

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

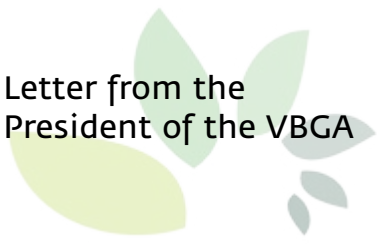



VanDusen
BOTANICAL GARDEN

Bloedel
CONSERVATORY

Vancouver
Botanical
Gardens
Association





Letter from the President of the VBGA

Once again I take pleasure in submitting to you the Vancouver Botanical Gardens Association (VBGA) Annual Report. I thank you for reading it and, most importantly, for being participants and leaders in the work that it summarizes.

2017 has been both busy and exciting in numerous ways. Not the least in Stephen Shapiro's selection as Executive Director. The VBGA Board has expressed our thanks to Shawn Mitchell for the many improvements at the Board and staff levels that he steered over his four and one-half years with us. These allow us to move towards a more activist stance in the enhancement and development of VanDusen Garden and Bloedel Conservatory. Stephen's strengths in fund-raising and non-profit organization management allow us to look forward to new projects and expanded services at both locations.

We are thrilled with the several substantial bequests that we have received or which have been announced in 2017 - these are another sign of the very deep commitment of our members. Our two donor recognition events, in June and November, are an important way of thanking and updating our members and other donors on the results of their contributions.

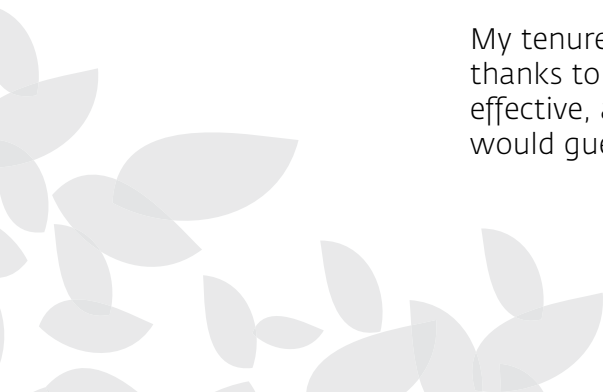
This year we have been able to conduct key studies on potential redevelopment of the Education Centre, commence planning for a new 'Learning Garden', contribute to the new Backyard Bird Garden, and to collections at VanDusen Garden and Bloedel Conservatory. We're working with Park Board and City staff on water conservation measures, including a groundwater supply and recirculation of water at VanDusen Garden, to reduce water costs and better protect the collections in dry weather. At the same time we have completed important policy steps in financial management, a comprehensive 'Code of Conduct', a 'Gift Acceptance Policy' and other operational improvements such as volunteer uniforms, signage and volunteer information services at both locations.

Of the botanical gardens I have visited few are as well kept and none equal the concentration of displays, and the richness of the experience that we enjoy. So while we often are impatient in our Vancouver Park Board relationship, in truth VanDusen Garden and Bloedel Conservatory are success stories. We are excited that early discussions have commenced towards a new Joint Operating Agreement between Park Board and the VBGA, and to assemble the information needed by both parties to achieve a new and truly forward-looking agreement. We want to take a thorough look, together, at our strengths and weaknesses, our opportunities and new ways to realize the full potential of these two sites. We know there is so much more in facilities and services that could be done and which are needed in the face of densification and our role to help understand, to entertain, and to educate about the environment and sustainability.

My tenure as VBGA President ends in April. I wish to express my sincere thanks to the many volunteers and staff that make this organization so effective, and to my fellow Directors who spend a lot more time than most would guess in working to further the aims of this proud organization.



Richard Hankin
President, VBGA





Introduction

The Vancouver Botanical Gardens Association is the joint operating partner of VanDusen Botanical Garden and Bloedel Conservatory, in collaboration with the City of Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation.

In our 40+ year collaboration, our respective responsibilities have largely stayed the same. Park Board is responsible for the maintenance and management of the facilities and collections at both sites, special events, rentals and marketing; and the VBGA is responsible for educational programming, volunteer services, running the library and resource centre at the Garden, the website (vandusengarden.org) and select social media channels, and the membership program.

We also have a common vision: We want the Garden and the Conservatory to be cherished locally and renowned internationally.

Our Mission

To engage people of all ages and walks of life in the importance of biodiversity to our lives, and to foster a lifelong love of plants and gardens by virtue of their participation in our programs and services.

Strategic Plan

To be effective stewards of the trust and commitment we receive from all the donors, volunteers, partners, supporters and staff, the VBGA board of directors launched a three-year strategic plan in 2015, one that we review annually to ensure that it continues to be appropriate and that we are staying on track. To that end, we continue to work towards three ambitious objectives in a multi-year plan:

Double our engagement numbers (e.g. education enrollment; volunteer enrollment; library attendance, etc.).

Second, to double our expenditures in the Garden and the Conservatory.

And third, to be ready to launch a capital project in the Garden.

All of our efforts are focused on making the above a reality.

Leadership

The VBGA is led by a volunteer board of up to 20 directors. The board meets monthly. Every director must sit on at least one committee.



Board of Directors (2017-2018)

Richard A. Hankin, President
Don Zarowny, Vice President
Christine McCaffrey, Treasurer
Tony DuMoulin, Secretary
Terri Clark
Dolf Dejong
Vicky Earle
Edgar Hahn
Leslie Ann Ingram
Norene Kimberley
Paul Kluckner
Susan Jamieson-McLarnon
Michael Murgatroyd
Janet Rhodes
Desmond Rodenbour
Angela White
Francis Wong






The Yosef Wosk Library and Resource Centre

With an eye to boosting the quality of our programs and services and expanding our reach, the Yosef Wosk Library & Resource Centre increased its outreach programs in 2017.

Highlights of 2017:

- Launched a successful monthly *Preschool Storytime: Nature's Stories for Young Children* pilot program
- Completed a cataloguing project of all VanDusen Bulletin (title changed to Clippings in 2017) articles which are now searchable through our online catalogue available on our website at vandusengarden.org/learn/library.
- Collaborated with Vancouver Public Library on a *Harry Potter Book Summer Club* program for adolescents.
- Hosted three Vancouver area Professional Day Ecology Workshops for lower mainland teachers and conducted a variety of library orientations for other interested groups.
- Held four Art Exhibitions and openings in the Roberta Mickelson Gallery.
- Offered nine Book Club events.
- Welcomed 4,873 visitors to the library



Volunteer Engagement

Through 2017 the Volunteer Engagement department worked towards advancing practices in a number of areas to move towards better alignment with the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement. These efforts also coincide with the VBGA strategic plan priorities. There has been a focus on improving records management and we have invested in a new volunteer management database which is scheduled to launch in spring 2018. Volunteer communications through email, use of social media, and updates to our website content are intended to better serve existing and prospective volunteers. Volunteer recruitment, training, and recognition initiatives are also evolving to better meet the needs of our Volunteer force.

Volunteers are pivotal to our work connecting people to nature. The impact of Volunteers can be measured through countless interactions with guests, such as a child's wide eyed amazement as she explores the Conservatory with a Docent who brings the experience to life. In 2017, Volunteer Docents have had 22,531 interactions, Guides have provided 15,544 walking and cart tour interactions, while our Visitor Services and Member Services Volunteers have had 13,888 guest contacts. 950 Volunteers have contributed 45,000 hours during 2017. Thanks to our Volunteers, school groups experience engaging educational opportunities; visitors are inspired and informed as they explore the library over extended hours; gardeners locally and across the globe can bring home a piece of VanDusen through planting our seeds; and our annual Plant Sale brings the community together and raises much needed funds. Thank you, together we are able to achieve our mission.

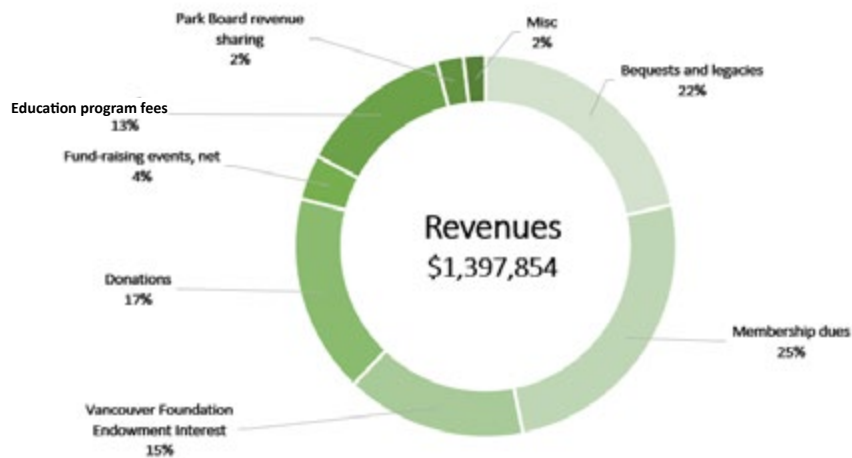
"It is great to see kids having contact with nature, learning, and not just play with their electric device. I enjoy helping people, and all of the time I have been treated as part of the team. Every time I reached VanDusen Garden, my mood turned good!"

- Camp volunteer, Grade 11

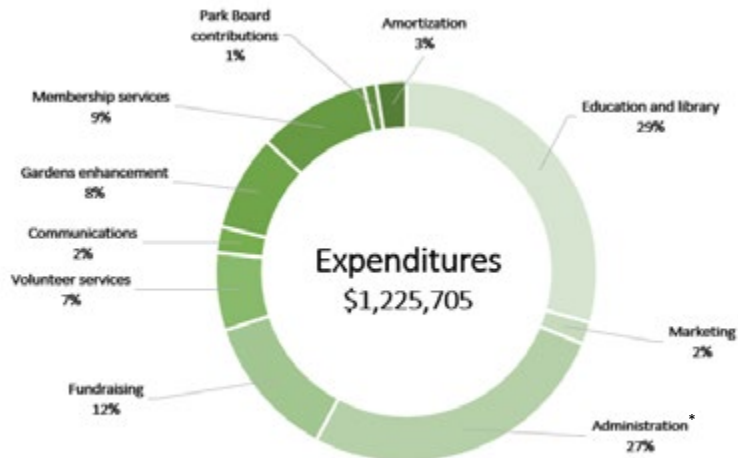


Financial Results

Thanks to the support of donors, volunteers, members, course and camp participants, and the Park Board, the VBGA has completed its fiscal year with a surplus of \$172,149. Our statements are audited by BDO Canada LLP, a copy of our full audited financial statements is available upon request.



Fund-raising events consist of the annual plant sale and semi-annual soil, manure and compost sales.



Gardens enhancements and projects included:

- Building of the Backyard Bird Garden, which opened in early 2018
- Co-sponsoring the Regional Wildflower Rewilding project
- Providing plant material to repair and build the collections, especially after the long snowy winter of 2017
- Providing labelling and interpretation supplies
- The VBGA also sponsored the 7th annual Artists for Conservation Festival, a multi-day art and environmental education event held at VanDusen Botanical Garden.

* The administration costs shown are not allocated to specific program areas.





Membership – 2017 in review

10,686 Members representing **7,168 households** enjoyed unlimited general admission to VanDusen Garden and Bloedel Conservatory during regular open hours throughout 2017. Our members received discounts to special events and programs and were offered quality member benefits including reduced rates for education courses and kids camps. **2017 membership revenue continued to remain robust at \$352,745.**

Successful initiatives during 2017 included a new and improved membership category restructure, enhanced membership transaction process and customer service experience, improved membership web presence on www.vandusengarden.org, enriched electronic Member News newsletter, and enhanced Member benefits to the Gardens and in our community.

Thank you to all Members for their strong support, input and knowledge. You have made a difference! We look forward to seeing all new and returning members at VanDusen Garden or Bloedel Conservatory in 2018!





VBGA Education

Connecting people, plants and urban ecosystems

2017 was a year of restructuring and capacity building for the Education Department as we continued to define our niche in the environmental education community. We are grateful for the support of our donors and members who have enabled the VBGA to invest in building a strong team of staff and volunteers to implement the high-quality programs for which we are recognized. In 2017, the Education team was restructured and expanded to include Education Director, Adult Education Coordinator, Youth Programs Coordinator, and Field Trip Coordinator. This allowed us to focus efforts in key areas to increase the participant capacity in existing programs, create new education opportunities, and expand the reach of educational programs to a broader demographic.

"It is a nurturing and encouraging environment."

- Adult Education Student
in *Botanical Illustration*

Adult Education

By creating the dedicated position of Adult Education Coordinator, we were able to increase the number of courses offered to 107, expanding in areas with identified demand such as botanical arts, and organic veggie gardening. By listening to participants' needs and interests and concentrating marketing efforts, revenue from course fees increased by 11.1% over 2016 for a year end total of \$74,617.

Teachers are crucial

2017 had a strong focus on connecting more teachers with the Garden. As the BC Ministry of Education curriculum changed in recent years, so have our programs, trainings and resources available for schools. We hosted our first annual Teacher Open House and introduced over 80 teachers to the beauty and biodiversity of the Garden, and how to use it to facilitate students' interdisciplinary learning in (and from) nature. We continue to be grateful for annual funding from the Vancouver Master Gardeners in support of teacher education at the Garden, which includes Pro-D workshops such as the *School Garden Ecology Workshop*, *Drawing Nature*, and *Inspire Environmental Awareness in your Students*, as well as free admission to gardening and ecology classes within the Adult Education program.

Camps

Day camps at VanDusen took place during the summer, spring break, and on an October Pro-D day, for a total of 479 children participating. The demand for these camps continued to grow, with 228 children on waiting lists in 2017. There is great potential for further expansion in this area of education, once barriers such as space and sufficient volunteers are addressed.

"My children feel empowered that they got a chance to contribute to the scientific observations at VanDusen summer camps." – parent

"My daughter enjoyed the VanDusen summer camps in the Garden with fresh air and hands on experience with bugs and plants. She cares more about nature and human impacts." – parent

Outreach

The Education department staff and volunteers provided walks, talks and discovery stations for general visitors to the Garden and Conservatory at monthly guided bird walks, Family Day, *Vancouver Bird Week*, *Seedy Saturday*, and the *Artists for Conservation Festival*. Community outreach included the VSB Sustainability Fair and Field Trip Fair.



School Programs

Field trips to the Garden provide hands-on learning in alignment with provincial curriculum and bring science to life for students. In 2017, we welcomed 2914 students and teachers from 58 different schools from Abbotsford to Squamish. The multi-sensory and interdisciplinary experience at the Garden can have a profound influence on a child's understanding of the importance of plants to all life on earth, and the complex interdependent relationships between all living things.

"The students enjoyed connecting with nature and sharing experiences with their peers. They made connections to their place in the world and biodiversity." – teacher

Financial support from the Christopher Foundation and McGrane-Pearson Endowment Fund help to underwrite the cost of these programs, allowing us to keep student fees low and accessible to all and provide free bus transportation for underserved schools. This support also gives the VBGA the capacity to create new curriculum, integrate the technology in the classroom, and provide key training for program volunteers in areas such as facilitating inquiry-based learning, finetuning interpretation skills, understanding child development and behaviour, and adapting programs for children with special needs.

In 2017, a new field trip program was launched, *Connecting Urban Youth to Nature*, expanding our reach with underserved schools. Thanks to the Diamond Foundation and several other donors, we offered free field trips at the Garden for 38 classes of elementary school students, and developed many curriculum-linked activities, tours of the Garden, guides and scavenger hunts, all designed for teachers to lead by themselves at the Garden. During this pilot year, 796 children and 145 adults participated. The Vancouver School Board administration and teachers have clearly told us how valuable this program is for their students, many of whom rarely take advantage of Vancouver's urban parks and gardens. By creating opportunities for kids to spend time in nature, we are helping to foster their essential environmental literacy, ethics and action. 2017 funding from the Grayross Foundation will support next year's participation of a new set of schools and students.

"They realized there is a huge garden right in their own city. They saw birds, animals and insects they have never seen before." – teacher

Our donors are also passionate about the Garden and the Conservatory. We could not function without the financial support of the hundreds of loyal and generous donors who give financially year-over-year.

This list recognizes donors' contributions received between January 1 - December 31, 2017*

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\$25,000 - \$99,999

Grace MacInnes
The McGrane-Pearson
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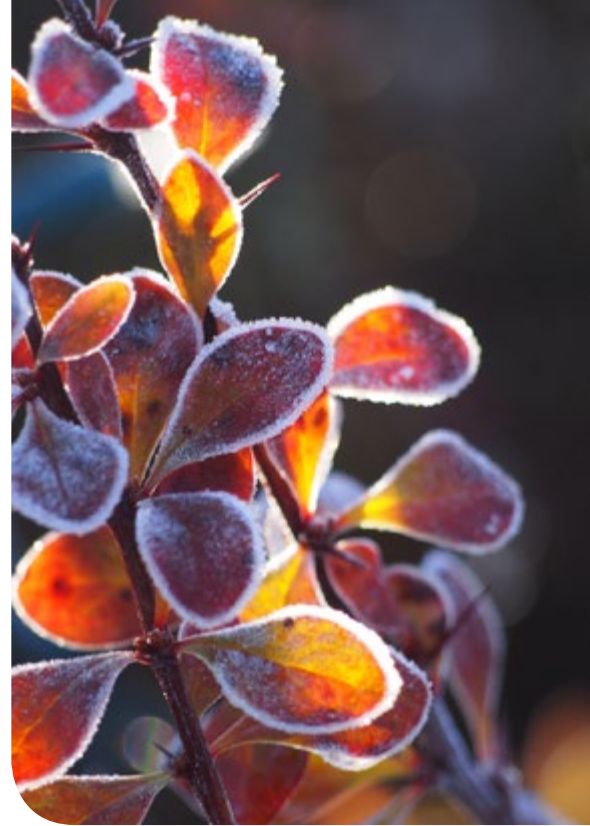
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Continued next page...

* Contributions separate from VBGA membership fees.



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Thank you

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this list. If there are errors or omissions please accept our apologies and contact our Development office at 604.257.8190 so that we are able to make corrections.

The VBGA can be contacted at:

5251 Oak Street,
 Vancouver, BC V6M 4H1
 604.257.8625
vandusengarden.org

The VBGA is incorporated under the BC Societies Act, and is a registered charity; Charitable #: 119281301 RR0001