In the five years that I have been curator, 2018 was the most active in terms of new plantings in the Arboretum. A majority of these centered around the new Arboretum Loop Trail and adjacent areas, many of which were enhanced, rehabilitated and augmented. We also made improvements to a few other collection and garden areas with individual and smaller plantings. Following is a summary of some of the more noticeable new plantings you might encounter during your next visit.

Four new Yoshino cherry trees have been planted along Azalea Way.
Arboretum Entrance

Perhaps the most obvious major planting occurred in March, just north of the Graham Visitors Center, with the creation of a new, large bed at the southeast corner of the intersection of Arboretum Drive and Foster Island Road. This intersection changed a lot as part of the Loop Trail construction—with the addition of new curbs and crosswalks—and we wanted to create a fitting entrance to the Arboretum at its north end. The new planting was also intended to alleviate some of the soil compaction and social trails that had developed on the east side of Arboretum Drive during trail construction. What’s more, we wanted to encourage pedestrians to use the new gravel trail on the west side of the Drive to connect from the lower parking lots to the Visitors Center—rather than walk in the road.

The plantings were designed to provide lots of floral and textural interest, and to preview the collections farther along Arboretum Drive and Azalea Way. To that end, we added two *Rhododendron* cultivars—‘Teddy Bear’ and ‘Yaku Sunrise’—along with *Acer shirasawanum* ‘Jordan’, a golden-foliaged selection of the full moon maple from Japan. At the south edge of the bed, we added fragrant plants that can handle drier conditions, including the November-blooming, bamboo-leaved false-holly (*Osmanthus heterophyllus* ‘Sasaba’) and the winter-blooming *Sarcococca ruscifolia*. Both provide attractive evergreen foliage and pleasing scents. To help fill in the background, we planted *Camellia japonica* ‘Showa-no-hikari’, an unusual Japanese camellia that produces large, pink-and-white single flowers in March.

Two specimens of mountain pepper—*Tasmannia (Drimys) lanceolata*—flank the entry sign. Native to woodlands and cool temperate rainforests in southeastern Australia, these shrubs flower in April and May but are grown primarily for their red stems and narrow, dark evergreen foliage. Adjacent to the parking lot, we planted several dwarf Hiba cedars (*Thujopsis dolabrata* ‘Nana’), which—with their wide, soft, textural foliage—look like a cross between a

**TOP:** The new planting bed at the main entrance to the Arboretum.

**CENTER:** Two new mountain peppers, from Australia, were planted in the entrance bed.

**BOTTOM:** More than 80 new azaleas were planted at the south end of Azalea Way. Other additions include disease-resistant dogwood cultivars.
western red cedar and a juniper. Finally, we added sword ferns along the edges of the bed to provide some Northwest flavor—and also because they are so adaptable.

**Azalea Way South Entry**

Another highly noticeable project was the recent renovation of a large bed at the south end of Azalea Way, where the historic promenade intersects with the Loop Trail by the newly daylighted Arboretum Creek. This area was regraded during trail construction in order to merge the two pathways. It is very visible, not just from the trail intersection, but also from the expanded Birch Parking Lot nearby. Flanked by a very large river birch (*Betula nigra*), the area is now one of the busier entrances to the Arboretum.

Once trail construction was finished and native plantings were installed along the creek banks, the intersection of Azalea Way and the trail was ready for a major refresh. A generous gift from Arboretum Foundation Unit 26, based on Bainbridge Island, made it possible. In September, we decompacted the ground, which had been damaged by construction staging, and we brought in new soil to create a planting berm. The berm will help with drainage and plant establishment, while subtly framing this new entrance to Azalea Way.

We planted more than 80 azaleas—comprising seven varieties. I wanted to honor the original design intent of Azalea Way by adding a mix of colorful and fragrant deciduous azaleas with a long bloom sequence. I was also interested in using varieties that weren’t already in the collection. Other plants in the bed include some young dogwood trees.

The original Olmsted plan for Azalea Way called for a foreground of azaleas along the path, with other spring-flowering trees providing the mid-ground to a backdrop of large evergreen conifers. The initial planting included dozens of flowering cherries, but also numerous magnolias, dogwoods, and other small trees. Azalea Way has lost many of its eastern and native Pacific dogwoods since the devastating arrival of anthracnose in the 1970s, so I chose two new hybrids between the Pacific dogwood (*Cornus nuttallii*) and the anthracnose-resistant Kousa dogwood (*Cornus kousa*) to try to bring back some of the original Olmsted design intent. We have been pleased with an earlier planting (in 2016) of one of the cultivars, *Cornus STARLIGHT®*, and I was eager to add more of this and similar hybrids that have shown superior resistance to the fungus.

We also planted the very unusual *Houdendron tibeticum*, an evergreen member of the styrax family (Styracaceae) that features peeling, ornamental bark once it matures. This is the first time we’ve grown the species in the Arboretum; our specimen was donated by Portland’s Hoyt Arboretum last year. We also planted a large *Rhododendron simsii* that plantsman Dan Hinkley donated earlier this year. It was a plant that Dan grew from seed he collected in China. The white to dark-red flowering species is a parent of many

Two new *Azara microphylla* have been added to the Loop Trail planting next to the Stone Cottage and will provide a fragrant flower show in winter.
of the azalea hybrids that have been used in cultivar development over the years.

It will be exciting to see how this bed matures and develops in the coming years.

**Loop Trail: Stone Cottage Section**

In January, we installed a new planting along the Loop Trail just northeast of the Stone Cottage. This area already featured two sizable boxleaf azara (*Azara microphylla*) trees but was otherwise largely denuded, aside from a few sparse older rhododendron cultivars and an Oregon myrtle (*Umbellularia californica*). To the east there is a very large Chilean myrtle (*Luma apiculata*), likely planted decades ago. Given the three sizable Chilean specimens and the area’s proximity to the Gateway to Chile, I designed a planting around this theme.

We installed several new *Luma apiculata*, which is a large evergreen shrub with orange-brown bark that grows to up to 20 feet tall and produces late summer flowers, followed by black berries. These specimens will provide a screen of the neighbor’s fence and a backdrop to other plantings. Also planted were two new *Azara microphylla* for additional height. In addition, we planted a number of Chilean hard fern, *Blechnum chilense* (which will form robust clumps of evergreen foliage with new growth of reddish bronze), as well as *Gaultheria mucronata* (formerly *Pernettya*) that will provide winter interest with its pink berries and small evergreen foliage.

We added two small Chilean fire trees (*Embothrium coccineum*) to provide brilliant, orange-red flower color in late spring—though this species can be finicky to establish. We also planted *Eucryphia × nymansensis* ‘Mt. Usher’, a tall, multi-stemmed shrub that’s sadly under-used in horticulture. A hybrid of two hardy Chilean species, it puts on a stunning show of large, fragrant, white flowers in August.

**Loop Trail: Pacific Connections Section**

Farther north along the trail, on the other side of Arboretum Drive, we restored a section of the Gateway to Chile. Here we added additional *Blechnum chilense* and *Gunnera magellanica*, a diminutive relative of the much larger Chilean rhubarb (*Gunnera tinctoria*) that acts as a deciduous groundcover. We also installed another *Eucryphia × nymansensis* ‘Mt. Usher’.

Along the trail at the west edge of the Cascadia Forest, we restored a slope with drought-tolerant native shrubs, including red-flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum*), oceanspray (*Holodiscus discolor*), and a selection of *Arctostaphylos × media*—a neat, compact, naturally occurring hybrid form of manzanita—called ‘Martha Ewan’. 
Down the hill from Cascadia, we installed additional Chilean species at the edge of the future Chilean Forest. Among these were more *Blechnum chilense*, along with Chilean lantern tree (*Crinodendron hookerianum*) and winter’s bark (*Drimys winteri var. chilensis*)—all planted on the western slope down off the trail. On the east side of the trail, three monkey puzzle (*Araucaria araucana*) were planted, and we expect them to do better in this location—with its well-drained soils—than the trees planted in the Gateway to Chile in 2010. We also planted another *Azara microphylla*, along with two other members of the genus: toothed azara (*Azara dentata*) and lanceleaf azara (*Azara lanceolata*), the latter of which was grown from seed collected in the wild and donated to us by Dan Hinkley. Fragrant like their cousin *Azara microphylla* (which is a star of our Witt Winter Garden), *A. dentata* and *A. lanceolata* have much larger leaves and bigger yellow flowers.

In the scree slope along this section of trail, we added Chilean rhubarb, *Blechnum chilense* and several relatively uncommon species. These species include boldo (*Peumus boldus*), a broad-leaf evergreen with medium-sized, rounded leaves; maqui, or Chilean wineberry (*Aristotelia chilensis*), a small evergreen tree with handsome, red leaf stalks and purple–black berries; *Myrceugenia chrysocarpa*, a smaller–growing, evergreen myrtle family member; and prickly myrtle (*Rhaphithamnus spinosus*), a broadleaf evergreen with spiny stems and purple berries.

Farther north and downhill along the trail, we planted both sides with species native to Emei Shan (Mount Emei) to provide an early look at the future China Forest planned for this area. Several *Rhododendron* species were added, from the relatively small statured *R. williamsianum* to the almost tree–like *R. calophytum*. We interspersed the rhododendrons with *Sorbus setschwanensis*, *Tsuga dumosa*, *Acer davidii* and *Schefflera delavayi*, as well as two *Mahonia* species native to the mountain: *Mahonia gracilipes* and *Berberis* (Mahonia) *eurybracteata*. In the wild, these two mahonias hybridize naturally, and we are growing several seedlings of the hybrid in our nursery to plant out in the coming years. The seedlings came to us courtesy of the Elizabeth Miller Botanical Garden, and they display an interesting mix of the characteristics from both species.
In all, 100 plants representing over 45 species were planted along this stretch of the trail. Considering Emei Shan features over 3000 species, we have only scratched the surface of the floral richness possible in the future forest planting.

Lake Washington Boulevard Corridor

In recent months, we began a major refresh of the Viburnum Collection along the Loop Trail, and we expect to add many new plantings in this area in the coming year. It’s part of a larger restoration of the Lake Washington Boulevard corridor, made possible by a generous private gift to the Arboretum Foundation. The project will include the installation of new native and collection plantings along Arboretum Creek, on the west side of the Boulevard, as well as new plantings in more areas along the Loop Trail—including on the eastern slope of Yew Hill and in the Oak Collection.

At the new Boyer Street entrance to the Loop Trail, we planted several *Arbutus unedo* ‘Compacta’ to help screen the rather stark railing along the sidewalk leading to the bridge over Arboretum Creek. This smaller variety of the strawberry tree is a tough evergreen with November flowers and strawberry-like fruits that are at their showiest in the fall. Here also we planted three California lilac cultivars (*Ceanothus* ‘Midnight Magic’) to provide a lower screen closer to the road and some vivid bloom in late spring.

Additional plantings in this area include red-flowering currant and a variety of Siebold’s crabapple (*Malus sieboldii* ‘Fuji’). The effort to brighten up some of the plantings along Lake Washington Boulevard will continue in the years to come.

Pacific Connections Garden

In the Pacific Connections Garden, we added new plantings to the New Zealand and Australian Entry Gardens. In New Zealand, we are trialing *Pittosporum crassicaule*, a distinctly small-leaved and finely textured broadleaf evergreen, and we added additional examples of tauhinu (*Ozothamnus leptophyllus*) and the daisy bush *Olearia × haastii*. The latter will thrive in the drier soils of the entry garden and offer attractive foliage and summer flowers.

In Australia, we have refreshed the garden with additional plantings of royal grevillea (*Grevillea victoriae*), tonghi bottlebrush (*Callistemon subulatus*), and leatherwood (*Eucryphia lucida*). Because the already established *Eucalyptus* species in the garden were rather severely leaning toward available afternoon sun, we opened up some space to the east to give the plantings more light earlier in the day.

We removed a relatively young western red cedar and replaced it with a young alpine snow gum (*Eucalyptus pauciflora* ssp. *niphophila*) and a huon pine (*Lagarostrobus franklinii*)—a Tasmanian conifer that can live to great age. A podocarp rather than a true pine, *L. franklinii* tolerates
having its feet wet and is planted near a seasonally wet area along the Broadmoor fence. We are also trialing the small-leaved evergreen shrub *Baeckea gunniana* here to see if it would be a good choice for this tough spot. By the vehicle turnaround, we planted a candlebark (*Eucalyptus rubida*), and we’ll continue to enhance this area with additional Australian plants in the coming years.

In a section of the future China Forest that faces onto Lake Washington Boulevard, we planted trees, shrubs and vines to screen a large, concrete retaining wall, built to support the Loop Trail. Look for new specimens of *Stachyurus*, birchleaf viburnum (*Viburnum betulifolium*), *Ilex aff. fargesii*, and climbing hydrangea (*Hydrangea anomala*). Where the Gateway to Chile begins at the south end of the wall, we added the conifers Prince Albert yew (*Saxegothaea conspicua*) and willow-leaf podocarp (*Podocarpus salignus*). Farther north on the trail—where it intersects with the service road going down the Boulevard—additional Chinese species such as *Ilex ciliospinosa*, *Tetracentron sinense*, *Clethra fargesii*, and various rhododendrons are among the new plants added.

**New Cherries, Rhodies and More**

Other notable changes in the Arboretum include plantings at the East Newton Street Entrance, which connects the south Pinetum with the Montlake neighborhood to the west. Plantings include the compact oakleaf hydrangea selection *Hydrangea quercifolia* ‘Pee Wee’, along with the false holly *Osmanthus heterophyllus* ‘Purpureus’, two varieties of Japanese cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*), and a *Chamaecyparis obtusa* ‘Nana Lutea’. We are also using this sunny spot to try out the Catalina ironwood, *Lyonothamnus floribundus* ssp. *asplenifolius*. Endemic to the Channel Islands of California, this unusual broadleaf evergreen has a narrow habit and peeling bark with age. It requires good drainage and light exposure.

In the Puget Sound Rhododendron Hybridizers Garden, we added new cultivars from Frank Fujioka, a prolific hybridizer of the last 30 years. We hope to continue to add many of the outstanding hybrids developed by local breeders in the next few years. To the east, in the Asiatic maple section, we planted a new *Acer japonicum* ‘Aconitifolium’ as part of an example bed begun last year. In my opinion, the cultivar offers one of the best coloring and longest—lasting foliar displays of any small tree.

Along Azalea Way, four new Yoshino cherries (*Prunus × yedoensis*) were planted, bringing the story of their provenance full circle. The new plants were propagated from cuttings taken from trees on the University of Washington’s Liberal Arts Quadrangle several years ago. The Quadrangle trees were originally moved to the campus from the Arboretum in 1962, having been displaced by the construction of the SR 520 highway. The new trees were part of a batch being grown for the UW at a local nursery and that had gotten too big to be held there any longer. Several were planted on campus, but four were donated to the Arboretum. The original trees, planted just east of Montlake Boulevard East—in the old “Canal Reserve” section of the Arboretum—predate the Olmsted Brothers plan of 1936. It is likely that these trees were planted in 1935 under the curatorship of Frederick Leissler, assistant director of the Arboretum, before permanent accession and planting records were kept in the Arboretum. It is fitting that their progeny are back in the Arboretum once more.

It is an exciting time in the Arboretum. We are grateful to the many donations of plants from local collectors and growers and for support from friends like you. We hope that you will come and enjoy the new additions, and we look forward to watching them grow and mature. Thank you, as always, for your continued support of the Arboretum.

Ray Larson is curator of Living Collections at the University of Washington Botanic Gardens and curator of the Otis Douglas Hyde Herbarium, the Arboretum’s herbarium housed in the Center for Urban Horticulture.