Over the past year, many physical changes have taken place in the Arboretum, particularly with the continued construction of the Arboretum Loop Trail. But we’ve also been developing our living collections, by adding new plantings around the park and acquiring other specimens related to the trail project.

Loop Trail Plans
As curator, I’ve spent much of 2017 planning for the planting that will occur along the Loop Trail after the completion of major construction. A primary focus has been the area at the south end of the Arboretum, where the trail crosses through the future Pacific Connections China and Chilean forests. At these intersections, we have begun planting trees, shrubs and perennials native to south-central Chile and to Mount Emei, in the Sichuan Province of China.

Over the last two years, I have developed species lists for the intersections and have been acquiring plants from local nurseries and specialists. These include several of the 20 plus species of rhododendrons native to Mount Emei, as well as plants grown from wild-collected seed, such as Sorbus, Berberis and Emmenopterys henryi. The latter tree was described by plant explorer Ernest Henry Wilson as one of the “most strikingly beautiful trees of Chinese forests.” It typically takes decades to flower in cultivation and rarely does; however, it is worth growing for the leaves alone, which are large and emerge in hues of red and copper-red.

As I write this review, in late October, trail construction is close to complete, and we hope to begin planting the Pacific Connections areas in earnest soon. The planting of other areas along the trail depends somewhat on ensuring that the impacts of construction on the soil have been mitigated.

However, look for new plantings at the north end of the Arboretum, on the large bank north-east of the Wilcox Bridge and at the north end of East Foster Island Road. These will be a mix
of rhododendrons; viburnums; smaller, mostly shrubby oaks; and other mostly spring- and summer-flowering shrubs. One specimen tree that I’m particularly excited about is *Quercus hypoleucoides*, the silverleaf oak. It’s an evergreen species native to higher elevations in the south-western United States and Mexico, and it bears dark-green, lance-shaped leaves with silver-white undersides. We currently have one in the Oak Collection, not far from the bridge, but it is in too much shade. The new tree will be planted in a sunnier location by the trail to the north of the bridge, so it should do much better—and it will be easier to see and enjoy.

There will also be new plantings at the south end of the trail, southeast of the Stone Cottage. The areas at the cottage, and those to the north of the bridge, are prominently located along the roads through the Arboretum and will be planted with trees and shrubs that were propagated from existing collections by the Port Townsend-based nursery Far Reaches Farm in the early stages of the project.

Look for other new plantings in the viburnum and oak collection areas as well. We anticipate planting will continue along the newly opened trail through spring and into the fall of 2018.

### Mitigation Plantings

Ohno Construction completed the wetland mitigation plantings of native species along the new Loop Trail in September, and these plants will be monitored for a year to assess establishment. Any plants that don’t make it through year one will be replaced as needed by Ohno.

I worked with the trail designer, the Berger Partnership, to diversify the typical palette seen in restoration plantings. As a result, many new species have been added to the Arboretum that were historically native to Seattle. These include star-flowered solomon’s-seal (*Maianthemum stellatum*), red columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), common camas (*Camassia quamash*), and many others. Most of the thousands of mitigation plantings are perennials and grasses, but look for dozens of new trees as well—such as vine maple (*Acer circinatum*), shore pine (*Pinus contorta* subsp. *contorta*), cascara (*Rhamnus purshiana*), and paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*).

In addition, several hundred conifers were planted by city contractors in the areas around the Washington Park Playfield. These trees will help restore the evergreen element to the matrix of second- and third-growth bigleaf maples, cottonwood and alder currently in that location.
While planning for the trail plantings has consumed much of our time in the last calendar year, we have made enhancements in several other areas of the Arboretum. Perhaps the largest and most noticeable is the Centennial Garden, a new display north of the large pond on Azalea Way, just below the Lookout Gazebo. Opened in mid-September, this garden was made possible by the Seattle Garden Club and celebrates the organization’s 100th anniversary in 2017. It continues the Club’s longtime support of the Arboretum and brings a splash of spring and summer color to the south end of Azalea Way.

More than 500 plants were added to new beds on the edge of the pond. The plantings echo the collections in adjacent Rhododendron Glen and Azalea Way and create a new ornamental destination garden in the Arboretum. Ericaceaeous plants include *Oxydendrum arboreum*, *Enkianthus campanulatus* ‘Showy Lantern’, and *Rhododendron* ‘Percy Wiseman’. Five varieties of hydrangea—along with sweeps of sarcococca, *Mahonia* (Berberis) ‘Soft Caress’, *Hakonechloa macra* ‘All Gold’, and *Rosa Flower Carpet® Amber*—add color and texture. New trees, such as *Magnolia virginiana* and *Acer japonicum* ‘Meigetsu’, provide seasonal color and structure.

**Centennial Garden Specimens**

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**Hydrangeas in the Camellia Collection**

In the Camellia Collection, just north of the New Zealand Forest, we completed the removal and pruning of some large conifers in order to provide more light to existing camellias, stewartias and magnolias. We opened up overgrown beds, reestablished lawn areas, and planted dozens of new plants. Among these were a few camellia cultivars, but most of the new plantings were of several hydrangea species and cultivars that had been acquired largely through donation over the previous two years.
Because of its well-drained, loamy soil and existing irrigation infrastructure, the camellia section is perfect for growing hydrangeas, so we expanded the hydrangea collection in this area (which merges with the main hydrangea collection in Rhododendron Glen) to showcase more of these summer-interest plants. In the first phase of planting this past year, the species *Hydrangea aspera* and *H. hirta* were added, along with many cultivars of *Hydrangea macrophylla* (both lace-cap and mophead selections), *H. serrata*, *H. paniculata*, and *H. quercifolia*. We will begin a second phase of planting in the spring of 2018.

**Stewartia Supplemented**

The Arboretum has an extensive collection of *Stewartia*, most of which are dispersed throughout the Camellia Collection, including along the path where the camellias merge with the New Zealand Forest. This year we added an unusual shrubby specimen with multiple stems—likely a form of *Stewartia monadelpha*—to the collection in this area.

At the other end of the Arboretum, in a prominent location at the very north tip of Azalea Way, we planted another stewartia, this one a beautiful young *S. pseudocamellia* tree. Donated to us by a Seattle homeowner who was redeveloping property but wanted to preserve the plant, it is located in the bed directly across from the Visitors Center and replaces a magnolia tree that died a couple of years ago. It will bear beautiful white and yellow flowers in June and stunning orange-red foliage in fall.

**Pacific Connections**

In the Pacific Connections Garden, additional plantings of *Corokia cotoneaster*, *Halocarpus bidwillii*, and *Melicytus angustifolius* helped fill in areas in the New Zealand Forest. Across Arboretum Drive, the area around the patterned screen at the vehicle turnaround was renovated with plants of Australian origin. *Leptospermum grandiflorum*, *L. namadgiensis*, and *L. rupestre ‘Squiggly’* will help soften the screen and the infrastructure behind it, as well as provide a textural and floriferous presence of their own.

In the Australian Entry Garden, we planted the eye-catching shrubs royal grevillea (*Grevillea victoriae*), with its pendant, orange flower...
clusters, and *Eucryphia lucida ‘Spring Grow’,* boasting glossy, variegated foliage and fragrant, white flowers. In the Cascadia Entry Garden, several new cultivars of Pacific Coast Iris hybrids were added. These irises have proven to be exciting new plants for Northwest gardens, offering brilliant spring blooms in many shades and requiring very little maintenance.

To add diversity to the Cascadia Entry Garden, we also added some manzanita (*Arctostaphylos*) selections and a new cultivar of the mountain hemlock, *Tsuga mertensiana ‘Bump’s Blue’,* which grows slowly and bears lovely, powder-blue foliage. In the Cascadia Forest, we planted *Calycanthus occidentalis, Garrya fremontii, Lonicera conjugalis,* and *Ceanothus thyrsiflorus,* along with the camas species *Camassia quamash* and *C. leichtlinii.*

**Other Additions**

In the Witt Winter Garden, *Arctostaphylos densiflora ‘Howard McMinn’, Edgeworthia chrysantha, Callicarpa bodinieri var. geraldii ‘Profusion’, and Thuja japonica ‘Nana’* were planted to bring further seasonal interest. We planted *Acer caudatifolium,* a stripebark maple species with brilliant-red new growth, at the south end of the garden overlooking the Woodland Garden. In the Woodland Garden, we added *Corylopsis pauciflora* and several *Rhododendron yuefengense—a promising, medium-sized, pink-flowered species that is fairly new to cultivation.*

Just south of the Graham Visitors Center, several large shrubby species were planted where the large row of Leyland cypress (*× Cuprocyparis leylandii*) were removed last year. Here you can now find *Aesculus parvifolia f. serotina, Cryptomeria japonica ‘Dacrydioides’, and Cotinus obovatus.*

We planted out three true firs grown from wild-collected seed. We added the endangered Ziyuan fir (*Abies ziyuanensis*) from China to the Pinetum, the Taiwanese species *A. kawakamii* to the true fir section north of Rhododendron Glen, and *Abies squamata—a species from the Tibetan Plateau—to the Sino–Himalayan hillside south of the Rhododendron Hybrid Garden. We also planted a large specimen of *Cryptomeria japonica ‘Cristata’* in the south Pinetum, and several other trees and shrubs, large and small, were added throughout the Arboretum.

The coming year promises to be an especially busy one on the planting front, and I’m very excited to see how all the new plantings perform. Come enjoy the new flora and observe the changes as we work to build on the Arboretum’s 80–plus years of collection development.

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