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## Spring Newsletter

*Our roots are in the sands of coastal Delmarva*

*May 22, 2020*

## Update Report

News from President Ray Sander & Executive Director Sheryl Swed

Welcome to the Spring Newsletter. The plan for 2020 was to make it DBG's banner year. We would open up on April 17 for nine months. Brian and Sheryl developed a great offering of programs and events. Three events were envisioned as the main sources of funding our 2020 operations — the spring Frolic in the Folly, the June Sip & Saunter in the Meadow and the September Dinner Party in the Gardens. Our Garden Stewards and Docents were eager to prepare the gardens and welcome our guests. We entered 2020 in good financial condition to maintain the gardens with some limited growth. But then things changed...

**DBG's 2020 Update** – With the theme of “**Getting to Sustainability**” we began 2020 seeking funding for the next round of essential infrastructure and new staff who would enable DBG to become more financially secure.



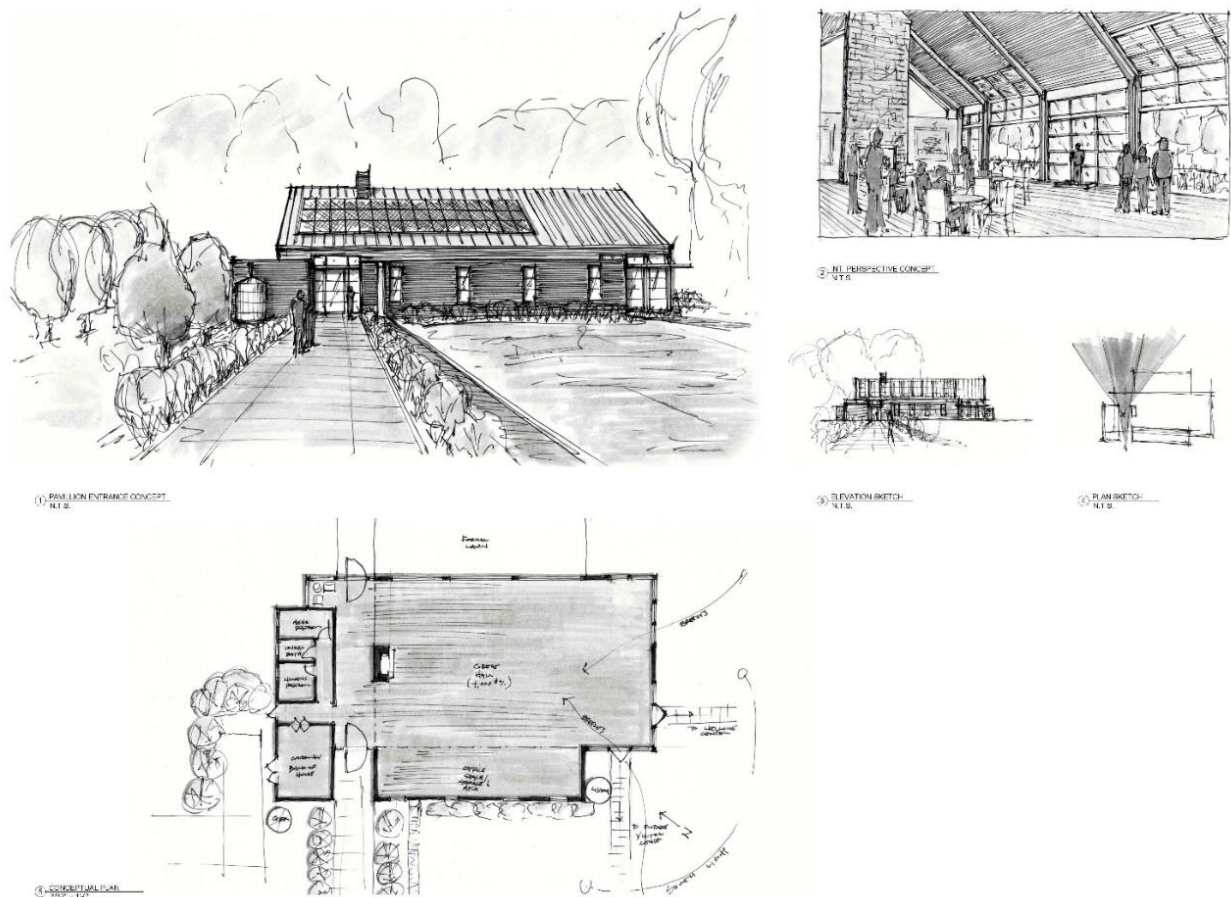
Sheryl and Ray

On the infrastructure front, we identified the need for an all-weather pavilion so that we could reliably hold classes, lectures and events without the threat of inclement weather requiring cancelation or rescheduling. The all-weather pavilion could enable us to elongate our open season by offering displays and courses into the winter. This space could also be used for weddings and other celebrations, which would give DBG a new revenue stream. The remaining “must have” infrastructure are the permanent ADA public restrooms and lighting systems in the Entry Gardens and Meadow.

On the personnel front, our all-volunteer business model is reaching the point where we needed to begin to hire professional staff for the many functions that have been performed by our dedicated Board and key volunteers. This natural progression began in 2019 when Brian Trader joined DBG as Director of Horticulture and Deputy Executive Director. Positions centered on fundraising, membership services, events and programs were identified as our high priority. We also considered the hiring of employees who could staff the Welcome Center for evening and weekend openings.

To achieve these infrastructure and personnel goals, we have sought the support from a wide array of sources. We have asked our Sussex County Legislators to include funds for DBG's public restrooms and lighting in the 2021 State Bond Bill. We also requested infrastructure funds from the Sussex County Council for the public restrooms.

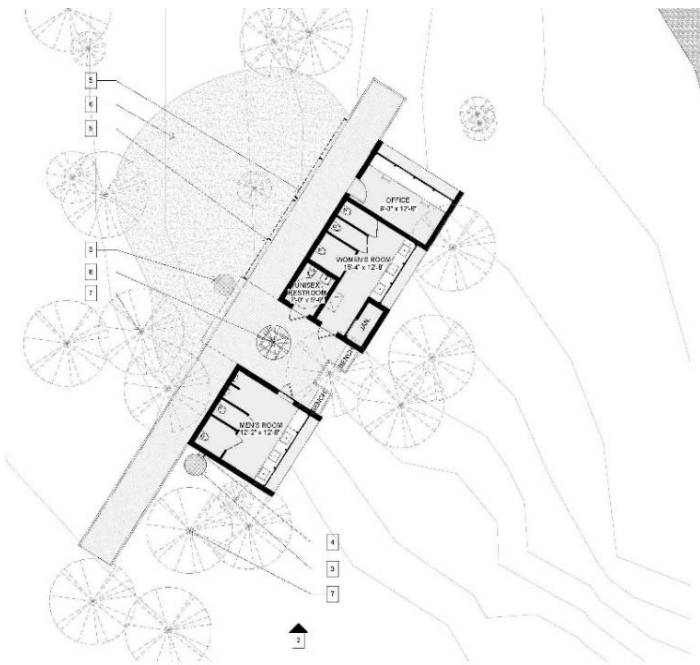
**The Annette Pennoni Meadow Pavilion** – We have successfully started the all-weather pavilion project by negotiating the naming rights for this essential structure with DBG’s long-standing champion, Pennoni Associates. This leading engineering firm has been instrumental in every stage of DBG’s development. With a multi-year pledge from Mr. Chuck Pennoni, the pavilion will be named The Annette Pennoni Meadow Pavilion. Mrs. Pennoni was a strong supporter of the Delaware Botanic Gardens and we are honored to have her memorialized on what will be the center stage for all the events, programs, classes, and meetings held at DBG. Most importantly for our financial sustainability, the Pennoni Pavilion will be the venue that empowers us to hold revenue-generating events. The Annette Pennoni Pavilion will be located adjacent to the Piet Oudolf Meadow, overlooking this most important DBG garden feature. Scott Edmonston and his team are working with Pennoni’s Mark Davidson, to develop the design plans for the Annette Pennoni Meadow Pavilion. Early sketches are below. We will be initiating a fundraising campaign to build this creative structure in time for the 2022 season.



Pavilion conceptual drawing by SEA Studios

**The Edmonstons and SEA Studio Architects** – Many of you already know Scott and Jennifer Edmonston, who guided the beautiful build out of the Welcome Center’s interior. Scott is an American Institute of Architecture award-winning architect located here in Bethany Beach. Scott and Jennifer’s interest and commitment to DBG has now expanded beyond their pro bono work on the Welcome Center. As mentioned above, this talented design team is developing the requisite plans for the Annette Pennoni Meadow Pavilion. In addition, Scott has pro bono designed the plans for DBG’s public bathrooms. We hope that you will be impressed with the beauty and creativity, which Scott & Jen are bringing to DBG. Sketches of the public restrooms are below.

**Restrooms** – On April 21, the Board approved the Entry Garden restrooms design and plans prepared by Scott Edmonston’s SEA Studio Architects. The restroom is 1,175 square feet. We have requested construction bids for the restrooms building, and hope to select our contractor and begin construction in June. One of the exciting aspects of the Edmonston’s restroom design and plans is that they will be “green” to protect the natural environment. We are engaged in fundraising so that our guests and staff can have the benefit of permanent restroom facilities, perhaps before the end of this year.



Restrooms conceptual drawing by SEA Studios



2. PERSPECTIVE VIEW  
N.T.S.

**DNREC Grant** – Brian Trader, Deputy Executive Director and Director of Horticulture, in collaboration with DBG’s environmental scientist, Carol Bason, applied for a water quality grant to make our restrooms “green.” We are using “green technology” for reducing restroom rain runoff and some plantings, and infrastructure changes in and around the proposed restroom facility. The good news is that the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) notified us that we will receive the grant. We thank Brian and Carol Bason for making the restrooms “green” and getting the money to make it a reality.



Ray & Sheryl with Harry Caswell & Jenn Klein from Caswell Plumbing

**The Pump Station and connection to the County Sewer System** – Recall that the site was a soybean farm without a working well, electricity nor a sewer connection. A precondition of permanent restrooms is the connection to the sewer line that runs along Piney Neck Road. In response to our RFP, we received a very competitive bid from a well-respected plumbing firm here in Sussex County. We are honored to be working with Harry Caswell and his team on the installation of this essential infrastructure. Work is scheduled to begin before the end of May and should be completed by early June.





L to R, Cam Yorkston, Sheryl, Thère du Pont, Ray, Brian Trader & Carol McCloud

**Longwood Foundation Update** – Once we had successfully opened the garden gates, the Longwood Foundation allowed DBG to submit a grant request for their 2020 spring grant cycle. Recall that the \$750,000 Longwood Foundation in 2015 empowered DBG to begin the project. On March 13, we had the opportunity to meet with Thère du Pont, President of the Longwood Foundation, at the gardens. It was a fruitful visit. This was the first time he had seen all that had been accomplished since his December 2016 visit to the Groundbreaking Ceremony. Working with the leadership of the Longwood Foundation, we kept our self-sustainability goal but focused our request on our

most important and immediate needs. We recast our theme to **“Getting to 2021 and Beyond.”** We were much honored that despite the extremely high competition for Longwood Foundation grants this spring, the Longwood Trustees felt that DBG is bringing to life a significant public garden for the benefit of Delmarva residents and visitors. In May, DBG was awarded operating funds to create a new fundraising position. We thank the Longwood Foundation for their continued support. We also salute the great DBG team that worked together on this successful Longwood proposal. The team included, Kathy Johnson, Brian Trader, Tom Bason, Cam Yorkston, Sheryl Swed and Ray Sander. This new key staff position will manage our internal fundraising efforts and work with our great fundraising consultants, Cam and Kathy Yorkston. The search for this position will begin immediately.

**Next Steps** – The impact of the COVID-19 medical emergency is affecting every aspect of life. As a nonprofit, DBG depends upon the generosity of the community that has joined together to make this dream a reality. Working together, we have overcome obstacles that many people thought were insurmountable. From the project’s outset to the present, there has been a continuing chorus that “this has never been done before,” “this is a bridge too far,” “you will never raise that kind of money,” “volunteers cannot be expected to manage and staff a public garden.” This project has defied the odds because of the dedication and persistence of the team of volunteers, donors, civic-minded firms and creative philanthropists who have joined together as a community dedicated to creating a public garden in southern Delaware.

We have readjusted our budget expectations, re-prioritized our goals and plans for 2020. We are undeterred. As you know, the federal Government and the State of Delaware have established programs to assist small businesses and nonprofits. We have sought funding from every program, which is open to supporting nonprofits impacted by COVID-19. We will continue to pursue foundation funding. We have asked our elected representatives to include our infrastructure needs in the State’s Bond Bill.

We ask all of you to also redouble your efforts on behalf of DBG. We ask our supporters to become members. We ask for all of our members to renew. We ask you all to each bring one new member to DBG. Your enthusiasm and endorsement can double our community’s membership. When we reopen, the first week will be for members only.

**When will DBG re-open?** – There is a delicate balance point to opening the Delaware Botanic Gardens while protecting the health of our staff, volunteers and guests. We are eager to open but we are anxious about the health and safety of our staff and volunteers who must be present to enhance the guest experience. Likewise, the health of our guests is also paramount. We certainly do not want a visit to DBG to become a contagion risk for anyone.

The risk-rewards must be prudently and responsibly evaluated. Certainly, there are considerable civic and psychology benefits from visiting a public garden and connecting to nature. At the same time, the contagion risks are potentially dangerous, especially for seniors who are the core of our volunteers and our guests. We will follow the guidance from our state political officials, trusted health professionals as well as the responsible public garden leaders from across the country.

We look forward to welcoming our guests at the Delaware Botanic Gardens when we can assure the safety of our guests, staff and volunteers. The overriding promise of the Delaware Botanic Gardens is never to be the cause of making someone sick.

In the meantime, we promise our garden community that we will maintain the gardens and keep adding to their beauty.

**Salute** – Finally, it is said that a crisis brings out the best and worst in people. Fortunately, DBG consistently brings out the best. We end our update saluting the many people who have stepped up to keep the gardens maintained in first class shape, while adding new features. This will allow us to reopen with an even more beautiful and more functional garden. There are people committed to DBG working every day drafting grants, producing virtual tours, arranging media coverage, keeping the volunteers in touch, seeking donations, and setting up digital technology so that the DBG community can be virtually connected. We are honored to work closely with the dedicated staff and the many dedicated, “full-time” volunteers as we move forward. If you want to become more active, please let us know.

Thank you!

Ray & Sheryl

## Outreach during COVID-19 Crisis

DBG continued to seek creative ways to reach out to our community during this COVID-19 crisis including:



Brian at the Milford Center of Nursing & Rehabilitation Facility

### **Community Outreach-Spring Floral Cheer** –

Volunteers had planted hundreds of small pots of narcissus bulbs in the hoop house, with the aim of selling the flowers at the Welcome Center shop in March-April. With the bulbs maturing and garden closed, Brian Trader, Deputy Executive Director and Director of Horticulture had the great idea to donate some of the plants to a senior center.

Brian loaded up over a 100 pots of flowering yellow narcissus plants on March 24 and delivered them to the Milford Center of Nursing & Rehabilitation Facility. The staff of the center said the donation could not have come at a better time because the center was

closed to visitors and the DBG donation lifted the spirits of the residents and staff. In the April 6 *Cape Gazette*, Sheryl Swed, DBG Executive Director, was quoted saying, “While we can’t currently welcome guests to our gardens, we are finding ways to bring our gardens to the community.”

**DBG 2019 Annual Report** – We recently released our latest Annual Report. If you have not seen it, the report can be viewed on our website here [2019 Annual Report](#). We want to thank Carol Bason, Joanne Shipley, and Ray Bojarski for putting together a colorful, well-designed and informative Annual Report. This is the story of



our seven-year journey to bring an idea of a public garden to a reality. All our volunteers and supporters are listed. As you recall, we won an award for the 2018 Annual Report and this 2019 report sets a new even higher standard of excellence.

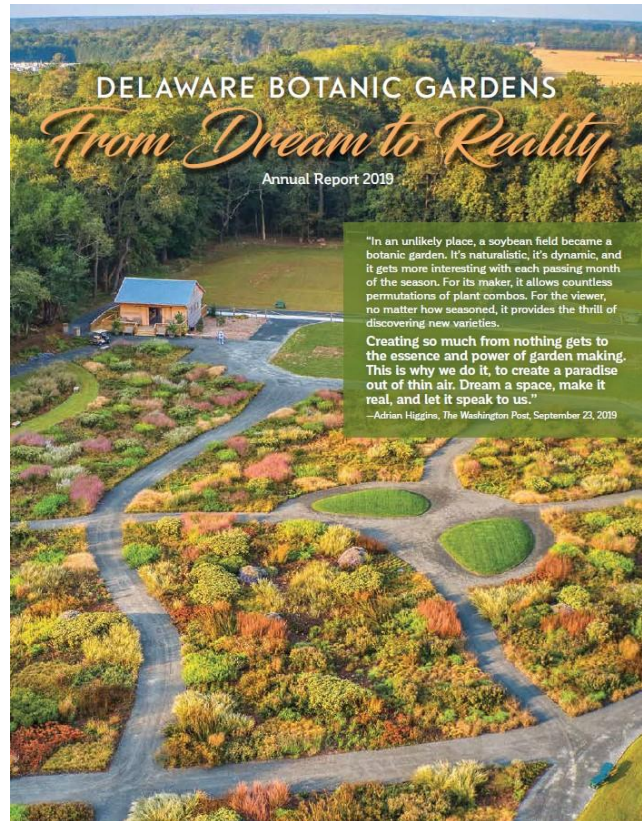
**Stay Connected Challenge** – One of our “closed” challenges is how do we keep people in touch with DBG. We want to inform our various constituents, including members, volunteers, supporters, and the general-public about what is happening and blooming this spring at DBG.

Described below are some of the virtual garden tours and media relations outreach plans we have used to keep connected with our members, volunteers, supporters and the public.

**Virtual Garden Tours** – To keep our members, volunteers and the public updated on the garden we produced short 3-5 minute “virtual DBG video tours,” with narration by Brian Trader to show people what plants were in bloom in the gardens.

We had never done such a project before, but thanks to the team of Tom Bason, Brian Trader and Ray Bojarski, the technical video and online details were worked out. As this newsletter is published, there are three garden virtual tours posted on the DBG website. They can be viewed here [DBG Virtual Garden](#). The first virtual tour is of the Folly Garden, the second of the Woodland Garden and third of the Piet Oudolf Meadow Garden. Tom reported that from March 18 when the first virtual tour was announced to April 30, the virtual tour page has had 3,529 visits. In the same period, our homepage had 2,087 visits. The website remains as the key communication link with members, volunteers, supporters and the public.

Brian has also been adding information and pictures to DBG’s social media platforms. Our Facebook page can be accessed here [facebook/delawaregardens](#) and our Instagram page can be accessed here [instagram/delawaregardens](#).



2019 Annual Report Cover



Virtual Garden scene Narcissus in the Folly Garden



Virtual Garden scene - View of Pepper Creek

**Media Outreach** – To remain connected to the public, DBG continued to work aggressively with our media partners this spring, including:

- March 14, (the day after we announced the delay in DBG opening), Ray and Brian appeared on the “Delmarva Potting Shed” radio 105.9 FM program, “live” from the East Coast Garden Center in Millsboro, DE. Originally booked to discuss our opening, they instead explained our closing and plans for the future.



Rick Cordrey and Donna Price interview Ray and Brian on the Delmarva Potting Shed Radio Show



Brian doing a live interview with Lisa Bryant on WBOC's Delmarva Life

- March 19, *Cape Gazette*, “Delaware Botanic Gardens Delays Season Opening”
- April 3, *Coastal Point* feature article-photo, “Work Continues behind the scenes at Botanic Gardens.” Brian Trader was quoted describing the gardens as he gave the reporters a tour. The article stated, “In the Folly Garden, spring’s colors are more abundant, with its narcissus, tulips, anemone, camellias, viburnums and other early blooms providing a visual feast with each step along the path.” The newspaper also reported, “a pair of nesting bald eagles kept watch overhead”
- April 7; *Cape Gazette* article, “Botanic Garden shares spring cheer in Milford”
- April 22, WBOC-TV “Delmarva Life” Lisa Bryant did a virtual Zoom interview with Brian at the gardens and showed video of the gardens in bloom.
- April 23, *Cape Gazette* article, “Botanic Gardens set to stabilize Pepper Creek shoreline, about the Living Shoreline Project”
- April 28, *Cape Gazette* article, “Delaware Botanic Gardens hold virtual tours”
- May 22, *Coastal Point*, “DBG releases 2019 Annual Report”



# Volunteers Update

News from Carol McCloud, DBG Vice President & Volunteer Director



Carol McCloud leading a tour

**Volunteers** – As I write my update, the first thing that comes to mind is how much I/we miss our wonderful volunteers. From the feedback I am getting, they miss volunteering in the Gardens and their Garden friendships as well. I look forward to when we are all back in the Gardens doing what we love: Planting, weeding, maintaining and curating the Gardens in preparation of re-opening our garden gates.

Prior to having to suspend our organized volunteer days in the gardens, we were working with our volunteers regarding open day's staffing. Our IT Director, Tom Bason, worked with me on sending out a survey to all our

volunteers to help us plan our staffing for the days we would be open.

We also had several training sessions for our volunteers:

1. January 13 – Volunteer Training – Piet Oudolf Movie
2. February 3 – Volunteer Training – Cutting Back the Meadow
3. March 3 – Volunteer Training – Guest Services video from APGA
4. March 9 – Docent Training in Welcome Center – Brian Trader, Alison Willocks and I briefed and answered many great questions. Alison also gave several Docents, both new and veterans, “hands on” training of our Point of Sale System (POS)

Our Garden Stewards have been volunteering throughout the winter to maintain the Gardens. When the COVID-19 virus first started surfacing in Delaware, our focus turned to the safety of our volunteers and staff.

On March 15, we sent an email to our volunteers that we would still have volunteer days; however, we would be practicing the guidelines of social distancing while they volunteered. On the following Monday, DBG leadership went to the Gardens to listen and discuss any concerns the Garden Stewards might have about continuing to work in the gardens. Ray, Sheryl, Brian and I made some brief remarks and listened to the 18 Garden Stewards who were present. It was apparent from the meeting that the Garden Stewards felt safe in the gardens and wanted to continue to volunteer. They agreed to practice social distancing while they worked.



Alison Willocks (r) leads Docent training with Carol and Brian





Tom Rondeau demonstrates the new garden decorum

The health and safety of our community and gardens is our highest priority as we weather the current COVID-19 pandemic. Because of Governor Carney's Stay at Home order on March 22, DBG leadership suspended our organized volunteer days in the gardens until further notice. Our three-person hardworking staff have continued to maintain the gardens, augmented by no more than seven volunteers at a time, observing State mandated guidance. Facial masks and social distancing are also required for all site work.

**Volunteer Incentive Program** – DBG has a Volunteer Incentive Program for our volunteers. Any volunteer who volunteers 100 hours in a given year receives free admission plus one accompanying guest into the gardens the following year. Any volunteer who volunteers 50 hours in a given year receives free admission into the gardens the following year. We sent an announcement, the first part of April, to all our volunteers who qualified in 2019 to receive free admission in 2020.

This year, their free admission will begin on the day we open the gardens in 2020 until that same date in 2021. We would like to “recognize and congratulate” our volunteers who achieved their goal.

**100 Hours Volunteered** – Angela Schaab\*, Kurt Schaab\*, Jan Poli\*, Craig Haggerty\*, Rob Wisniewski\*, Tricia Precht\*, Donna Buono\*, Margaret Kimmel\*, Andy McGrellis, Jim Marshall, Rick Fisher, Peggie Ravida\*, Jane Peters, Judy Martin, Maureen Morano\*, Judy Pfister\*, Cheryl Quirk\*, Mary Hall, Garland Saville, Jane Stokes, Les Ferguson, Alison Willcocks\*, Carol Bason\*, and Ray Bojarski

**50 Hours Volunteered:** – Tony Filiaggi\*, Ed Palmerino\*, Gwenn Wells, Angie Phinney, Sally Scarangella, Judy Marshall, Diane McGrellis, Don Klima\*, Bob King, Karen King, Gary Stokes, Karen Dudley\*, Jane Carroll, Tony Broomfield\*, and Jeanette Akhter\*

\* indicates 2<sup>nd</sup> year

I would like to thank all **our volunteers** for their passion and dedication to DBG. It is an honor and a privilege to volunteer alongside you. You are greatly appreciated. Stay safe! Carol

## A Special Note to Thank Members

The unprecedented coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis has forced us to close the garden gates, and cancel all planned fund-raising events, tours, admissions and close the gift shop. The financial impact is a major unplanned loss of revenue, which we were counting on for our 2020 budget. These actions and changes in our lives are beyond our control. As a non-profit organization, run by dedicated volunteers and a small staff, we need to protect our legacy gardens. One thing within our control is to ask all our loyal DBG members and volunteers to renew their memberships, recruit new members and to give gift memberships or donations to DBG. On April 23, we sent our garden family an email blast asking for support. The response has been heart-warming. We thank all who have stepped up. We have decided during this crisis to have all renewed and new membership to begin the date we reopen and extend for the next 12-months. If you love the gardens and are not yet a member, please join here [www.delawaregardens.org/membership](http://www.delawaregardens.org/membership) or donate here [www.delawaregardens.org/donate](http://www.delawaregardens.org/donate). Go to our website now. The Board thanks you in advance for taking action to protect our legacy gardens.

Your membership support now will be rewarded with a member's only opening week the first week we are open in 2020.

## The Gardens in Spring Bloom

Here is a montage of photographs of the gardens this spring taken by Sheryl, Brian and Ray Bojarski.



*Rhododendron 'Klondyke'*  
(Exbury azalea)



*Lamprocapnos spectabilis*  
(bleeding heart)



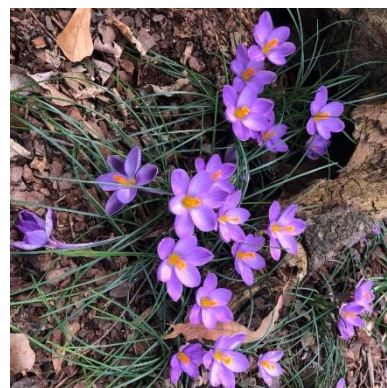
*Hyacinthoides hispanica*  
(Spanish bluebells)



*Camellia japonica*  
(Japanese camellia)



*Rhododendron canescens* (Piedmont azalea)



*Crocus sieberi* ssp. *sublimis* 'Tricolor'  
(Sieber's crocus)



*Chionanthus virginicus* (fringetree)



*Viburnum dentatum* (arrowwood viburnum)



*Weigela florida* Sonic Bloom® Pink  
(weigela)



# Horticultural Happenings

News from Brian Trader, Deputy Executive Director and Director of Horticulture

For many, spring is a season of hope, anticipation, growth and surprises. The surprises can be good, like when your favorite perennials doubled or your new seeds germinate. Surprises can be less desirable too, like when you find scale on the plants overwintering in the greenhouse. This spring has been full of surprises and I am an optimist that our future is bright.

Though we are disappointed, we cannot welcome guests or as many volunteers in the garden right now, we have been productive on several projects including permitting of our Living Shoreline, installation of new irrigation, and planting of our new Rhyne Garden.

In March, Delaware Botanic Gardens (DBG) worked with the Center for Inland Bays (CIB) to file a permit application with the Delaware Department of Natural Resources (DNREC) for our Living Shoreline. The project will allow for protection of approximately 300 feet of our shoreline along Pepper Creek using the following wetland enhancements: 318 feet of anchored branch toe constructed of natural material from the Woodland Gardens, restoration of native vegetation and use of inverted root-wad clusters with native vegetated plantings. Pending approval of the permits, we look forward to working on this project in early summer and using these techniques as educational resources for our guests and community.



Brian Trader



Jeremy Cole at the new culvert

Over the last several months, we have been working diligently to improve the infrastructure of our gardens. Team members, Sam Cashdollar and Jeremy Cole worked for several weeks to fix the drainage and erosion around the culverts in our entry gardens.

Not only did they resolve the issue, they ensured the culverts complimented the DBG garden aesthetic. Sam and Jeremy extended irrigation to new areas of the garden including several new turf sites and the new Rhyne Garden. “Rhyne” is synonym for drainage ditch and the garden has been designed and inspired by the iconic tax

ditches present throughout Delmarva. Our Rhyne Garden is located in the parking and entry of DBG and will be the first garden to welcome our guests. The irrigation will be integral to the planting and successful establishment of the Rhyne Garden in the weeks and months ahead.



Some of the plants ready to be placed in the Rhyne Garden



The Rhyne Garden with planting in the conveyance almost complete

We have been working with seven different plant nurseries over the last several months to source perennials for the Rhyne Garden. All of the plants for the garden are native or native selections and have been contract grown by partner nurseries. These will be arriving at the gardens in the next few weeks and some are already here! We will feature selections of native *Juncus*, *Baptisia*, *Phlox*, *Monarda*, *Coreopsis*, and *Echinacea*.

DBG is grateful to DNREC, which has helped fund the planting and interpretation of this garden through 319 Nonpoint Source Program funds.

We look forward to welcoming our volunteers, members, guests and community back in the gardens as soon as it is safe.



Carol McCloud by the new Folly Garden sign

**New Garden Signs** – One of the things you will notice when you return to the gardens is new garden “sponsorship” signs that were installed in March. They were created by the Gecko Group, who did a great job. The three sponsorship signs were created for the Learning Garden, sponsored by Dogfish Head, the Folly Garden, sponsored by John & Carol McCloud, and the Knoll, sponsored by Ron Bass and George Robbins. These low-profile signs blend into our garden environment and are a wonderful addition.

The Gecko Group also created a new DBG map and descriptions of the gardens that are located in the Welcome Center.

**Thanks to many devoted DBG people who are moving DBG Forward in 2020.**

All photographs by Ray Bojarski except as cited.