“The Garden is a botanical treasure and valuable green space that attracts a wide variety of people with varying interests from around Portland, the country, and the world.”

Leach Botanical Garden Master Plan

Leach Garden Friends
Business Plan Executive Summary
2011 - 2015
Leach Garden Friends maintains and enhances Leach Botanical Garden’s living collections of plants for the purposes of education, research and conservation, and preserves the legacy of the Garden’s founders, John and Lilla Leach.
OVERVIEW

History of Leach Botanical Garden

- John and Lilla Leach purchased and built their home, a large manor house, in the 1930s in Outer Southeast Portland on 122nd Avenue just south of Foster Road.
- Lilla Leach was a trained botanist devoted to expeditions of plant discovery.
- John’s interest in plants was rooted in his profession as a pharmacist.
- Over the years, the couple gathered a unique and diverse botanical collection around which they built the Garden.
- John was a talented metal artist and his work adds a special flavor throughout the Garden.
- Other notable features of the Garden include a paved terrace, a frame “carriage house”, and a picturesque stone cabin on Johnson Creek, a significant urban watershed.
- The six acre Upper Garden on the north includes a frame house, a cottage, and the greenhouse/nursery as well as tool and storage sheds and open meadows.
- A six acre parcel of undeveloped and wooded riparian area straddles the Creek east of the original Leach property.
- Through a series of acquisitions, the Garden has grown from its original four and a half acres to nearly seventeen acres today.
- The Leachs’ will left the property to the City of Portland.

Background on Leach Garden Friends

- Leach Garden Friends was incorporated as a non-profit in 1981 to honor the Leachs’ legacy, tell their story, and share the Garden and its collections with the public.
- Leach Garden Friends has operated Leach Botanical Garden in partnership with Portland Parks and Recreation (PP&R) since 1983.
- The organization began as a small volunteer group; today its small staff is augmented by nearly one hundred active volunteers who provide over 8,000 hours of service annually.
- The LGF annual budget is nominally $250,000 including capital replacement and reserve.
- The administrative offices are located on the upper level of the Garden at 6550 SE 122nd & Claybourne.

Products, Services & Support

- Leach Garden is open to the public six days a week, year round.
- The Manor House and adjacent terrace are regularly used for rental activities ranging from weddings to classes and cultural presentations.
- Leach Garden Friends receives about forty five percent of its revenue from Portland Parks & Recreation, in addition to the City’s expenditures for major maintenance.
- Rentals generate approximately one fourth of the operating revenue.
- Donations (14%), class fees (3%), gift shop sales (3%) and special events (10%) comprise the balance of the organization’s annual revenue.
- Classes and activities for adults and children are offered in the Manor House, seasonally in the Upper Garden, and at other sites around the premises.
- Classes focus on botany, horticulture, gardening, arts and environmental subjects. The annual Nature Fair draws families from surrounding neighborhoods.
- Half a dozen annual events raise funds for the Garden. Events range from a Plant Sale and Holiday Bazaar to a series of English Teas.
- A volunteer run Gift Shop is open whenever the Garden is open.
- Garden staff propagate plants from the botanical collection for sale.
- The Garden has two endowed funds held by Oregon Community Foundation.
- The Garden banks with US Bank and has both checking and savings accounts.
- Grants from other public and private philanthropic sources have supported specific projects.
BACKGROUND

The Garden opened thirty years ago under management of Leach Garden Friends non-profit. In its early years, almost all functions were carried out by volunteers with few paid staff. Many volunteers had known the Leachs personally and were passionate about carrying forward their legacy. Early energy was supplemented by planning commitment and help from Portland Parks & Recreation (PP & R). The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) provided Museum Assessment (MAP) and Collection Assessment (CAP) accreditation. The Junior League became involved and provided energy and funding for a highly acclaimed education program. Over the next decade and a half, improvements were made to the Manor House and funds were raised to pave the adjacent terrace. Volunteers raised enough money to buy land for a parking lot. A botanical collection assessment was undertaken at least twice. Beginning in the Nineties, PP&R and METRO acquired adjacent properties to expand the Garden. Paid staff became more significant in the Garden’s operation. Although volunteers remained essential, many original friends of the Leachs were no longer involved and the volunteer corps was unable to adapt without help to the demands of the modern business environment.

External changes in people’s leisure time activities and the demographics of the community contributed to ups and downs in the use of the Garden. Over time participation from groups such as garden clubs and contributions from donors and philanthropic sources also shifted as the organization’s energy and focus changed.

In 2006 and 2007 the City led development of a new Master Plan for the Garden to encompass the growth in the property and to look forward to serving a broader range of people as a unique Portland amenity.

Portland City Council’s approval of the Master Plan for Leach Garden in September 2010 combined with the inclusion of the Garden in the Lents Urban Renewal Area provided a framework and impetus to develop the newer parts of the Garden. Changes, including development of a new, more visible entrance, expanded botanical displays and unique outdoor spaces, will increase the Garden’s opportunities to become more self-supporting.

The changes envisioned in the Master Plan are likely to increase the number of visitors to the Garden. That in turn will increase the need for staff, maintenance, supplies, and services. Increased visitation can also generate more resources to support Garden activities.

ANALYSIS

The Board of Directors has explored our assets, competencies, and the markets and audiences which are likely at the Garden and plan to move forward in three areas.

   - Develop the Upper Garden as a flexible and innovative outdoor platform for staging activities/classes based in our values. Design to take advantage of existing conditions.
   - Increase ability to accommodate ‘pure revenue’ activities whether fundraising events such as the English Teas, hosting of high value uses such as weddings, or licensing profit-making business activities such as “Leach Garden” brands as part of our redevelopment.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Program for the growing interest in nature-based activities and the interface between people and the environment.

2. Strengthen Attraction for Botanical and Horticultural Communities and Enthusiasts through Focus on the Garden’s Unique Collection.
   - Manage the Collection professionally with database software.
   - Develop targeted “demonstration areas” such as a Physic Garden grounded in the history of the Garden
   - Create new partnerships with institutions of higher learning
   - Provide a venue to increase public understanding of botany & natural sciences.

   - Increase marketing of activities and memberships for all Portlanders and specifically target immediate neighbors, businesses and institutions.
   - Develop strategic business relationships and grow the ‘Support the Businesses that Support Leach’ members and donors.
   - Develop key organizational partnerships based in related values and activities to increase public offerings, such as the co-location with Audubon Society.

The business focus for Leach Botanical Garden is based on the organization’s vision, articulated as an answer to the question:

What do we want Leach Garden to be?

- A botanical garden that features Oregon native plants and the historic Leach collection
- A horticultural resource for the public as well as for the serious gardener.
- A hands-on laboratory for environmental education that encourages engagement with the physical sciences
- A model and demonstration site of environmental sustainability
- A museum celebrating John & Lilla Leach and their contributions to Pacific Northwest botany and to the southeast Portland community
- A visitor attraction
- A place of beauty and respite

CONCLUSIONS

Because of its botanical collection as well as the Leachs’ place in Oregon history, the Garden is a unique treasure among Portland’s great public parks. Its location in Outer Southeast Portland makes it critically important in terms of equitable services to the local community which has few such cultural and park amenities nearby.

**We are a public garden and that is our most important role.** Equitable access to facilities like Leach Botanical Garden is essential for citizens of Outer Southeast Portland. Without question, potential for increased donations and membership from our immediate neighbors exists but our first relationship with the public is based on service. We are increasing the public capital resources in east Portland.
Opportunities for programs and partnerships exist in the Garden’s botanical collection. Enhancing elements of the collection, such as the Physic Garden which John created, not only stays close to the Leach legacy, but can also be a draw. Done with rigor, the Physic Garden provides potential ties to academia, whether as a teaching setting for understanding the traditional uses of herbal and medicinal plants or as a possible participant in the unfolding exploration of future medical or microbiological research. A close relationship with a university which encourages the use of Leach as a satellite campus for specific purposes has great potential. In addition to opportunities presented by the Physic Garden, John’s history as a metal artisan and the aesthetic qualities of the natural setting suggest programmatic opportunities in the arts.

The Garden and its collection, combined with flexible functionality in the spaces we design, offer other partner opportunities as well. The nursery industry is one of the largest in the state and the display of plants in our collection or that could be added to our collection might provide a basis for economic partnership. Equally, the tranquility of our setting (In the City: In the Woods) in close proximity to most of the urban population could allow us to host symposia in different disciplines. A discussion with Pacific NW College of Art, for example, surfaced a suggestion about high level symposia focusing on the changing interface between artists and the organic world around them. At the same time, design for such purposes would create spaces with utility for partnering with programs such as Outdoor School to provide new forms of delivering valuable learning to young people. The Garden can be a perfect setting in which to implement some of the goals of the Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan, as an example.

Pure revenue opportunities at the Garden factor into our plans as well. The Wedding and Event rentals here are a net positive revenue stream, but are limited by facility capacity and similar issues. Designing to mitigate those limitations where possible and creating more opportunity to sell to this market is essential. The increased flow of visitors to the Garden will increase our capacity to benefit from retail sales in the future, a purely profitable undertaking. A third revenue opportunity may lie in building on the popularity of products or services which fit who we are. The volunteer-led English Teas generate support for the Garden now but are limited by the capacity of the volunteer structure. We will explore whether models exist to expand such services and make them a Leach Garden standard. An important reason to examine these models lies in the reality that our volunteer driven events are limited by the ability of volunteers to run them.

NEXT STEPS

First steps in preparing for the changes envisioned in the Master Plan unfolded in the past year. In the year just ahead, we expect to translate the ideas laid out above into Phase One elements of Leach Garden’s renaissance. We expect to preserve and build on the legacy of John and Lilla Leach and the Garden’s botanical collection and grounds while making this special place one of Portland’s most treasured spots.

• Acquire and activate botanical collection management software.
• Develop a strategic partnership plan and strategies, particularly in the higher education arena.
• Enlist an economic and market analyst to review our identified program initiatives in more detail.
• Begin planning for a capital campaign that builds on our 30th Anniversary celebration.
Key Assumptions

Goals and strategies described in this plan are based on the following critical assumptions:

1. Funding from Portland Parks & Recreation will remain stable until completion of the new developments in the upper Garden, which are essential to increasing the Garden’s capacity to become more self-reliant. Reductions in the percentage of that funding as part of our overall budget will begin in the year following construction.

2. The Portland Development Commission will continue to commit funds for Leach Botanical Garden Phase I improvements as anticipated in the current Lents URA budget.
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