



DELAWARE
BOTANIC
GARDENS
AT PEPPER CREEK

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DELAWARE BOTANIC GARDENS

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2015 ANNUAL REPORT

For the Delaware Botanic Gardens, 2015 was the year that the project accelerated into passing gear, fueled by its first major foundation grants and joined by exceptional leaders from the fields of landscape and garden design and architecture.

The board of directors knew that 2015 was the right moment to apply for the garden's first major foundation grant. One reason was that in 2014 DBG had secured, for \$1 per year, long-term access to the project's 37-acre site, valued at more than \$1 million. Members of the board, guided by the regionally acclaimed fundraising consultant Cam Yorkston, wrote the first major grant application to one of the nation's philanthropic leaders, the Longwood Foundation. This process was challenging and demanding but ultimately rewarding.

In the fall 2015 grant cycle, DBG requested a Leadership Grant of \$1 million from the Longwood Foundation. In November 2015 the Longwood Foundation awarded the organization a grant of \$750,000, with a path to \$1.25 million. Using creative philanthropy, the Longwood Foundation trustees awarded an immediate \$500,000 and held in reserve an additional \$250,000, which will be provided when DBG meets a match challenge. To receive this last \$250,000, Delaware Botanic Gardens was challenged by Longwood to raise an additional \$500,000 in cash and pledges by March 2017. At the end of 2015, only six weeks after the grant was awarded, DBG had raised \$307,190, including additional foundation grants of \$75,000 from the Welfare Foundation, \$40,000 from the Marmot Foundation, and the first \$100,000 pledge. As of this annual report, DBG has raised \$370,498, putting it within \$130,000 of completing the Longwood challenge. All friends and supporters are being asked to join in completing this vital goal.

One 2014 milestone, the creation of DBG's Advisory Council, has been a major contributor to the 2015 progress of the Delaware Botanic Gardens. With the leadership of the state's first lady, Carla Markell, the council has continued to play key roles in guiding and refining the development of the garden's site plan and components. The council's horticultural bench strength started with its first member, Holly Shimizu, and then was augmented in 2014 with the addition of Doug Tallamy and Rodney Robinson. In 2015 the council was further enhanced by the addition of Don Rakow of Cornell University, a public gardens leader. Along with our director of horticulture, Gregg Tepper, and the newest board member,

Claudia West, a recognized practitioner and author, a group of experienced horticulture thought leaders are now contributing to the project. Council members also offered supportive testimonials included in DBG's grant applications.

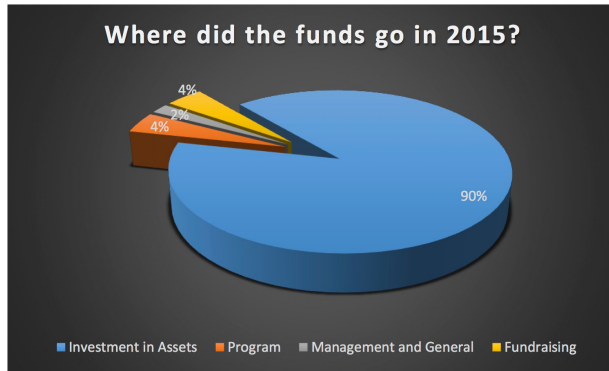
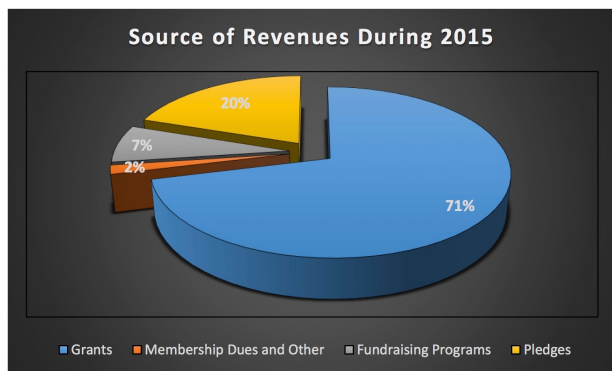
Another major 2015 accomplishment of the Delaware Botanic Gardens was to add to its team the internationally renowned garden designer Piet Oudolf, who is from the Netherlands. Most famous for his design of the High Line Gardens in New York City, Oudolf (center) has also brought his iconic garden vision to Chicago's Lurie Gardens, London's Olympic Gardens, the Barcelona Botanic Gardens, and Battery Park Gardens in New York. This innovative garden leader has agreed to design DBG's Meadow Garden, an approximately 1.5-acre expanse in the style of the New Perennial movement—the first such public garden in the Mid-Atlantic region. Oudolf's meadow adds an international attraction that is perfectly aligned with DBG's coastal plain public garden. Plant selection for the meadow has already begun, and designs will be developed in 2016. Given the lead time needed to grow the meadow plants, the Piet Oudolf Meadow Garden is projected to be completed in 2018.



The year 2015 also marked a transition of leadership for the DBG board of directors. After several years of hard work and dedication, the garden's founder, Michael Zajic, passed on the baton of leadership. In April 2015 he stepped back from the board and accepted an invitation to join the Advisory Council. With our succession plan in place, Susan Ryan became president, Sheryl Swed was named executive director, other board members assumed new leadership positions, and several active supporters were added to the board.

Among the 2015 accomplishments of the leadership team of Sue Ryan and Sheryl Swed were creation of an endowment fund at the Delaware Community Foundation; another successful Good Earth Market Farm Dinner (left), which raised \$60,000; and submission of the first foundation grant applications, which resulted in \$915,000 in major foundation awards, including the \$250,000 challenge grant from the Longwood Foundation. By the end of 2015, the DBG team had raised more than \$1 million, including \$665,000 collected or pledged from foundations; \$168,000 set aside for the project with the bipartisan support of Sussex County legislators, led by Senator Robert Venables and Representatives Danny Short and Tim Dukes; and more than \$285,000 in donations, pledges, and memberships from our supporters.





In 2014 DBG had for the first time exceeded \$100,000 in net assets, but in 2015 it raised net assets to nearly \$1 million. On December 31, 2015, balance sheet net assets were \$955,578, which compares positively to the 2014 year-end net assets of \$103,222.

On the team-building front, the garden's leadership began to assemble its "dream team" to create a sustainable, world-class garden that captures the beauty of the Atlantic coastal plain. As noted, Piet Oudolf (left), the renowned meadow designer, was added first. At the end of 2015, DBG was on the cusp of signing a contract for our lead designer with Ted Flato (right) of Lake/Flato, an award-winning architecture firm. Since then, that contract has been signed, as has a landscape design contract with Rodney Robinson (center) and his new firm, RAS Landscape Architects. Our dream team is now in place.



Working within the limits of the project's preconstruction budget, board members and volunteers have continued rudimentary site cleaning, underbrush clearing, and roughing in of some paths through the site's 12.5 acres of woodlands. The natural beauty of the site's woods is no longer hidden. Board members (who also currently serve as the staff), the Advisory Council, and volunteers and supporters continue to donate thousands of hours of time and talent. Prime examples of how DBG's accomplished board has empowered this project in 2015 are (1) the total redesign of our www.delawaregardens.org web site, and (2) the successful foundation grant writing. All of these tasks were performed by our talented board members. Without the expense of web designers and grant writers, the organization was able to save its limited financial resources for the actual building of the garden. The project also continues to have generous pro bono support from great local companies such as Pennoni Associates,



Rodney Robinson Landscape Architects (now RAS Landscape Architects), George & Lynch, SoDel Concepts, and the law firms of Baird Mandalas Brockstedt LLC and Tunnell & Raysor P.A.

Together we have achieved a great deal since the Delaware Botanic Gardens was founded in 2012. In the coming months, DBG projects final approvals of its site plan, concept design renderings of the first building, a master plan for the entire site, ground breaking, a major capital campaign, and several fundraising events.

With continued support, the Delaware Botanic Gardens looks forward to even greater progress, tangible achievements, and continued success in 2016.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

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Former Executive, Delaware Community Foundation

Collin O'Mara
Director, National Wildlife Federation and Former Secretary, DNREC

Donald A. Rakow
Associate Professor, School of Integrative Plant Science, Cornell University

Rodney D. Robinson, FASLA, PLA, LEED® AP
Principal, Robinson Anderson Summers Landscape Architects

Nelson J. Shaffer
Executive Vice President, Pennoni Associates Inc.

Holly Shimizu
Executive Director Emerita, United States Botanic Garden

David Small
Secretary, Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control

Douglas W. Tallamy
Professor of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology, University of Delaware

Michael J. Zajic
Founder, Delaware Botanic Gardens

