreign countries (Yugoslavia, Peru, Israel, Argentina, Columbia, Kenya, Russia, Japan, Egypt, Poland, Hungary, The Solomon Islands, Austria, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Scandinavia...), have noted their feelings.

Typical of the comments made in our Guest Register:

- "A Jewel to behold"
- "The swans are magic"
- "A wonderful Legacy"
- "What a wonderful thing to share! Many thanks to the Bloedels"
- "A horticulturist's dream"
- "A masterpiece...true appreciation and cooperation with nature".
- "Peaceful"
- "Wonderful"
- "Beautiful"
- "Thank you"

ANNUAL PASS

Questions are still asked regarding the nature of our Annual Pass and it seems appropriate to mention a few of the parameters. A Pass enables the

holder and up to three guests to visit the Reserve an unlimited number of times for one year. We do ask that reservations be made for each visit and recommend calling well in advance if possible. The Pass is not transferable; the Pass Holder must accompany their guests. As a member you will receive periodic newsletters, notification of special events and be entitled to a 10% discount on our book and video.

There are a few guidelines that we would like to bring to your attention so that you will be knowledgeable about our policies.

We do not allow picnicking anywhere on the grounds.

Pets must be left at home but dog guides are welcome.

Because delicate plant materials grow very near trail edges, please make every effort to walk only on the trails.

To compliment your walk, there are interpretive materials available in the Gate House at no charge.

We do look forward to having you visit often.

SWANS

Our "Name the Tundra Swans" program for island first grade classes turned out to be a most enjoyable adventure. The schools received the effort warmly and teachers contributed a great deal by preparing the students before the presentation and by

following up with appropriate activities. The students quickly learned "swan vocabulary", what a fragile habitat and protected species meant and how swans behaved as they fed, protected and cared for themselves.

Following the visits, we received over 200 suggestions for names that would fit our two Tundra Swans. The task of selecting just two names from so many creative ideas was a difficult one, but we finally settled on Serena for the pen and White Glider for the cob. The couple appear to be increasingly comfortable in their new Mid Pond home.

PROGRAM

One of the challenges of offering programs at the Reserve is to allow the gardens to remain the principle focus for the visitor and to avoid introducing a level of activity that might become a distraction or preoccupation. Still, it is appropriate that the Reserve find some definition as a resource to the community.

Consequently, each year great care and deliberation go into a review of the previous year's program to be sure that the effect has been to enhance the garden experience and not to detract from it. So far, comments from those who have participated would seem to suggest that such events as evening walks, information sessions and seasonal offerings of a

variety of artistic performances have been positive additions to the garden experience. Our perception matches that view, so we hope to continue to offer program opportunities at the Reserve.

Blakely first graders enjoy learning about swans.



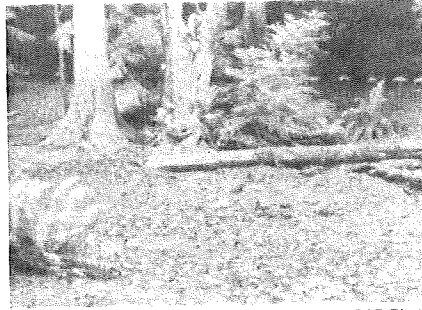
PMO Photo

aspect appealed to Mr. Bloedel the most-- exhibiting the huckleberries or developing a display of moss.

By November 1982, the first sweep to remove existing vegetation (salmonberry, lady fern, horsetail and salal) was completed. By the end of that year all trees were surveyed again and assessed for retention or removal. It was necessary to remove several trees, to open the space to light and movement. Trees smaller than six inches in trunk diameter were the first to go. Once the smaller saplings and seedlings were gone, we carefully selected a few larger trees, mostly red alder, to remove. Recognizing the fact that with such clearings dead trees and snags are the first to go, we decided to create snags for follow-on generations of woodpeckers and cavity nesting birds. About six relatively mature alders were selected for removal, but rather than remove the entire tree, we cut them off about 12-15 feet above the ground, leaving a most interesting display of tall, branchless trunks. Some visitors found this exhibit rather bizarre. Soon, however, the birds found the dying stumps and began to take them apart. With rare exception, the only plants left growing below the remaining trees were occasional sword ferns, the huckleberries, deer ferns, and a few skunk cabbages.

We knew that the task of establishing a sizable display of moss would not be easy nor fast. Fortunately, we had some experience to call upon from our effort to create a small mossy area just west of the Guest House and east of the Entry Drive bridge. In that area, we discovered that if one planted enough Irish moss (*Sagina subulata*) and tended it as though it were true moss, moss would invade it and ultimately take it over. In the interim, the fast growing Irish moss looks enough like true moss that for most viewers, the difference is barely noticed. Based upon that experience, we decided to repeat the treatment and ordered 2,200 flats of Irish moss from Skagit Gardens (Mt. Vernon, WA) for

delivery in the spring of 1983. Additionally, plans called for acquisition of a significant number (200+-) of Hercules' Walkingstick (*Aralia spinosa*). These trees would be used to provide an intermediate canopy of shade for the moss, above the huckleberries and below the remaining native trees. We



RAB Photo

275,000 *Sagina* plugs were planted.

soon discovered that few nurseries offer the plant, but by using local and out-of-state sources, we were able to collect about 100 specimens. As it turned out, some of these turned out to be Devil's Club (*Oplopanax horridum*) and many were later identified as the Asian species (*Aralia elata*).

The only other plantings of note were a few native conifers (western red cedar, western hemlock) added in those parts of the feature where only alders grew. The intent was to create a feeling of movement of species. Where conifers were the dominant plants on one side of the space and alders on the other, we added a few conifers to the alder side suggesting that these new conifers were "pioneers" into the deciduous stand.

To mask the clipped yew hedge at the Reflection Garden from view of visitors entering the Moss garden, 36 new English yews (*Taxus baccata*) were planted just outside the entry and exit to the Reflection Garden. These new yews would not be clipped, but rather allowed to grow in an open, loose manner so as not to communicate any maintenance messages to visitors prior to their actual entry into the Reflection Garden space. It was our intent that the element of surprise experienced

upon entering that highly ordered "room" be as intense as possible.

With the decision to change our consulting Landscape Architect, in the spring of 1983, all landscaping projects were put on hold pending counsel with the new consulting designer. An exception to this directive was the Moss Garden project where approval to install a new pathway through the space was granted in order to complete the project. We had initially envisioned a trail that might enter the garden from the northwest side (from the meadow) rather than from the previous entrance adjacent to the driveway. Attempts to layout such a trail were being tested at the time design changes came to a stop. The trail built accommodated existing uses. Fortunately, that course later proved compatible with the adopted Master Plan for Development (1986).

The conversion of the space from a second growth forest thoroughly undergrown by salmonberry to a moss garden was not an easy one from a maintenance standpoint. Weeding requirements were excessive to control germinating salmonberry, salmonberry root sprouts, and horsetail. And although it continues to be a space of rather heavy maintenance demands, it stands today as essentially the same space as when first planted. No adjustments have been needed; no plants were moved or removed. Mr. Bloedel's vision has, so far, survived a brief test of time. The huckleberries that were to be the focus of the garden have gently blended into the mix of trees. The Aralias, by their massive, compound leaves and wiry stalks add more than shade. It is the moss, however, added to accent the huckleberries, that has become the feature of the garden, softening all the intrusive acts of man, pulling it all together, making it all seem so much more mature than it really is.

Richard A. Brown

1. Dietrich, William E. "Report on the Proposed Development of the Room Area of the Bloedel Reserve". August 21, 1978.



Award

To honor the memory of Virginia Merrill Bloedel (1902-1989), the Virginia Merrill Bloedel Lecture Series was established this year.

The lecture program was established to recognize and to promote the accomplishments of individuals who have contributed to the welfare of nature or humanity or to the advancement of science or understanding, that others may learn and benefit by these achievements.

This year's Lecture Fellow was Randall Grayson Arendt, an internationally regarded rural/urban planner, who spoke to the issue of "The Declining Quality in the Experience of Landscape".

Mr. Arendt described how, through a lack of appropriate zoning and community design standards, our landscape, as seen from the auto has deteriorated. He showed many pictures illustrating how communities have preserved the quality of roadside vistas by innovative zoning practices.

Following his presentation at the Reserve, Mr. Arendt conducted a two-day workshop on Open Space Preservation for City of

Bainbridge Island planning staff, Park District personnel, developers and representatives of island special interest groups. Nearly 150

people participated in this workshop hosted by the Bloedel Reserve. In response to this two-day session, the City of Bainbridge Island has engaged Mr. Arendt as a consultant to develop open space zoning policies for the island.

Mr. Arendt has engaged as a consultant to develop open space zoning policies for the island.

Surely the Virginia Merrill Bloedel Lecture Series has been and will continue to be an ongoing and strong resource for the community.

Randall G. Arendt



PMO Photo



Lecture Fellow

Purchase an annual pass to the Bloedel Reserve and receive the following membership benefits:

- Periodic Newsletters
- Notification of events
- 10% off *The Bloedel Reserve: Gardens in the Forest*
- 10% off *The Bloedel Reserve Video*
- Unlimited visits to the Reserve with up to three guests; reservations necessary.

Cost: \$25 per year.
 Hours: Business: 9-5 Mon-Fri
 Visitor: 10-4 Wed-Sun
 Fees: General Admission \$4
 Seniors \$2
 Children under 5 free

Reservations: (206) 842-7631 V/TDD

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