



*the* HPSO  
*quarterly*  
FALL 2026

A PUBLICATION  
OF THE HARDY  
PLANT SOCIETY  
OF OREGON

# FALL 2026

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# THE HARDY PLANT SOCIETY OF OREGON

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## 2026 ANNUAL MEETING

photo courtesy of Marion McNew



### FEATURING Marion McNew

Award Winning Landscape  
Designer Based in  
Hood River, Oregon

Sunday, November 1  
at 1:00 pm

Doors open at noon

Free to HPSO members

Hoffmann Hall  
Portland State  
University

1833 SW 11th Avenue  
Portland, OR 97201

The annual business meeting includes the election of HPSO officers and directors and other Society business. This year's featured lecture will be delivered by Oregon landscape expert, Marion McNew.

McNew is the head designer and owner of Mount Hood Gardens, Inc., an award-winning landscape design/build firm with a focus on high-end residential work and organic practices. Marion and her company have received numerous national design awards from the Association of Professional Landscape Designers (APLD) and the Perennial Plant Association. She is a Certified Professional Landscape Designer with APLD and was awarded its prestigious Fellow designation in 2018.

Marion has taught and lectured on garden design and various horticultural topics for most of her career. Headquartered in Hood River, Oregon, Mount Hood Gardens works exclusively in the mid-Columbia region, having created more than 250 gardens and small parks over the past 40 years. Marion considers the plant community principle to be of profound significance for her work. Her presentation will include abundant images of garden details and plantings from her extensive travels in Europe, Japan, and the United States, as well as gardens of her design.

Marion holds a master's degree in horticultural engineering from the University of Hannover, Germany. She started her company in 1985, originally as a perennial wholesale nursery. The business quickly transitioned into landscape design and installation. The company is located on five beautiful acres and has an onsite growing facility, a tree nursery, and display gardens. Visits are by appointment only. Mount Hood Gardens' website is: [mounthoodgardens.com](http://mounthoodgardens.com).

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Our fall issue includes three insect related articles (covering flies, spiders, and toxic nectar). It has an international flavor (Japanese gardening, Japanese cedars, and Chilean plants). We also explore Portland's Reed Canyon, profile a local family-owned nursery, provide a checklist for fall gardening, introduce our new editor, Britta Fink, and review a book on gravel gardening.

This is my last issue as Editor of the *Quarterly*. I leave after eight years with mixed emotions. I have loved every aspect of producing the magazine—recruiting authors, editing copy, organizing submissions, and working with the dedicated volunteer staff. But now that I live a thousand miles away, a Portland-area editor is essential. And I have found many new ways to engage my time and energy.

I am enormously grateful to everyone who contributed over the years to make the magazine a beautiful and informative publication. During my tenure, dozens of people were involved—too many to list—thank you all. I wish the new editor and the continuing staff members every success. I look forward to sitting back and enjoying future issues as they arrive in my mailbox.

Eloise L. Morgan

photo courtesy of Bernadette Doolan

## HPSO'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

by Karen Palmer, HPSO President

I am very pleased to introduce our new Executive Director, Bernadette Doolan. She joined us on September 9 so perhaps you have already met her.

Bernadette comes from a career in both corporate and non-profit sectors, successfully integrating marketing strategies with community engagement, as well as bridging the gaps between awareness and calls to action to foster sustainable growth. She has won national awards for some of this work.

She brings the rare combination of strategic vision, disciplined budget skills, team management, and a belief that organizational growth should be both measurable and joyful. Bernadette is an avid gardener and clay sculptor, amateur florist and soil builder. She says, "Being HPSO Executive Director is my dream job, marrying my business acumen with my lifelong love of plants."

Please join the Board in welcoming Bernadette into our fold. We are sad to see Amy Coulter leave us in her official capacity and thank her for the years of improvements she has made to the organization. We are confident that Bernadette will continue down that path and bring her own stamp of excellence to the table.

Bernadette can be reached at [Bernadette.Doolan@hardyplantsociety.org](mailto:Bernadette.Doolan@hardyplantsociety.org), Monday through Thursday 10:00 am–3:00 pm. The HPSO phone number remains the same: 503-224-5718. Aubrey Horner and Nandy Mason remain on staff to assist with your questions. If you plan to stop by the office, it is always a good idea to call ahead, since the staff may be out of the office attending to other HPSO affairs.



New Executive Director Bernadette Doolan.

photo by Amy Campion

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## Sugi The Japanese Cedar

### Valuable in a Time of Climate Change

text and photography by Norm Jacobs

It's always a pleasure, though sometimes overwhelming, to take a deep dive into plant varieties of Japanese origin. A millennium of evolving garden design and the cultivation of a wealth of species and cultivars discovered in the wild has produced a surfeit of riches. Japanese maples (*Acer palmatum* and its cousins), Hinoki false-cypress (*Chamaecyparis obtusa*), Sawara false-cypress (*Chamaecyparis pisifera*) are all garden-worthy plants. But among the conifers, the Japanese cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*, *sugi* in Japanese) holds a special place in my estimation. Few evergreen plants can rival its range of colors, textures, growth rates, and ultimate sizes, as well as suitability for sites, soils, and companion plants. Horticultural value aside, it is also a staple building material and a cultural icon.



*C. japonica* 'Bandai'.



*Cryptomeria japonica* 'Twinkle Toes'.

Functional as basic indoor/outdoor construction lumber, *sugi* beams and panels are traditional for the construction of Japanese tea houses and tea rooms, built without metal fasteners. Panels carved with scenes from nature become lintels over doorways in traditional homes.

Cedar-lined avenues have been planted and maintained in Japan for centuries. Some are tributes, such as the *Nikkō suginami-ki*, planted between 1625 and 1648 in Tochigi Prefecture. Its 22 miles of some 12,000 surviving trees (out of 50,000 originally planted) serve the memorial shrines

of the founders of the ruling Tokugawa Shogunate. Some routes were practical, such as the *Hakone Suginami ki*, a cedar-lined half-kilometer which was once part of the Tokaido Road connecting Edo (Tokyo) with Kyoto, whose trees provided shelter for travelers. Cedar avenues may also be an indicator of sacred ground, such as the 1.8 kilometer tree-lined stone stairway to the summit of Mount Hakuro constructed in the 17th century.

Over 80 named Japanese cedar cultivars are listed in the database of the American

*continues on next page*



*C. japonica* 'Spiraliter Falcata'.



*C. japonica* 'Sekkan'.



*C. japonica* 'Elegans Compacta' in winter.

continued from previous page

Conifer Society. Visit [conifersociety.org/conifers](http://conifersociety.org/conifers) for a more complete view of the genus than I'll attempt here. I will highlight garden-worthy examples of the species and the role they play as design elements of our Southeast Portland, Oregon, display garden. Ranging from full-size trees to near-miniature shrubs, they are particularly valuable for their durability in the face of climate change, with minimal water needs once established. *Cryptomeria* are highly adaptable to a range of soil types and site exposures from full sun to dappled (though not dark) shade. Not being fussy allows *Cryptomeria* many options for partner plants to complete a landscape design, and the versatility of this genus will allow placement of *Cryptomeria* in "difficult spots" in your garden.

In our garden, my wife, Deb Zaveson, and I have reduced our weeding and watering needs by planting in layers, starting with a few large evergreen trees as an overstory, Japanese maples and other smallish deciduous trees for a dappled shade canopy, a midstory of shade-loving (or shade-tolerant) shrubs and perennials, and groundcovers. There are varieties of *Cryptomeria* in all of these layers—top to bottom.

Largest is 'Sekkan', whose lime-green foliage with golden new growth is now

approaching 25 feet in height and eight feet in width after 15 years in the ground in full sun. Typical for large conifers when juvenile, it formed a "skirt" of horizontal branches that we pruned off once the several strictly vertical leaders became dominant. It now displays a handsome trunk, bare to about seven feet. At this point, all it needs is a once-a-year shaking out of old dry brown foliage. The foliage of 'Sekkan' is scratchy, so gloves and long sleeves are wise.

The several cultivars of *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Elegans' are darker green turning to purplish-maroon in winter, and they grow wide horizontal branches, which may eventually droop with the weight of their tips. Their foliage has a very soft, delicate appearance.

While 'Elegans' itself rivals 'Sekkan' for size, we opted for the somewhat smaller 'Elegans Compacta', now about 15 feet tall and 10 feet wide after 15 years. As with 'Sekkan', we have removed skirt and lower branches to allow underplanting. With its very dense foliage, its shade is dark and dry, so select its companions accordingly. There is a similarly large cultivar called 'Elegans Aurea' that remains green year-round.

Semi-dwarf to dwarf shrubs offer the greatest range of sizes in the genus and can often tolerate the extremes of sun to near-full shade, although most are happiest with a half day of each. In considering selections available 40 years ago, we were immediately attracted to a group that when left unpruned will nevertheless grow in formal

Japanese fashion. Their somewhat spreading branches of dense dark green foliage eventually open to reveal the dark copper bark of the trunk. In our average conditions, they offer a procession of growth rates culminating in mature sizes ranging from 'Bandai' (three feet tall in 10 years), 'Jindai' (six feet tall in 10 years), to the more recently introduced 'Black Dragon' (10 feet tall in 10 years).

A range of sizes also applies to the varieties that form dense domes, wider than tall, beginning with near-miniature 'Tenzan' (six inches wide in 10 years), dwarf 'Birodo' (one foot wide in 10 years), and larger 'Koshiy' (three feet wide in 10 years). In our garden, 'Koshiy' is a groundcover that surrounds the trunk of a small tree. 'Birodo' provides winter interest when the maples above it are bare, and 'Tenzan' shares a mixed ceramic pot on the sunny porch.

We love the very dense foliage of *Cryptomeria* 'Globosa', which is too large for our garden. We were thrilled when dwarf cultivars 'Little Diamond' and 'Little Champion' were introduced to produce the same effect. 'Little Champion' is reputed to be the smaller of the two, but after over 15 years in partial shade here they appear identical.

If your taste runs to unusual foliage, 'Cristata' will display fasciated buds at its branch tips, hence its nickname as the "cockscorn cedar." It will reach a 12-foot height in a decade, but it is usually pruned shorter to display its bizarre buds.



*C. japonica* 'Dinger'.

Somewhat less alien is the group whose foliage wraps around its stems in a spiral, of which the largest (a 25-foot tree) is simply 'Spiralis', also known as 'Granny's Ringlets'. For the smaller garden, the same foliage feature is displayed by cultivar 'Rasen' at half the size of 'Spiralis', and the dwarf form named 'Spiraliter Falcata' that is still less than three feet tall after a decade in our garden. A cousin to this foliage type is the dwarf cultivar 'Dinger', which we've only test grown for a few years, but it looks promising for a future spot in the landscape.

For those fond of variegation, there are cultivars that display white accents such as the full-size tree 'Albospicata' and the dwarf 'Knappontensis', both of which require mid-day shade else their white foliage scorches. A recent introduction called 'Twinkle Toes' presents a seasonal display of light golden new growth against a background of very dense green older foliage.

A note about nomenclature: Plants of Japanese origin may have *sugi* as a suffix to their name. Since *sugi* means "cedar/*Cryptomeria*" in Japanese, the suffix is redundant. *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Jindai' *sugi* and *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Jindai' are identical plants.

Like all conifers, *Cryptomeria* thrive in soils that host symbiotic fungus, typical of woodland biomes. Spores are airborne looking

for a suitable mulch layer to colonize. Provide mulch and optionally a mycorrhizal inoculant or mushroom compost for a start. We use a layer of arborist chips every few years to feed the soil. Newly planted *Cryptomeria* require regular watering through their first summer and occasional deep watering through the second summer.

Thereafter, use your judgment during extreme (100-plus degrees) heat events, particularly for plants in full sun, although in time this too becomes unnecessary.

These conifers are wise selections as our climate becomes hotter and drier.



*Long-time HPSO members, Norm Jacobs and his wife, Deb Zaveson, have been nurturing rare plants for more than 35 years, first in Oregon's Yamhill County and now at Arbutus Garden Arts, on an island in Portland's Johnson Creek.*



*C. japonica* 'Little Diamond'.

## welcome! TO THESE NEW MEMBERS

June 1, 2026 to August 31, 2026

We're pleased that you have recently joined our ranks, which currently number 2,500 active members. We hope HPSO offers you the same gardening inspiration, guidance, and camaraderie that has sustained so many of our long-time members, and we look forward to meeting you at events like our annual meeting, Hortlandia, PlantFest, After Hours, and open gardens.

|                    |                     |                   |                     |                     |                     |                         |
|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Ashley Alexander   | Asa DeWitt          | Jill Goldsmith    | Rita Johnson        | Kate Merrell        | Kay Pollack         | Mary Beth Spreadborough |
| Aaron Antrim       | Shawn Dickerson     | Nina Goodrich     | Sandi Kier          | Betsy Miller        | Sasha Pollack       | Beth Sterrett           |
| Arva Bartos        | Bernadette Doolan   | Rose Greensite    | Kay Knee            | Eamon Molloy        | Ben Postlewait      | Joy Tallent-Bohrer      |
| Caren Blass        | Lynn Dunn           | John Griffith     | Megan Kruger        | Renee Montmorency   | Pamela Reeves       | Colt Taylor             |
| Terrence Blevins   | Katherine Ell       | Sally Griffith    | Corinne Lent        | Linda Moore         | Olivia Reis         | Marcia Trenary          |
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| Tara Brown         | Sam Fisher          | Linda Hemelstrand | Karen Lisborg       | Anne O'Donnell      | Suzanna Rogstad     | Nanci Werts             |
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| Merina Chappel     | Cheryl Forst        | Steven Hill       | Corrine Lombardi    | Penny Paulsen       | Diane Schell-Rowley | Patty Wilson            |
| Megan Clark-Dishno | Kathy Fruscella     | Virginia Hill     | Patrick Lombardi    | Karen Paver         | Jacob Schmerber     | Marc Yew                |
| Diane Coleman      | Christine Gallagher | Sara Hodges       | Kate MacCready      | Amy Pearl           | Carl Schmits        |                         |
| Arielle Collins    | George Gault        | Nicole Hoff       | Paul Macdonald      | Carol Perrenoud     | Jane Schmits        |                         |
| Cindy Crawford     | Rebecca Geisen      | Carolyn Horvath   | Leslie Mahler       | Beth Peterman       | Lin Shinsel         |                         |
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| Debby Deering      | Stephen Gerould     | Janet Jacobs      | Christine McMonigal | Joseph Pucci        | Theresa Somrak      |                         |

## A WALK IN THE PARK

# Reed Canyon

## The Ultimate Urban Garden

by Mary Manning

If you could create a garden in your neighborhood that is a retreat from the city—offering hikes in a Pacific Northwest forest with birdsong, rustling leaves, aromas of earth and warm cedar, and encounters with native wildlife—what would it look like? When my husband and I downsized to a home in a 1950s neighborhood called Reed College Heights, we found ourselves immediately adjacent to just such a garden: Reed Canyon, Reed Lake, and Crystal Springs Creek. Let me take you on a tour of this remarkable 28-acre refuge hidden in the heart of the Reed College campus in Portland, Oregon.

I'm starting out at one of the many public entrances to the canyon at the base of Southeast 37th Avenue just south of Insley Street. The land to the east rises dramatically all the way to 41st Avenue. It's part of an escarpment that extends south from roughly Powell Boulevard and runs out at Johnson Creek. This is where the water leaves the aquifer that feeds Reed Lake and Crystal Springs Creek.

I enter under a monumental black walnut tree and through a scruffy orchard, named



Looking down to the wetlands from private property with Reed College science building in the background.

The Pollinator Garden, where the trails become green tunnels through a collection of ponds, bogs, and small islands. This area was once neglected and infested with blackberries and dead appliances: a perfect place for adventuring by the local children. It was overgrown with reed canary grass, morning glory, English ivy, and wild clematis. Before Reed College began the canyon's restoration in 1999, virtually every tree in the canyon was encased by ivy that grew to the top with trunks as big as your arm. As the restoration has progressed, the canyon has become a balanced ecosystem that is an integral part of Reed's academic program.

I'm going to choose the south trail around the shallow lake that was created when beavers dammed up the creek. Both trails around the lake are heavily wooded with Douglas-fir, western red cedar, big leaf and vine maples, Sitka spruce, and native

undergrowth. Dead trees remain where they fell, even into the lake itself.

As I progress along the trail on boardwalks over the swampy area, I notice a tree that has been felled by a beaver. Neighbors report that beavers can be spotted swimming at daybreak and dusk under the Blue Bridge that links the main Reed campus to the residences north of the lake. I've personally seen many species of ducks, as well as geese, great blue herons, and egrets. Other wildlife that has been reported here are river otters, nutria, brush rabbits, coyotes, raccoons, and various amphibians. There is a resident turtle named Yertle who can often be seen sunning himself on logs that have fallen into the lake.

As I approach the dam at the west end of the lake, I pass by the Cerf amphitheater, tiered wooden seating carved into the canyon wall. Just past this is the road over the dam and fish ladder. The water enters from the springs at 54 degrees year-round, and it flows at seven cubic feet per second in all seasons. This pristine creek cascades from Reed Lake and flows down towards the collection of lakes in Portland's Crystal Springs Rhododendron Garden, Eastmoreland Golf Course, and Westmoreland Park. The dam area was once the location of an outdoor pool built in 1930 where my husband took our children to learn how to swim. It was removed at the beginning of the restoration in 1999.

photo courtesy of Reed College



A Reed Canyon scene from 1914, six years after the college was founded.

The fish ladder provides access to the lake for several species of salmon returning to spawn, as well as for the otters that follow to feast on the fish.

I cross over the dam and then take the trail that follows along the creek. As the trail loses elevation, the sides of the canyon loom over the dark tunnel that is the pathway. The Bouncy Bridge is the second bridge connecting the campus's north and south areas and towers high above the path. A boardwalk traverses a swampy collection of horsetails and ferns under the canopy—this part of the trail reminds me of how the world might have felt when dinosaurs were around.

I'm staying on the south side of the creek which connects to Botsford Drive and then to 28th Avenue where a bioswale protects the creek and a recent stand of Oregon white oaks. The oaks are in a grassy field reminiscent of so many areas in the Willamette Valley cleared by Native Americans. Not that long ago this was a working farm, and the creek was routed straight west and then under the street. It was too fast for successful fish passage, so in 2007 the creek was seeded with logs, and now it passes through pools shaded by trees and shrubs perfect for fish climbing up to spawn in the wetlands that lead up to the lake.

Our tour has taken us from the headwaters of the lake and down to where the creek leaves the Reed College campus and travels through the golf course, the parks, and connects to Johnson Creek, the Willamette River, the Columbia River, and finally the Pacific Ocean. Our trip is just one way to explore the canyon, and every trail brings new sights, sounds, smells, and even some inner peace.

■ ■ ■

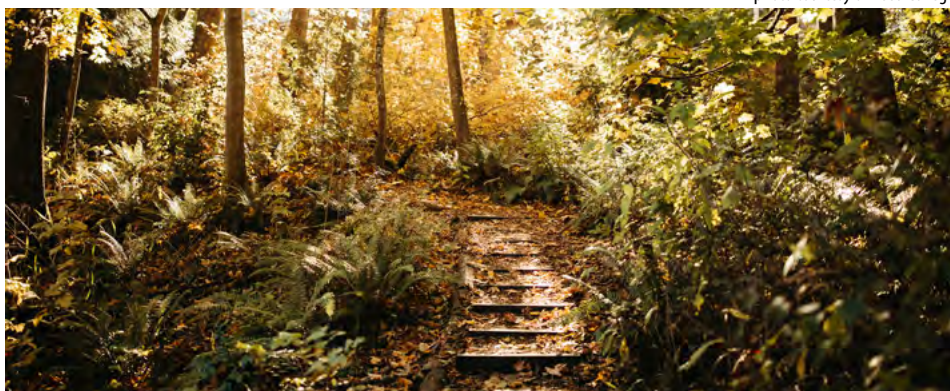
*Mary Manning is a retired retail executive and Portland State University adjunct marketing instructor. Her current career is nurturing her six-year-old garden adjacent to Reed Canyon.*

## References:

The Historic Resources of Reed College: [reed.edu/facilities\\_services/assets/downloads/hertiage-master-plan-pdfs/final/1.0\\_Historic%20Resources.pdf](https://reed.edu/facilities_services/assets/downloads/hertiage-master-plan-pdfs/final/1.0_Historic%20Resources.pdf)

Natural History of the Canyon: [reed.edu/canyon/natural-history/](https://reed.edu/canyon/natural-history/)

An in-depth presentation explaining the canyon restoration by Reed Facilities Operations Manager Zac Perry: [youtube.com/watch?v=TP6rSMFw298](https://youtube.com/watch?v=TP6rSMFw298)



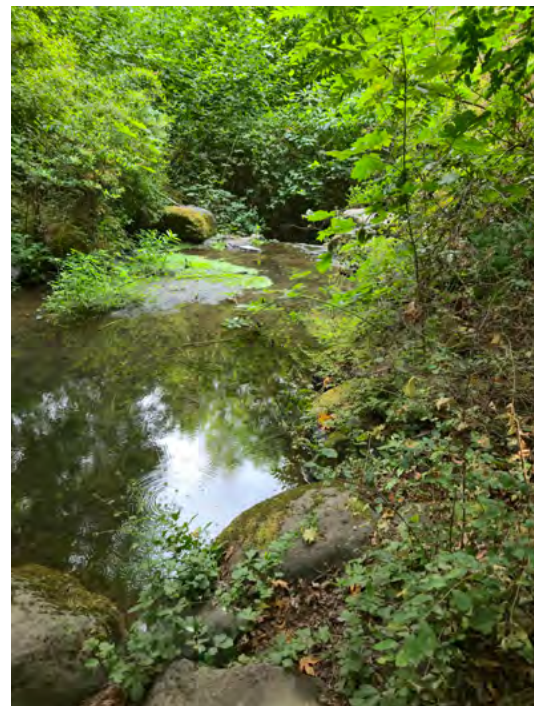
A Reed Canyon trail in the fall.



above: View from the Blue Bridge looking toward the east end of Reed Lake where it emerges from the wetlands.

at right: Small spring-fed pond feeds into Crystal Springs Creek below the fish ladder.

photos by Mary Manning





Burgess's thick-headed fly is an unmistakable fly with a wasplike body.

## CAPTIVATING CHARACTERS

# Falling for Flies

text and photography by Amy Campion

When I started gardening for pollinators and other insects almost six years ago, I never dreamed I'd fall in love with flies, but here we are. I've met some captivating characters, and now I'm smitten.

Flies are so much more than mosquitos and house flies. Since I started paying attention to insects in 2021, I've observed 115 species of fly in my Portland, Oregon, garden. Some of them are beautiful. Some are ugly. Some are rare. Some have strange life histories or bizarre behaviors. Picking a few favorites is a challenge, but here are six flies I've come to love that you can look for in your own garden.

Flies are some of the hardiest creatures in the insect world, with species on the wing even in winter. In February, I look for Williston's bumble fly (*Criorhina nigripes*) on my manzanitas. This cute, furry fly doesn't bite or sting, but it does an excellent impersonation of a bumble bee to make you think it could sting if it wanted to. The short antennae and the super-sized eyes are two giveaways that it's only bluffing.

Adult bumble flies visit flowers for nourishment, but the larvae subsist on rotting wood, which can be hard to find in urban and suburban landscapes. Include some logs or stumps or a snag in your garden to support some of our coolest insects, like this one.



A male dance fly presents his nuptial gift as an interested female looks on.

In March, dance flies in the genus *Empis* come out in my garden. They drink nectar and stab and eat other insects with their long proboscises. Mostly, though, dance flies are known for their mating dance. The male flies around the female and tries to win her over with a present: an insect he's killed. Entomologists have termed this offering a "nuptial gift."

Dance fly larvae live in leaf litter, so leave the leaves in at least some parts of your garden to provide them (and many other insects) habitat.

Hover flies (family Syrphidae) emerge very early in the year; I sometimes see them darting around on mild days in January. The syrphids are a diverse group (I've seen 36 species in my garden so far), and it's hard to choose a favorite, but the white-bowed smoothwing (*Scaeva affinis*) is up there. This black-and-white beauty appears in late March.

Adult white-bowed smoothwings fuel up on flowers, but their larvae—like about

half of the hover flies in my garden—eat aphids. In fact, according to *BugGuide.net*, one such larva can eat more than 500 aphids. Look for them the next time you spot an aphid infestation on your plants. Hover fly larvae typically look like slugs marked with muted patterns, but white-bowed smoothwings look more like pale green caterpillars with a white stripe.

The greater bee fly (*Bombylius major*) appears in late March, and it always gives me a chuckle. It's another bumble bee mimic, but it looks cartoonish with its plump body, big eyes, wings held out stiffly, and extra-long proboscis.

I got my first photo of a greater bee fly last year, and it was an accomplishment. They're zippy fliers. Bee flies have to be elusive, because their *modus operandi* is to flick their eggs near the nests of



Hornet flies are expert yellowjacket mimics.

ground-nesting solitary bees without getting caught. With any luck, a few eggs will make it into the nests, where the fly larvae will chow down on the bee larvae. Adult bee flies visit flowers for their food, and they do some pollinating.

Burgess's thick-headed fly (*Physocephala burgessi*) is an unmistakable fly, with a smooth, reddish-brown, wasplike body that terminates in a bulbous, hooked tip. These flies also parasitize bees, but they usually target bumble bees, and they do it in mid-air. A female will catch a bee and inject an egg directly into it.

Once parasitized, the hapless bee goes on about its business, while the thick-headed fly larva eats its insides. Eventually, the host bee dies, and the fly will pupate and overwinter inside the host's body. The adult fly emerges the following May or June to start the grisly cycle over again.

Many insects mimic yellowjackets, but none do it more convincingly than the hornet flies (*Spilomyia* spp.). I always do a doubletake when they appear in my garden in July. Looking more closely, I notice the short antennae and the quirky way these flies gyrate their wings when pausing on plants, and I realize I'm dealing with an imposter.

Hornet flies are perhaps my favorite flies not only for their cheeky mimicry, but for their wholesome lifestyle. The adults pollinate flowers, and the larvae do not eat bees from the inside-out, but rather live off organic matter in the rot holes of trees. Here's yet another reason to incorporate deadwood into your garden. Deadwood is full of life!

Flies are surprisingly diverse and interesting creatures. I hope this little tribute makes you look at them with a bit more curiosity, respect, and maybe even fondness. And if you want more, I have 109 more stories to tell.



*Freelance writer, editor, photographer, speaker, and former HPSO board member, Amy Campion co-authored the acclaimed Gardening in the Pacific Northwest. A Portland resident since 2013, she blogs about gardening at [amycampion.com](http://amycampion.com). Amy currently works at Garden Fever nursery in Northeast Portland and is a regular columnist for the Quarterly. She is available to speak about gardening for pollinators and other insects.*



One of many hover flies in my garden: a white-bowed smoothwing.



White-bowed smoothwing larvae are voracious aphid-eaters.



A bumble fly visits my manzanita in February.

I never dreamed I'd fall in love with flies, but here we are. I've met some captivating characters, and now I'm smitten.

# Plants from Chile

## Pacific Northwest's Southern Hemisphere Counterpart

text and photography by Jim Gersbach

There is one place on earth that mirrors the Northwest's garden-favorable climate and topography to an uncanny degree. Chile is the Southern Hemisphere equivalent of the U.S. West Coast. It stretches through the same latitudes as Baja California to Alaska, but with the dry deserts in the north instead of the south. In Chile, rainfall increases as one heads south, just as it does when driving north up I-5 from California. The same Pacific Ocean sparkles to the west, with a coast range of mountains bordering an analog of the Willamette Valley in the form of the rich agricultural lands of Chile's Valle Central. To its east rise snow-capped volcanic peaks comparable to our Cascades.

Arriving in central and southern Chile, even on my recent—and fourth—visit, I was struck by familiar weeds growing in the ditches and roadsides. Himalayan blackberry (it's actually from northern Iran and Armenia), Scot's broom, gorse, and dandelion are invasive here, just as they are in the Northwest.

Adding to the eerie sense of familiarity, Douglas-fir—known to Chileans as *pino de Oregon*—grows exceedingly well in southern Chile. Unfortunately, along with fast-growing *radiata* pine and Australian eucalyptus, it has replaced much native forest throughout Chile. This is a shame, because with such a similar climate and topography, Chile offers Northwest gardeners many exciting plants well adapted to our conditions.

Among the 4,655 vascular plants native to Chile, probably the most well known and widely grown in the Pacific Northwest is hardy fuchsia (*Fuchsia magellanica*) and its cultivars. Like many plants in Chile it is known there by the name the indigenous Mapuche people gave it—*chilco*. I found *chilco* often grew near streams or rivers and in the understory of cool forests. Its red and purple flowers are the same in the wild as in my garden. But in Chile it can reach small tree size because it is seldom cut down by hard freezes, while in Oregon it has to come back from the ground each spring.

Another Chilean plant fairly well known in the Oregon area is escallonia, often in a hybridized form. There are many species in Chile with flowers ranging from white to pink to red and from low, prostrate alpine forms to taller shrubs. These are usually found where they can get plenty of light. They are especially useful for coastal gardens. Hummingbirds appreciate the flowers as much here as they do in Chile.

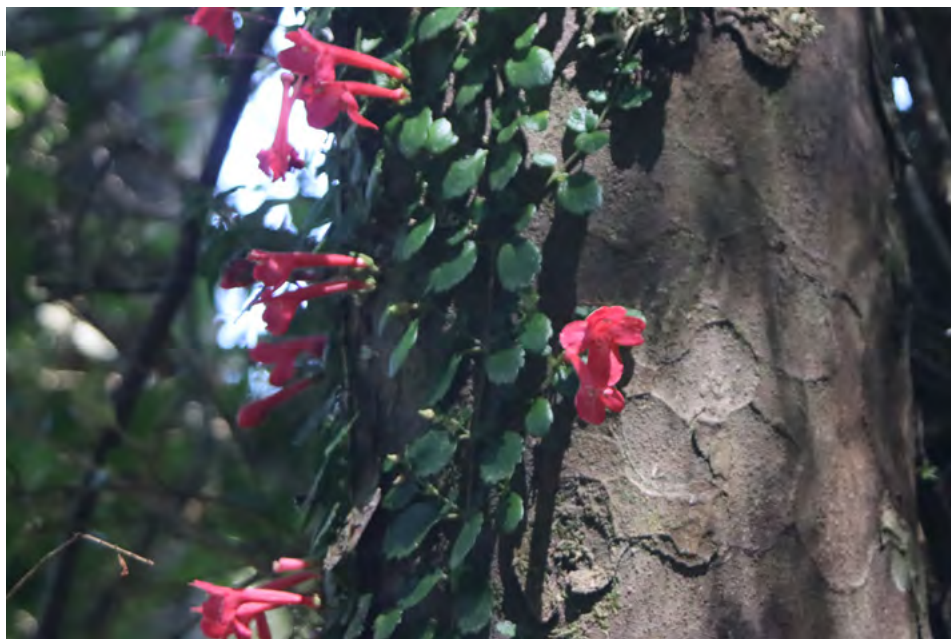
In recent years the small boxleaf azara tree (*Azara microphylla*) and Chilean firebush (*Embothrium coccineum*) have also become more available in the U.S. nursery trade. In Portland, Oregon, *A. microphylla* is even an approved street tree for small right-of-way planting strips. In the wild it grows in southern Chile's moist Valdivian rainforest under the shade of tall Chilean beech trees. Its shiny dark green leaves do resemble boxwood. Although the flowers

are miniscule, they emit a wonderful vanilla scent in late winter.

Somewhat less common in the Northwest is the aptly named Chilean firebush. It pops up in disturbed, sunny sites, often after wildfires. The showy orange to red flowers attract hummingbirds. When in flower, stands of firebush can turn a hillside aflame with color. A *Protea*, it can be tricky to grow. This plant should not be exposed to inorganic fertilizers. Although it prefers to grow in sunshine, it also likes its roots kept cool. Even with these conditions met, Chilean firebush can suddenly succumb to fungal infection, as happened with one in my northeast Portland garden. Others have had success with it, so it might be worth a try for those not afraid to take a gamble.

All over Chile in forests, grasslands, and in roadside ditches, I saw Peruvian lilies (*alstroemeria*), especially *A. aurantiaca*. Colors in this widespread species varied from golden yellow to rich orange. Other species come in shades of pink (such as *A. presliana*), red, or lilac. I grow the cultivar 'Butterscotch' in a fair amount of shade, but it flowers for me nonetheless. Seeing the parent species flowering in partly shady areas in the wild helps explain its capacity to do so in my garden.

Monkey puzzle trees (*Araucaria araucana*) are familiar to most gardeners in the Northwest, even if few grow the conifer. It was thrilling to see it growing at treeline on high volcanic slopes in the Andes where



*Asteranthera ovata* growing on a Prince Albert's yew (*Saxegothea conspicua*).

it forms the most Seuss-like landscape imaginable, a living reminder of what the planet's forests looked like in the Jurassic. Strolling in a grove of these sizable trees one can well imagine bumping into a lumbering stegosaurus. In past years large numbers of these trees were harvested for lumber, but they have been declared a Chilean National Monument and cutting is now restricted.

A surprising number of South American trees that should be hardy in western Oregon, at least in more protected sites or at the coast, are very rarely available from U.S. nurseries or seen here in cultivation. Several attractive species are noteworthy. Two roble trees (*Nothofagus obliqua*) that I have grown in Portland's Linear Arboretum have proven the species can be hardy in the area. Oaklike in form, they turn yellow to orange in autumn. Both seem intolerant of long dry spells in hot summers, however, and are not a tree to consider unless you plan to irrigate occasionally.

The related rauli (*Nothofagus alpina*) with its hornbeam-like leaves and ornamental orange fall color is sadly not to be found in Portland. It makes an imposing, upright tree that can quickly grow to 100 feet or more in good soils.

For those with acreage, *N. dombeyi* is the most impressive hardwood species I saw in Chile and Argentina. Specimens with massive trunks several feet in circumference dominated forests, thrusting their picturesque, oak-like branches 100 feet or more into the sky. The relatively small dark green leaves are evergreen. Portland's Hoyt Arboretum has some growing on the hill beneath the Mt. St. Helens viewpoint that are several years old, but specimens hundreds of years old are awe-inspiring in girth and grandeur.

The Chilean myrtle or arrayan (*Luma apiculata*) is widely photographed for its gorgeous cinnamon and beige peeling bark. On my most recent trip I stopped to admire its beauty wherever I saw it. A related tree I had not seen before but loved just as much was *Amomyrtus meli*. In Parque Oncol, a nature preserve near Valdivia, Chile, I was blown away by the beautiful trunks of trees growing in an 80-year-old second-growth forest. The smooth, peeling bark in cream, tan, and brownish-pink colors rivaled that of any eucalypt, to which they are distantly

*continues on next page*



Flowers of *Fuchsia magellanica* as seen in the wild. This species is a parent of hundreds of cultivars.



Scarlet flowers of *Lobelia tupa* grow at the Pacific coast of Chile. Jim grew this robust perennial in his Grant Park front yard in Portland. It was still going strong years after he had moved.

continued from previous page

related. If I had enough room for its ultimate 60-foot height and protection from cold east winds, this would definitely be on my must-have list. As an added bonus, bees reportedly make a delicious honey from its profusely produced, fragrant white flowers.

Chile also has a number of attractive conifers that would be assets in larger Pacific Northwest gardens or parks. See sidebar on opposite page.

It would take hundreds of additional pages to discuss the rest of Chile's highly ornamental plants. At a minimum, I hope to have given you a taste of the many plants with garden possibilities from Oregon's doppelganger below the Equator.



*Jim Gersbach has visited Chile four times. He's fallen in love with the country's scenery, people, and plants. He's reminded of his time in Chile every August when the two Eucryphia x nymanensis 'Nymansay' in his northeast Portland garden bloom. The hybrid's parents are the Chilean species E. glutinosa and E. cordifolia. An Oregon Department of Forestry Public Affairs Specialist, Gersbach has long championed the diversification of Portland's urban forest. An HPSO member since 1992, he frequently contributes to the Quarterly.*



top photo: *Mitraria coccinea* is a scrambling perennial often seen growing on or in trees. Its brightly colored orange flowers stand out in Chile's dark, dense forests, allowing pollinating hummingbirds to easily zero in on them.

middle photo: Young *Fitzroya cupressoides* trees in Chile's Alerce Costero National Park. These youngsters may live to see the next millenium or two if climate change doesn't kill them first.

bottom photo: Extraordinary bark on a Prince Albert's yew (*Saxegothea conspicua*). Chilean trees like this and others have found a home in the sheltered Puget Sound garden of Heronswood in Washington State.

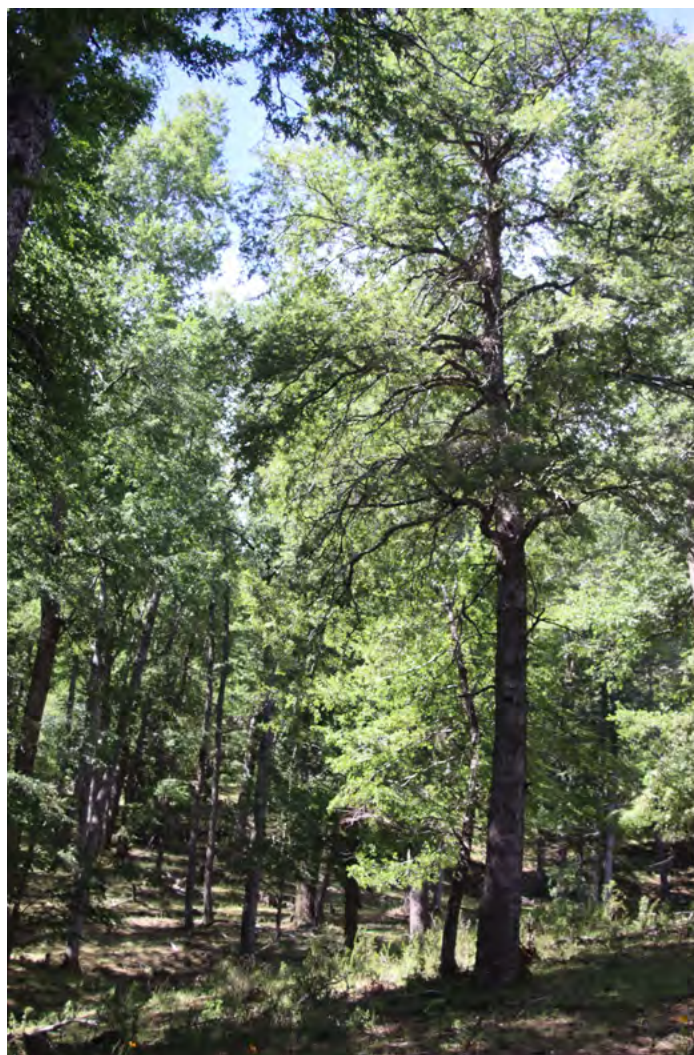


## Chilean Conifers That Could Grow in Pacific Northwest Gardens

- **Willow-leaf podocarp** (*Podocarpus salignus*) lives up to the name with its long, flat, ever-green needles. It may reach 60 feet or so over many years.
- **Andean podocarp** or **Chilean plum-yew** (*Prumnopitys andina*) has beautiful, soft, dark-green needles. It produces long, blue-purple arils that are made into a type of preserve in Chile. It appears hardy in Portland, with one growing in the Ainsworth median immediately north of Alberta Park.
- **Prince Albert's yew** (*Saxegothea conspicua*) is actually in the podocarp family. It has amazing exfoliating dark-chocolate bark. It grows slowly 50 to 80 feet tall in the wild.
- ***Fitzroya cupressoides***, slow-growing but extremely long-lived, is called the redwood of South America. Trees thousands of years old are documented growing in high-rainfall coastal areas. Like California redwoods, *Fitzroya* is in the cypress family.
- ***Austrocedrus chilensis*** looks superficially much like our western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*). This is not surprising given they are in the same family (cypress). However, the Andean cypress appears to tolerate sharply drained, drier, and sunnier sites. It suffers from an introduced phytophthora that is killing off many specimens.
- ***Pilgerodendron uviferum***, the southernmost conifer in the world, makes a neat, narrow, slow-growing cone. In the wild it reaches anywhere from 30 to 65 feet in height.



This *Fitzroya cupressoides* is older than the California redwoods. The species has beautiful reddish, rot-resistant wood, which has caused it to be logged to the point of becoming endangered.



The stately rauli (*Nothofagus alpina*) turns a lovely orange color in fall. Chile and Argentina share some of the only deciduous trees in South America. This is one of about four.

photo by James Martin



## Britta Fink

### THE QUARTERLY'S NEW MANAGING EDITOR

by Sara L. Sumpter

As the year draws to a close, the leadership of the HPSO *Quarterly* will change hands, with managing editor Eloise L. Morgan stepping down after eight years of service and assistant managing editor Britta Fink stepping up to take the reins.

Britta comes to the *Quarterly* with decades of gardening experience gained across a wide range of climates and landscapes. An obstetrician-gynecologist for many years, she began gardening as a medical student in North Carolina. After having grown up in the Southwest, the experience of living in a place that had four defined seasons and vibrant greenery was eye-opening. "All of it was completely new to me," she explains. "Because of the climate, everybody had a yard and everybody gardened, and I thought, 'I can get on board with this.'"

Gardening became an outlet for Britta during the grueling years of medical training. In North Carolina she devoured numerous gardening books alongside the endless list of required medical tomes. She also experimented with growing various plants from seed to save money while living on a graduate student budget. Upon the completion of her education, she and her husband moved to Phoenix, Arizona, for several years before relocating to Coos Bay, Oregon. While Phoenix was not her preferred climate for gardening, Britta persisted—including both the xeriscaping typical of the region and the practice of

growing showy, fragrant ornamentals like stock in the off-season. It was a lesson she had learned from her Southern Californian mother's trick of growing sweet peas in the desert in February.

In Oregon, Britta once again found a far more forgiving climate, and she and her family bought a home with an acre of land. Gardening remained her primary pastime during 22 years of private medical practice, and retirement naturally brought more time for gardening. In 2018, Britta joined the HPSO. In 2020, she and her family moved to Eugene, Oregon, and she started her third garden in Oregon. Though she was unable to attend meetings due to the distance, she often made the trek to volunteer at Hortlandia. It was involvement with the Travel Club that strengthened her ties with the organization, however. "I went on a tour in the summer of 2022; I went to the East Coast with my mom," Britta remembers. "We—and everyone at that point, really—were desperate to get out and do something. It was so refreshing!"

Britta continued to join HPSO garden tours and connect with other members. During a 2025 tour, she met Zoe Nielsen, then president of HPSO. When Zoe mentioned that the *Quarterly* would soon be seeking a new managing editor, Britta's ears pricked up. They began talking about what she would do with the *Quarterly* if someone put her in charge. As an undergraduate, Britta had double majored in biology and English literature, and she never lost her love of the English language and writing. Even when reading for leisure, she continued to find herself scanning the text with an editorial eye honed by years of working to make technical language accessible in layman's terms. As a result, she has many plans for the *Quarterly* going forward.

One of the things Britta hopes to do is inject a slightly stronger sense of humor, a crucial tool in any gardener's arsenal, into the publication. At the same time, she also plans to increase the *Quarterly's* focus on plants. "I want to introduce short, recurring features like 'I Wish I'd Never Planted

This' and 'Problem-Solving Plants,'" she explains. "At the end of the day, plants are what gets everyone excited, and I'm aiming to tap all of our plant resources—because we have so many—and get them to tell us their secrets!" She also intends to include more articles on plant propagation, expand the scope of Nursery Profiles to include more information on plant availability and growing practices, and incorporate interactive elements.

"I'd like to have a feature where we pose a plant-related question and solicit input from HPSO members," she says. "We could publish news about plant performance in member's yards, a true crowdsourcing of information. I think there's a lot of knowledge out there in the membership that we could be distributing. And I think it would be fun. Talk to the people; ask them some questions. See what they tell you. That's my vision."



*Sara L. Sumpter is a professional editor and translator living in Northeast Portland. A determined, though still relatively junior, gardener, she is interested in expanding her knowledge of gardening to include methods of seed saving, food preservation, and foraging. She is a regular contributor to the Quarterly.*



Britta's backyard garden in Eugene's Southeast Hill neighborhood.

# A GARDENER'S SEASONAL CHECKLIST

## Fall

by Katrina Alfano

As we step into autumn, here are some things you can be doing in your garden.

## October

- Consider using fallen leaves as mulch for your garden beds. The decomposition of leaf litter from weather and insects helps build soil humus, which improves soil structure and retains moisture. Did you know that fallen leaves in your garden can also provide insulation for many animals, such as butterflies, during the winter? Many eggs, caterpillars, and cocoons also depend on those leaves for survival. Please visit [xerces.org](http://xerces.org) for more information.
- Harvest the remainder of any warm season crops such as tomatoes. If apples and pears are ready to harvest they should easily come off the branches with a gentle pull. Clean up underneath your fruit trees, discarding any diseased leaves or fallen fruit.
- Consider planting cover crop seed on any bare patches of your vegetable beds. Cover crops that can be sown this time of year are common vetch, annual ryegrass, Austrian peas, Dutch white clover, and fall cereal rye.

## November

- Harvest herbs such as bay, winter savory, thyme, and rosemary to dry for winter enjoyment.
- The slow gardening pace of this month allows the gardener to plan for spring. This time of the year I like to walk through the garden and begin altering or creating new pathways.



In October harvest the remainder of your warm season crops plus apples and pears.

## December

- With the holidays in full swing, I enjoy making sure outdoor pots at the front doorway are full of seasonal interest. Some of my favorites are pansies, primrose, and dusty miller.
- The tool shed becomes a priority in December. It's a wonderful time to clean, sharpen, and organize your tools. If you have any empty terracotta pots, now is the time to clean, stack, and store them in the shed or garage for the winter.
- Open bags of potting soil, mulch, and fertilizer can be folded closed and tucked away. Go over your seed packet collection, discarding any that are expired, and filing the rest away for the upcoming spring.



*Katrina Alfano is an HPSO member and has worked at Portland Nursery for over a decade. She specializes in establishing mason bee and bird habitat. Residing in Southeast Portland with her husband, she enjoys their garden, which includes fruit trees, herbs, and plenty of birdbaths.*



Plant primroses near your front door.

## GARDEN CREATURES

"My name," said the spider,  
"is Charlotte."

"Charlotte," said Wilbur  
the pig. "I think you're  
beautiful!"

"Well, I am pretty," replied  
Charlotte. "There's no  
denying that. Almost all  
spiders are rather  
nice looking...."

*Charlotte's Web*, E.B. White, 1952



European cross orb weaver spider in Amy Campion's Portland garden.

# In the Company of Spiders

by Stephen Morgan

I, for one, agree with Charlotte and Wilbur, though I know the four percent of us who suffer from arachnophobia might think otherwise. But if you garden, spiders are already your quiet, natural-pest-control partners, working day and night, without pay or complaint, as part of the complex ecological web that is your garden.

In the Pacific Northwest, we share our landscapes with more than 1,100 species of spiders. Globally, there are over 53,000 species and still counting. Spiders belong to the order Araneae, coming from the Greek myth of Arachne. A gifted weaver, Arachne challenged the Greek goddess Athena to a weaving contest. Arachne, arrogant and skilled, angered the goddess and was turned into a spider, destined to weave forever.

Spiders range in size from no larger than a pinhead, to the largest, and mostly harmless, South American goliath tarantula, as large as a dinner plate. Some species seem almost imaginary. The European diving bell spiders of Europe live their

entire lives in streams and ponds, building a waterproof, silken bell. They mate, rear their young, and capture prey in the water.

The fascinating bola spider hunts with a single silk line with a sticky drop on the end. The gummy blob, made of silk, is impregnated with a sex pheromone that attracts male moths. The bola female doesn't build a web, but swings her tacky, scented bola, and male moths attracted by romance become dinner.

If you've walked through your garden in early mornings or late afternoons and noticed fine, shimmering threads stretched over the shrubbery, you've seen evidence of spider "ballooning." Young spiderlings will climb to a high point, orient themselves to the wind, release a fan of silk, and be whisked into the air. Their silk strands also become electrostatically charged, allowing spiders to ride the earth's natural electric fields. An excited and delighted Charles Darwin described this phenomenon in 1832 during his voyage on the HMS Beagle. Heading toward Buenos Aires and 130 miles at sea, he experienced hundreds of tiny spiders raining down on the ship.

In this article, I've covered just five of our most common garden spiders and their families. For excellent photos and more descriptions of these spiders, please go to HPSO member and Associate Professor Susan Masta's excellent web page at Portland State University's Museum of Natural History, Department of Biology, available online at: [web.pdx.edu/~smasta/](http://web.pdx.edu/~smasta/).

### Orb Weavers (family Araneidae)

Our classic garden spider, one of the largest spider families, builds a web of sticky spirals supported by non-sticky spokes. The female lays hundreds of eggs near the web before dying with the first frost. Watch for clumps of the tiny spiderlings in spring. Orb weavers are docile and harmless to us and eat whatever they catch in their web. The females become more noticeable as summer progresses, with their beautiful brown to orange colorations.

### Wolf Spiders (family Lycosidae)

One you'll commonly see while working on the ground, the wolf spider doesn't spin a web. Solitary, brown to grey, ground dwelling spiders, they're fast, darting here and there, hunting for prey. Being hunters, they have keen eyesight. A wolf spider mother will carry her egg case and young spiderlings on her back until they can take care of themselves. They are considered one of our most beneficial garden species.

Adobe Stock photo by Elisa



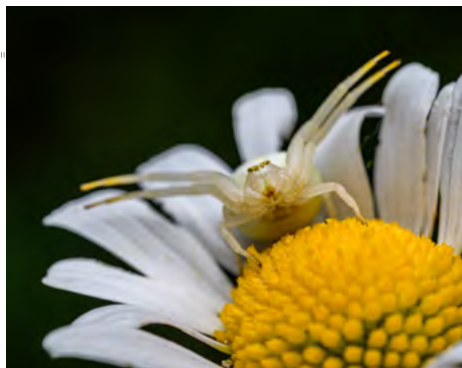
Wolf spider.

photo by Amy Campion



Crab spider on *Euthamia* plant in Amy Campion's garden.

Adobe Stock photo by Petr



Goldenrod crab spider, *Misumena vatia*.

Adobe Stock photo by LLga



Funnel web spider in his tunnel.

## Crab or Flower Spiders (family Thomisidae)

Identified by their forelegs, held crablike, flower spiders are very common. Many of them are ambush predators and, like our local goldenrod crab spider, can change color over a few days to match the flowers they hide among. They prey on a variety of flying insects.

## Funnel and Sheetweb Spiders (family Agelenidae and family Linyphiidae)

I'm sure you've noticed these very common spider webs in and on your shrubs and grass. When they sense vibrations on their web, they dart out very quickly from hiding to capture an insect. You might think the webbing is unsightly, but look closely and appreciate the little habitat that's been created there.

## Jumping Spiders (family Salticidae)

Our largest family of spiders, these mostly tiny, agile jumpers see as well

as dragonflies, including in color and ultraviolet light. Some females produce a nutritious milk-like substance for their offspring, feeding them until they are sexually mature. When jumping on prey, they maintain a safety line of silk to hang onto in case they miss their target. If any spider is going to win you over, it's this one. An article in *The New York Times* in early August this year detailed the popularity of jumping spiders as pets kept in terrariums.

Almost all garden spiders are completely harmless to us. Black widow spiders (*Latrodectus hesperus*) occur in eastern and southern Oregon. They are quite rare here in the Portland Metro area and very reclusive. The brown recluse spider (*Loxosceles reclusa*) does not occur here either. Spiders are interesting to watch and fascinating to learn about. So, the next time you see a spider in your garden, instead of backing away, get closer and be curious to learn more about the wonderful life you're really seeing. You might find yourself agreeing with Charlotte and Wilbur after all.



*Before serving as the Horticulturalist at Portland's Hoyt Arboretum, Stephen Morgan was a horticulture extension agent with Oregon State University for 16 years. His responsibilities there included Master Gardeners, field research, educational program development, and working with commercial growers.*

## Resources:

"Spiders Commonly Found in Gardens and Yards," Susan Masta, PSU (available online at [web.pdx.edu/~smasta/](http://web.pdx.edu/~smasta/)).

"Common Spiders of Washington," EM113E WSU Extension (available online)

*Spiders of Oregon, An Identification Guide*, Mike Merano, 2022

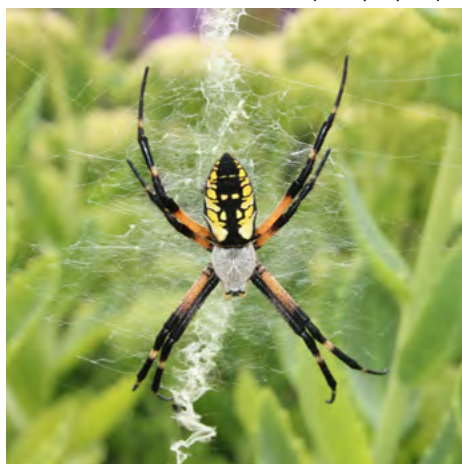
*An Immense World: How Animal Senses Reveal the Hidden Realms Around Us*, by Ed Yong, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author who details the wonderful ways animals, including spiders, perceive their environment through their senses.

photo by Susan Masta



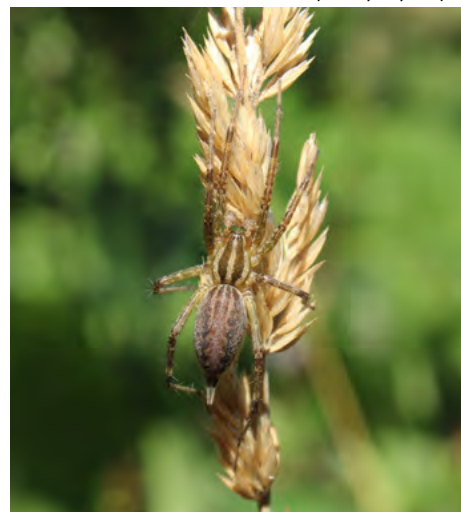
The bold jumping spider (*Phidippus rigius*). Some people keep jumping spiders as pets.

photo by Amy Campion



Yellow garden spider in Amy Campion's garden.

photo by Amy Campion



Grass spider in Amy Campion's garden.

## GARDEN DESIGN

# Creating Japanese Gardens With Skill and Heart

by Liz Schneider



Before making any cuts, I asked the *momiji* how it wanted to be shaped and attempted to identify the *kisei*.



*Komorebi* in the Portland Japanese Garden.

Since childhood I have loved the Portland, Oregon, Japanese Garden (PJG), but I have mostly admired it from afar. The same is true for Japanese gardens and gardening in general. In my garden, I try to prioritize plants that require few inputs; and in my design business, most requests are for low-maintenance, low-water gardens. My limited knowledge had me believing those requirements and Japanese gardens did not mix, so I have not invested in learning the art. Nonetheless, I am completely enchanted by Japanese garden paths and have wanted to learn how to create them. When the Oregon chapter of the Association of Professional Landscape Designers (APLD) sent its April newsletter with a link to apply for PJG's *Waza to Kokoro*, I clicked.

By applying, I'd hoped for an overview of Japanese garden design, some information on stone paths, and time in the garden. What I got was a seven-day immersive seminar with 12 other landscape and design professionals from around the country (a true testament to PJG's reputation).

Our schedule was full with workshops taught by experts of Japanese gardening, culture, and tea. Two Japanese master gardeners flew from Japan to teach their craft through volunteer language interpreters. Hugo Torii, PJG's Garden Curator & Director of Japanese Garden Training Center, instructed and facilitated the week along with Yuki Wallen, Training Center Program Manager. We also had visits from other garden staff and experts. Our agenda included four days of classroom/garden learning at PJG, a two-day stone workshop at Smith Rock, Inc., in Milwaukie, Oregon, and a pruning day at Iseli Nursery, a Boring, Oregon, wholesaler. We also participated in several tea ceremonies, including one in the PJG Kashintei Tea House, a special privilege as it is generally closed to the public.

The curriculum included content that reinforced my limited knowledge of Japanese gardens: nature is the inspiration, everything is intentional, there are a lot of rules, and a lot of pruning. What I didn't anticipate was how the class would also break down these preconceived notions. Nature is the inspiration, but Japanese garden design entails extensive observation and deep understanding of how natural elements co-exist and function. Everything is intentional, and there are strict rules, but once learned (and this takes decades), rules can be broken and creativity reigns. There is a lot of pruning, but there are also natural Japanese gardens that emphasize native plants and require less tending. (The PJG Natural Garden and entry path are excellent examples.)

*Waza to Kokoro* translates to something like "skill and heart." I had a baseline understanding of the "skill" part, it was the "heart" element I had missed.

Japanese gardening is an art traditionally learned through decades of apprenticeship. (In PJG Garden Curator Hugo Torii's

words, “It takes 200 years to be a gardener”—how humbling). We learned this process as *shu-ha-ri* (obey, digress, separate), whereby the apprentice follows a *sensei* for many years to acquire the technical skill before developing her own approach and diverging from the *sensei*. This is where the heart comes in.

One skill paramount to this craft is understanding nature in order to create gardens that feel genuine to our innate senses. Rather than developing a design on paper and selecting materials to execute it, the Japanese gardener develops the plan as she goes by responding to the site and materials available. In reverence to nature, decisions are based on the individual stones (cracks, moss, and all), bamboo shoots, wood pieces, and the like, available. The garden evolves as new materials are introduced.

This came to light during our hands-on *nobedan* workshop, when our *sensei* encouraged us to observe the stones, get to know them, listen to them, and build our path based on their guidance—a stark contrast to my everyday process. Four teams created four distinct layouts, each with its own character. There are very specific rules for how *nobedan* are built to be functional, and this takes skill to execute well. What surprised me was the amount of space allowed to work within, even beyond those rules (provided you have learned and adequately considered them). A good Japanese garden balances function with the aesthetic of imperfection (what we often call *wabi-sabi*) and playfulness. This is what makes it beautiful—this is *kokoro*.

Of course, Japanese garden design is a highly complex art influenced by thousands of years of history and culture. Thus my knowledge of the subject remains extremely elementary. But I have now had a view into the depth and intricacy of this art, and this has given me a completely new perspective. It has sparked inspiration to explore it more.

Like any, a Japanese garden can be a high-maintenance water hog. Or it can be a low-input, whimsical, calming, *Zoko no niwa* with layers of locally native plants, meandering paths from reclaimed materials, and water flowing over mossy boulders. As with anything, to do this right takes technical skill *and* creative spirit—it takes *waza* to *kokoro*.



*Liz is a longtime Northeast Portland resident and fledgling landscape designer eager to engage with the community through gardens. She is an independent landscape designer who collaborates regularly with Pride + Joy Landscapes. She joined HPSO in 2012 and is an active member of the Quarterly editorial staff.*

#### For more information

[japanesegarden.org/japan-institute/thecenter/waza-kokoro-seminar/](http://japanesegarden.org/japan-institute/thecenter/waza-kokoro-seminar/)

[japanesegarden.org/2025/10/11/waza-to-kokoro-2025/](http://japanesegarden.org/2025/10/11/waza-to-kokoro-2025/)



*Sensei Seki coaching my nobedan construction team on the kokoro of placing our lantern stone.*



*My seminar team's tsukubai [water basin] is tested to assess our waza.*

#### Some of my favorite terms and their rough translations:

*Waza* – skill, technique

*Kokoro* – heart, spirit

*Roji* – tea garden path  
(literally “dewy ground”)

*Nobedan* – garden path

*Zoko no niwa* – natural garden

*Ma* – the space between (Hugo:  
when you are fighting with your  
girlfriend and there is a pause)

*Komorebi* – light through trees

*Mono no aware* – awareness that  
there is beauty in the brevity of  
life

*Myabi* – delicate, refined  
elegance

*Iki* – understated stylishness,  
chic

*Wabi* – rustic simplicity;  
irregular, austere beauty

*Sabi* – patina from age

*Kisea* – flow

*Sukashi* – pruning to allow  
wind flow

## STORIES FROM THE STORES

# Feeling the Vibe At Al's

by Jim Mitchell

Readers of the *Quarterly* know what a garden can be—a certain place that creates a feeling, a mood, a sensation. Call it the garden's vibe.

Walk into one of Al's Garden & Home Centers in the Portland, Oregon, area, and the vibes are yours to choose from. Joy? For you, if it's flowering trees, lilacs, and weigela, they're on your right. Serenity? How about lavender and hydrangea—they are around the corner. Forest cleansing? Conifers and sword ferns straight ahead. Or if vintage is for you, English climbing roses and stately delphiniums to the left.

HPSO members likely know Al's is more than just a retail nursery. But did you know they are growers as well? Nearly 80 percent of plants they sell at their stores are grown by the company at three growing facilities located elsewhere in the metro area.

They've been in business for more than 75 years, starting with a roadside fruit stand in Woodburn, Oregon, shortly after World War II. Over the years, a blend of horticulture interests and business savvy enabled



Al's four garden centers reflect the Portland metro area growth.

them to buy land and eventually open large garden centers in four of the fastest growing areas of the region—Sherwood, Wilsonville, Woodburn, and Gresham.

Al Bigej opened the original fruit stand and had modest success. When his young son Jack added shrubs a few years later, the business started to expand. Soon the fruit sales were surpassed by sales of other plants. Growth created opportunity, and as the family expanded, so did the business. Today, Mark Bigej, third generation family member and Chief Operating Officer, works alongside his sisters Dorothy Russo, Chief Growing Officer, and Darcy Ruef, Chief Financial Officer, continuing

the family's commitment to evolve the business for a new generation. Mark says that the nursery has grown beyond just selling and growing plants. "We also grow people," noting that many former employees learned the trade at Al's and then moved on to open their own wholesale or retail outlets.

Mark asserts they've never lost focus on the three qualities that ensure a gardener's success: a good variety of plant material to choose from, a good quality of stock, and good growth potential. "When you buy something, appearance and size is obvious," a staff member noted during a recent tour. "You are roughly assured of

its growth potential.

But the unknown is the growth quality. That's the key" to satisfied customers. Call it the trust element. In two years, when the true quality of the plant is known, you'll tell your friends and return for more.

It's a mistake to compare Al's to the so-called big box or one-stop shopping stores. As well as selling plants to suit the novice gardener, Al's grows and sells

photo courtesy of Al's Garden Center



Al's vast holiday gift selection.

photo courtesy of Al's Garden Center



The third generation carries on from grandfather Al—granddaughter Darcy (left) is the finance chief, grandson Mark handles operations, and granddaughter Dorothy (right) takes care of horticulture.

a surprisingly large array of exotic plants and shrubs for the experienced gardener seeking plants outside of the expected. An extensive inventory is there for the browsing on their robust website. You might want to visit it to chase away your winter doldrums.

Staff members regularly visit nursery trade shows to collect information on industry trends and to find vendors for seed, root stock, and grafts that Al's will develop in one of their growing locations. "Retailers like us are focused on trends," Mark notes. "Gardens are getting smaller, and new home buyers are looking for plants that are more compact and trees that are narrower. We're seeing a growing interest in container gardening, as well as things like dwarf fruit trees." Plus, he adds, "climate change is here, and drought tolerant plants are in demand."

Al's is a long-time supporter of The Hardy Plant Society of Oregon, as well as the local community. For HPSO members, they sponsor After Hours events with private educational seminars and discount shopping, and Mike Darcy's "Plant Nerd Night (now Afternoon)." They also share their horticultural bounty with the community, often donating overstocked plants to nonprofits for fundraising events. They donate to seed libraries, offer Kid's Club educational classes, and support local schools and church groups. They offer free seminars on container arranging and vegetable harvesting.

photo by Jim Mitchell



Al's three growing locations supply the four retail stores.

In addition, on their website, Al's recently introduced the "Landscape Design Inspiration Tool" that allows users to create a visual representation of their own garden by uploading a photograph of the area of their yard they want to reimagine. Then they can use the application to design a virtual garden by selecting different plant and feature options. Users can also modify the view to see how it changes with the seasons. You can actually see if you can achieve the vibe you seek.

Yet another useful feature on their website recommends plants based on specific selection criteria. Users can check dropdown boxes for attributes such as color, watering needs, growth habit (spreading, climbing, clumping), and size; and multiple recommendations meeting the chosen criteria appear.

Al's is open year-round. The atmosphere changes as products, features, and décor of the stores change with the season. Besides plant material, all four stores carry garden-related items—furniture, containers, and gifts, along with apparel and other accessories for the gardener. While many nurseries close for the so-called "shoulder season," Al's has adapted to market demands. For instance, at the Sherwood store, you can sip warm coffee in the morning and wine in the afternoon while you shop.

Customers are known to call Al's their Happy Place. Staff hear that all the time, even on those drab Northwest winter days. As soon as you walk in, you'll probably agree. After all, for most of us, being surrounded by plant vibes makes any day better.



*Jim Mitchell is a long time HPSO member and reports that he felt a "good vibe" during a recent visit to Al's. He is a regular contributor to the Quarterly.*

**NOTE: Al's will be open for an HPSO After Hours event Thursday, November 19, 5:00-7:00 pm, at their Sherwood location.**



Colorful perennials bring exuberance to the garden.



Al's offers a wide choice of garden furniture and related items in all four stores.

**Al's**  
garden \* home

Locations:

16920 SW Roy Rogers Road  
Sherwood, Oregon 97140

1220 N Pacific Highway  
Woodburn, Oregon 97071

27755 SW Parkway Avenue  
Wilsonville, Oregon 97070

7505 SE Hogan Road  
Gresham, Oregon 97080

[als-gardencenter.com](http://als-gardencenter.com)

Direct link to virtual design application: [als-gardencenter.com/pages/design-your-space](http://als-gardencenter.com/pages/design-your-space)

## GARDEN SCIENCE

# Dangerous Gardens When Nectar is Toxic

by Gail Langellotto

There are over 300,000 so-called secondary compounds that have been identified from various plant species. They are referred to as “secondary” because unlike plant primary compounds (including glucose, DNA, and amino acids) secondary compounds are not directly involved in plant growth or reproduction. Instead, secondary compounds help to deter pests, attract pollinators, or protect a plant from UV radiation and other environmental stresses. In addition, whereas plant primary compounds are universally found across plant species, different types of secondary compounds are found in different plant families. For example, alkaloids are found in nightshades (Solanaceae) or poppies (Papaveraceae); glucosinolates are found in cruciferous vegetables (Brassicaceae).



Microbes ferment the sugars in *Epicactis* orchids, which can intoxicate and inebriate visiting bees.

Many of the secondary compounds are bitter, pungent, or toxic chemicals that deter feeding or directly harm most insect herbivores. Only insects that have adapted and specialized to feed on a slim suite of host plants are able to overcome these chemical plant defenses.

Cabbage worms (*Pieris rapae*) are an excellent example of how plant secondary compounds promote host plant specialization. Cabbage worms can metabolize the bitter glucosinolates found in cabbages, kale, and mustards into a harmless

compound, instead of following the more common metabolic pathway that produces toxic isothiocyanates.<sup>1</sup> Since most insect species don't have this ability, cabbage worms have fewer competitors for food. Over time, they became specialized to feed solely on plants within the Brassicaceae. The same relationship between plant secondary compounds and insect herbivores plays out across the natural world. This is why about 70 percent of insect herbivores are specialized to feed and reproduce on plants within a single taxonomic family or genus.

Photographer: Eric Hunt, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons



California buckeye nectar can be extremely toxic to honey bees but not to nectaring butterflies.

The relationship between plants and their herbivores is largely antagonistic. Plants concentrate secondary chemicals in their foliage to deter or prevent herbivore feeding. However, nectar is a reward of sucrose, fructose, and glucose that strengthens the mutually beneficial interaction between plants and their pollinators. It is thus somewhat surprising that many plants have nectar that contains toxic secondary compounds.

An excellent review paper<sup>2</sup> published in 2000 shares a long list of plants with nectar known to be repellent or toxic to bees. They include plants that are widely recognized as poisonous, including death camas (*Zigadenus venenosus*), false hellebore (*Veratrum californicum*), mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), and deadly nightshade (*Atropa belladonna*). Because nectar is supplied by a plant's vascular system, it makes sense that highly toxic compounds that are found in other parts

of a plant would make their way into nectar. In other cases, such as milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.) and *Epipactis* orchids, toxic ethanol is produced via microbial fermentation of nectar sugars, rather than from the plant itself. In California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*), the nectar itself may not be toxic. However pollen grains falling into the corolla may render the nectar harmful to bees.<sup>3</sup> California buckeye can also be found on pollinator lists: it is an important host plant and nectar source for butterflies, even if the nectar is toxic to bees.

Notably, bees tend to be more prone to the effects of toxic nectar than butterflies.<sup>4</sup> Bees have higher metabolic rates and more sensitive organ systems than butterflies, which is one reason for their increased susceptibility to toxic nectar. Bees also tend to be generalists<sup>5</sup> and thus exposed to a wider range of nectar toxins than well-adapted specialists might encounter.

Bees that feed on toxic nectar can exhibit a variety of responses. Some may show no observable response. Others may appear lethargic or “drunk.” In the most

extreme cases, the bees can be poisoned and die.<sup>6</sup> In other cases, alkaloids (the class of chemicals that contain nicotine, cocaine, and caffeine) in nectar can alter the nervous system of bees in ways that improve their effectiveness as pollinators.<sup>7</sup>

Why might plants offer toxic nectar to their pollinators? One possibility is that it discourages unwanted floral visitors, such as nectar-robbing bees. Nectar robbers bite holes in the base of flowers to receive the floral reward of nectar without providing the benefit of pollination. Toxic nectar can also promote specialization and reduce opportunities for generalist pollinators to clog the surface of a plant's stigma with pollen from another plant species. Once a pollen grain is deposited on a stigma, it forms a pollen tube that can fertilize plant ovules within the ovary, to ultimately form seed or fruit. This process is disrupted when pollen from the wrong plant species is deposited on a stigma,<sup>8</sup> which is more likely to happen in florally rich gardens.<sup>9</sup> A final possibility might be that toxic nectar may not confer any adaptive advantage to plants. Instead,

it could be a byproduct of plant physiology (as evidenced by the fact that toxic plants tend to have toxic nectar).

Currently, toxic nectar is largely viewed as an anomaly. In truth, few research groups have studied the phenomenon. We thus know very little about the extent of toxic nectar across plant species, or the role of toxic nectar in structuring plant-pollinator interactions. But this is the fun part of science! There is always more to discover and learn.



*Gail Langellotto is a professor of horticulture at Oregon State University and Principal Investigator of the Oregon State University Garden Ecology Lab. She holds a B.S. in biology and an M.S. and Ph.D. in entomology, all from the University of Maryland. She is a regular contributor to the HPSO Quarterly.*

Photographer: Stan Shebs, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons



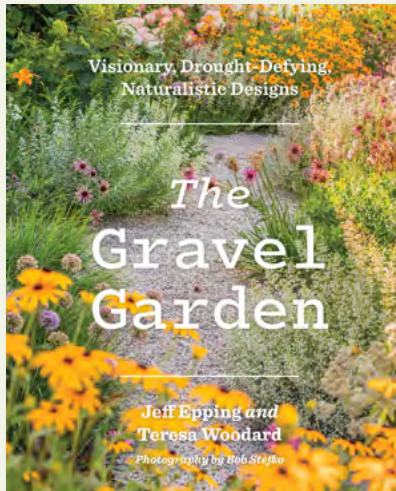
Poisonous death camas has a steroidal alkaloid in its nectar that can disrupt an insect's cardiovascular system.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Wittstock et al. (2004). Successful herbivore attack due to metabolic diversion of a plant chemical defense. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 101:4859-4864.
- <sup>2</sup> Adler (2000). The ecological significance of toxic nectar. *Oikos*, 91: 409-420.
- <sup>3</sup> Garvey (2015). Keep Your 'Girls' Out of California Buckeye. University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources Bug Squad Blog. <https://ucanr.edu/blog/bug-squad/article/keep-your-girls-out-california-buckeye>
- <sup>4</sup> Jones & Agrawal (2016). Consequences of toxic secondary compounds in nectar for mutualist bees and antagonist butterflies. *Ecology*, 97: 2570-2579.
- <sup>5</sup> Bell et al. (2023). Assessing five decades of garden bee studies. *Frontiers in Sustainable Cities*, 5, 1102360.
- <sup>6</sup> Garvey (2015). Keep Your 'Girls' Out of California Buckeye. University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources Bug Squad Blog. <https://ucanr.edu/blog/bug-squad/article/keep-your-girls-out-california-buckeye>
- <sup>7</sup> Wright et al. (2013). Caffeine in floral nectar enhances a pollinator's memory of reward. *Science*, 339(6124), 1202-1204.
- <sup>8</sup> Caruso & Alfaro (2000). Interspecific pollen transfer as a mechanism of competition: Effect of *Castilleja linariaefolia* pollen on seed set of *Ipomopsis aggregata*. *Canadian Journal of Botany* 78: 600-606.
- <sup>9</sup> Werrell et al. (2009). The influence of garden size and floral cover on pollen deposition in urban community gardens. *Cities and the Environment*: 2(1) Article 6.

# BOOK REVIEW

Phillip Oliver, a retired librarian and former HPSO Board member, reviews a new garden book recommending an unusual concept.



## The Gravel Garden: Visionary Drought- Defying, Naturalistic Designs

by Jeff Epping and Teresa Woodard  
Timber Press, 2026



The concept of “gravel gardening” is an interesting one and, for want of a better word, bizarre. You remove the top six inches of soil and replace it with pure gravel, add perennial plants (in small plugs, pint, or quarter-sized pots), and water daily for several months until plants have become established. Following that, you have a weed-free and water-wise garden.

If this leaves you in doubt, authors Jeff Epping and Teresa Woodard might easily change your mind with this eye-opening book. The photos alone, by photographer Bob Stefko, will certainly entice and motivate gardeners to consider new possibilities, especially when told that such a garden will result in 80 percent less work than a conventional garden.

The concept of gravel gardens is a naturalistic design philosophy that uses drought-tolerant, deep-rooted perennials in a manner that reduces water and weeds. The authors recommend a large inventory of perennials that can be grown this way, as well as ornamental grasses, and in some cases, even small shrubs. Some common plants, and those that reappear in many of the gardens in the book, are coreopsis, penstemon, lavender, calamint, echinacea, aster, rudbeckia, Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*, syn. *Salvia yangii*), and a number of ornamental grasses. Although most of the gardens are created with pure gravel, this rule is not set in stone, and some gardens (such as Chanticleer Garden in Pennsylvania) use a combination of gravel and soil. However, one of the basic principles is reducing soil so that weeds cannot germinate.

Epping is the Director of Horticulture at Olbrich Botanical Gardens in Madison, Wisconsin. There, he created his first gravel garden; and, in 2018, converted his nearby home garden. He was inspired by the gardens of Beth Chatto and Derek Jarman in England, as well as the garden of his friend and colleague Roy Diblik at Northwest Perennial Farm in Burlington, Wisconsin. Diblik's enthusiasm and encouragement prompted Epping to try gravel gardening for himself.

Epping describes his personal garden in Wisconsin and explains the basics for creating a gravel garden. A total of 20 gardens are profiled in 14-page spreads that showcase a range of different garden types, including private and public gardens, a roundabout, and a rooftop garden. A chapter on British gravel gardens includes those of Beth Chatto and Derek Jarman, as well as the walled garden at Knepp Castle and the recently developed Delos Garden at Sissinghurst. The U.S. gardens that are included range from Pennsylvania to Texas, with several in Iowa and Wisconsin.

Epping hopes that readers will be inspired to explore the possibilities of gravel gardening: “It is gardening for the world we live in now. Gravel gardens are resilient, resource-wise, and endlessly beautiful.”



*Phillip Oliver is a former HPSO board member. He gardens in Vancouver, Washington, and documents happenings in his garden and elsewhere on his blog Dirt Therapy ([phillipoliver.blogspot.com](http://phillipoliver.blogspot.com)).*

Scarlet flowers of *Lobelia tupa* grow at the Pacific coast of Chile, page 10. Photo by Jim Gersbach.





The Hardy Plant Society of Oregon  
11800 S Military Lane  
Portland, OR 97219

[hardyplantsociety.org](http://hardyplantsociety.org)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### WORKSHOP

Saturday, October 24  
— Woodland Wreaths  
Workshop with Françoise  
Weeks

### ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, November 1 —  
PSU Hoffman Hall

*See page 1 for details.*

### AFTER HOURS

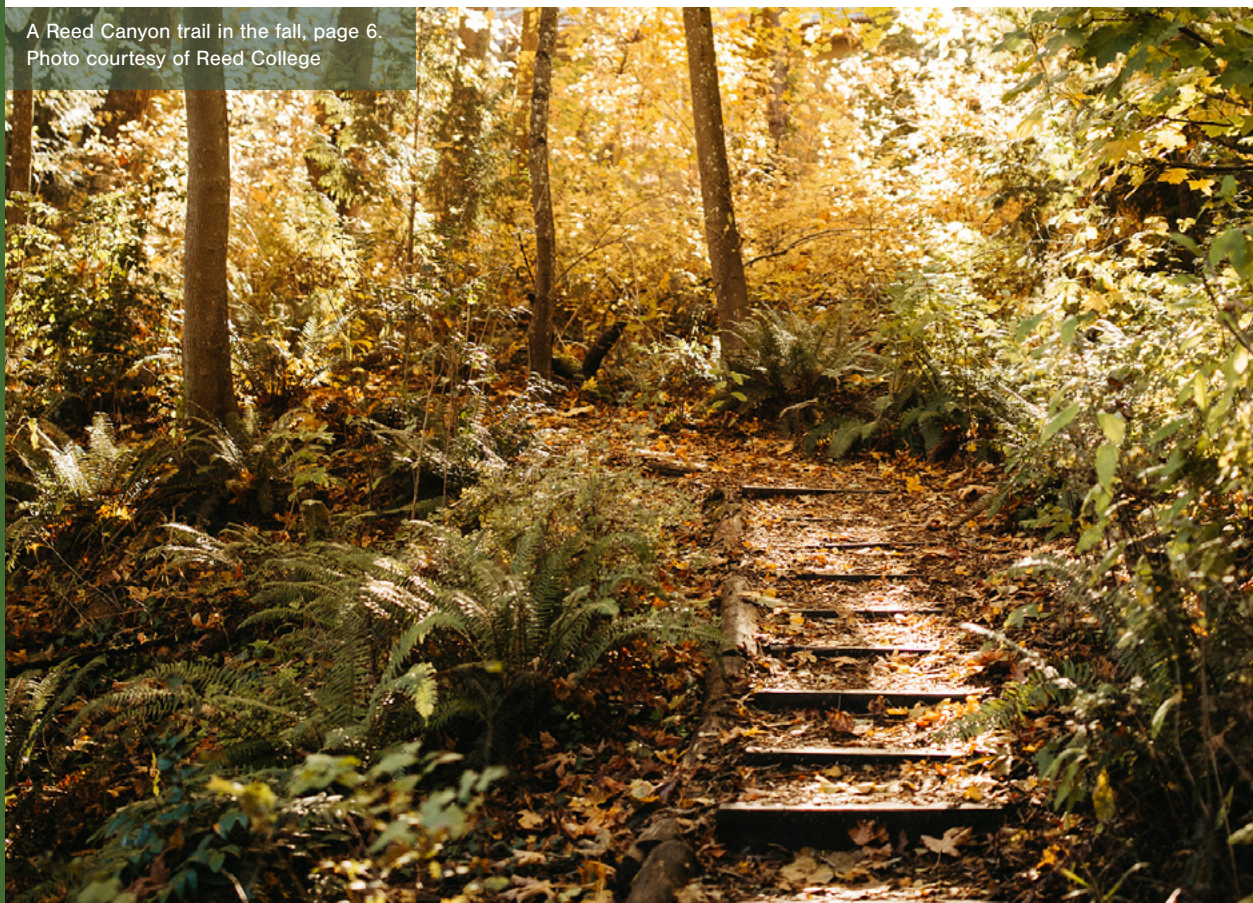
Thursday, October 15  
5:00-7:00 pm —  
Cornell Farm Nursery

Thursday, November 19  
5:00-7:00 pm —  
Al's Garden & Home,  
Sherwood

Watch for more program  
information and open  
garden information in  
HPSO emails and at  
[hardyplantsociety.org](http://hardyplantsociety.org)

*The Hardy Plant  
Society of Oregon is  
a 501(c)(3) non-profit  
organization whose  
purpose is educational  
and whose mission is to  
nurture the gardening  
community.*

A Reed Canyon trail in the fall, page 6.  
Photo courtesy of Reed College



A white-bowed smoothwing hover fly, page 8.  
Photo by Amy Campion.



*Cryptomeria japonica* 'Twinkle Toes',  
page 3. Photo by Norm Jacobs.

