INTRODUCTION

VanDusen Botanical Garden and Bloedel Conservatory are jointly operated by the Vancouver Botanical Gardens Association and the City of Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. Both bodies share responsibility for the day to day running of the Gardens. This close and long-standing relationship is best represented in what we all get to see every day at both locations.

The work VBGA does together with the Park Board is defined by the roles and responsibilities in our joint operating agreement most recently updated in 1994. Both VBGA and Park Board recognize a great deal has changed in the last 25 years. We agree that our current operating agreement needs to be reviewed and refreshed in order for VanDusen Botanical Garden and Bloedel Conservatory to remain relevant, forward looking and efficiently run so future generations can enjoy what these wonderful grounds offer.

In summer 2019 Park Board in consultation with VBGA hired independent consultants to work with both parties to complete a strategic business review including an economic analysis and review and redefinition of the operating, financial and governance models. These steps are being undertaken to facilitate the development of an updated joint operating agreement and an exciting, new, long term vision for Bloedel Conservatory and VanDusen Botanical Garden in 2020. The terms agreed in the Joint Operating Agreement will impact how the Gardens and their programs will be run, operated, and managed. VBGA and Park Board are also working together to create a new mission and vision for VanDusen Botanical Garden and Bloedel Conservatory.

The Strategic Business Review comprises of 4 stages:

**Phase 1: Stakeholder Engagement (Complete)**
Input and feedback gathered from VBGA Board, members, donors, volunteers, VBGA and Park Board staff, and the general public.

**Phase 2: Strategic Plan (In Progress)**
Composition of a strategic plan for both VanDusen Botanical Garden and Bloedel Conservatory outlining future vision for both facilities.

**Phase 3: Recommendations**
Independent consultants will provide recommendations on financial governance and operational models, and on how VBGA will work with Park Board into the future.

**Phase 4: New JOA Created**
Creation of a new JOA (Joint Operating Agreement) to be reviewed by elected Park Board commissioners as well as VBGA Board ideally culminating in ratification by end of 2020.
As my second and final year as VBGA President concludes, I reflect on the tremendous strides this organization has taken in 2019 as a result of the hard work of VBGA board, staff, volunteers, donors and members, led by Executive Director Stephen Shapiro. I am pleased to report that we have experienced growth across all departments in 2019 and have added a new Marketing and Communications Department to our Association.

A major focus this past year has been working through a strategic business review process towards a revised JOA (Joint Operating Agreement) with the Park Board. To date there has been a huge amount of community engagement and feedback and I thank you all for your input. So far over 2,000 people ranging from staff, garden members, volunteers, donors, and the public have provided input on the vision, values, and priorities for the future of VanDusen Botanical Garden and Bloedel Conservatory. VBGA senior leaders and Park Board have been working collaboratively as a steering committee group. This team meets regularly and is planning additional working sessions to refine the future vision and mission based on the input received from engagement sessions, research, and best practices.

I am very pleased to be expanding our popular children’s summer camps through the new allocation of space at Bloedel Conservatory. This allocation enables VBGA to run our first ever Bloedel Conservatory based summer camps. I would like to extend my thanks to the Park Board for collaborating with us to make this space available for VBGA Summer Camp programming.

One of my highlights as VBGA President has been collaborating with the Park Board to make progress on the VanDusen Teaching Garden. I am pleased that after many years of groundwork the Teaching Garden is moving forward into the planning stages and we are drawing up plans for a ‘Gardening Lab’ which will be comprised of raised beds and will be fully wheelchair accessible. Due to the addition of the ‘Gardening Lab’, for the first time at VanDusen Botanical Garden, our education participants will have the opportunity to get their hands into the soil. In collaboration with the Park Board, we hope to have the ‘Gardening Lab’ in the ground fall 2020.

During my tenure as VBGA President, VBGA celebrated the 45th anniversary of our wonderful Volunteer Guides at VanDusen Botanical Garden and also celebrated 50 years of Bloedel Conservatory. We have strengthened our links to the community through working with Vancouver Avian Research Centre and Environmental Youth Alliance to name but a few. VBGA’s overall business operations concluded on a positive note for the fifth year in a row with a net positive balance of $187,000. Together, the board of directors and management team have steered VBGA into what will be a very busy 2020 – 2021.

I want to extend my sincere appreciation to all those I have had the opportunity to work alongside and get to know this past two years – it has been my pleasure to work with you all.

All the best,

Don Zarowny,
President, Vancouver Botanical Gardens Association

A note from
Stephen Shapiro
VBGA Executive Director

“On behalf of all our VBGA volunteers, donors, members, board, staff, and supporters, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Don Zarowny as he prepares to step down after two very successful years as our VBGA President. Don has provided outstanding organizational leadership, and on a personal note I want to thank him for his unwavering support of me during my past two years as VBGA Executive Director; I have benefited from his leadership and mentorship greatly.”
VBGA Volunteers connect tens of thousands of people annually to plants and the importance of biodiversity to our lives. In 2019, over 870 volunteers have contributed almost 43,000 hours with a value of over $1.4 million*. School Program Leaders, Summer Camp Volunteers, Pollinator Day Volunteers, and Pre-school Storytime Volunteers educated and instilled a sense of wonder for the natural world in our youth, while Adult Education Program Hosts and Bird Walk Guides connected our adult learners to nature. 6,879 visitors participated in our educational programs due to volunteer’s efforts. Visitor Services Volunteers provided support to 22,064 guests, enhancing their visit and Membership Volunteers provided frontline support to our 12,000 members. For 45 years, VanDusen Guides have shared the wonders of the Garden with hundreds of thousands of visitors. In 2019 the VanDusen Guides celebrated their 45th anniversary and provided walking and cart tours to 16,348 visitors.

Through the dedication of 400 volunteers, the 41st annual Plant Sale raised $65,000 and attracted 12,400 visitors to the Garden. Library Volunteers led pre-school storytime, supported the librarian, and ensured Western Canada’s largest public access botanical and horticultural library is open extended hours. The ‘Today in the Garden’ Volunteers created timely displays to inspire guests with what’s in bloom and our Fresh Flower Arrangers beautified the Visitor Centre atrium with gorgeous arrangements. Docents shared their passion and knowledge of birds and plants with 19,021 Conservatory visitors. The Docent interpretation cart inspires and educates visitors of all ages on adaptations, birds, and ethnobotany. Seed Collectors collected, cleaned, sold and shared VanDusen seeds, enabling our collection to be spread across the globe.

In 2019, the volunteer engagement department focused on enhancing volunteer recognition, evaluation, and strategic planning. VBGA solicited feedback from all volunteers through a volunteer experience survey which will help us better support the needs of our volunteer community. We further enhanced the volunteer recognition program through hosting a stand-alone volunteer recognition event, ongoing learning opportunities, and social events. We held a volunteer engagement strategic planning day to evaluate our program using the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement Audit, and to identify our priorities for meeting the changing trends in volunteerism.

A sincere thank you to our volunteers, your contribution of time, enthusiasm, and talent has a lasting impact on our community, the Gardens, and the VBGA.

"Volunteers present a “face” to the public. We represent the gardens. It’s very enjoyable to interact with the public and share knowledge and skills about the story of VanDusen and the plants it contains."

*Independentsector.org annual dollar value for volunteer time has been converted into Canadian dollars.
Membership Highlights

Membership revenue has grown over the last 12 months from $372,000 in 2018 to $408,000 in 2019. Support by our Members was tremendous with a record 11,860 new and returning members representing an increase of 860 adult members from 2018. These members represented 8,540 households, an increase of 450 in 2018. Our members are located within the Vancouver area, scattered throughout Canada as far east as Nova Scotia, and internationally from the USA, Mexico, Taiwan, and the UK.

76% of our Members now receive their correspondence electronically – reducing our environmental footprint. In 2019 we focused on engaging our members through: information distributed electronically (e-Member News) or through mailings (VBGA Clippings) and also increased our social media presence.

In 2019 VBGA Members continued to enjoy unlimited general admission to both VanDusen Botanical Garden and Bloedel Conservatory, discounts to special events, reduced rates for VBGA education courses, priority registration for children’s camps, access to a Member Only Gift Shop Sale, and discounts to attractions and restaurants within greater Vancouver. Our first ever Members Appreciation Month was held in April 2019 offering exclusive member only access to the Garden, and member only tours, talks and birdwalks in both VanDusen Botanical Garden and Bloedel Conservatory. We also offered educational events for children and families including the popular Hummingbird Banding workshops. The inaugural Member Appreciation Month was received extremely positively and due to the success of this new initiative there will be another Member Appreciation Month planned for 2020.

In addition to Members becoming a part of our Association through the purchase of a membership, in 2019 we offered our Members the option of connecting more deeply with the Gardens by joining a Giving Circle and receiving additional benefits. Our ever popular purchase of ‘Gift of a Garden Membership’ certificates continues to be a popular gift for special occasions.
The VBGA education team continued to build upon the significant growth of recent years by offering programs for all ages and demographics, from preschoolers to seniors. Interdisciplinary school and camp programs integrated art, science, geography and design, while new programming for adults strengthened holistic engagement in the Garden and Conservatory with forest therapy walks, wellness classes and workshops covering Indigenous perspectives and ethnobotany. Community partnerships were grown and strengthened, including those with the Vancouver Public Library, and Institute for Environmental Learning at Simon Fraser University.

By providing a diversity of activities designed to enhance appreciation for the importance of plants and connect people to nature, the department was able to foster behavioural change in support of the environment. 14,586 people engaged in our education programs and activities up from 12,513 in 2018.

In 2019 we increased the number of professional development workshops for K-12 teachers from 5 to 12 and as a result were able to accommodate 247 teachers, up from 110 in 2018. All of our teacher pro-d days were 100% sold out in 2019. This growth reflects a burgeoning need in the community, and teachers are increasingly reaching out to our staff for instruction on outdoor education techniques to increase their ability to engage their students academically beyond the confines of the classroom.

**New Teacher Pro-D Workshops in 2019:**

- Classroom Garden Series
- Working Towards a Practice of Reciprocity: Building Relationship to Place
- Iconic Native Plants
- Indigenous Ethnobotany and BC Ecology
- Growing and Learning in School Gardens

The teacher reference catalogue in the Library was updated in 2019, providing a more comprehensive guide to our interdisciplinary resources. This has been undertaken to encourage teachers to use our library collections more extensively and grow their students’ plant-based literacy. We also grew pre-school storytime from once a month to twice a month in 2019.

In 2019, VBGA field trips grew and expanded beyond our traditional audiences. Our 45 minute guided tours grew from 28 in 2018 to 54 in 2019. The number of students on our self guided tours grew by 25%, from 1,238 in 2018 to 1,546 in 2019.

In 2019 we launched a new field trip program ‘Tour of the Tropics’ at Bloedel Conservatory, initially for preschoolers through Grade 1. This tour introduced students to tropical ecosystems with hands-on guided activities exploring ethnobotany, plant and animal adaptations for survival and interdependence. After a successful spring launch, the program was broadened to accommodate students through Grade 4.

**Pollinator Days:**

Pollinator Days, our unique 3-day field trip festival, has become a signature event for the VBGA. Elementary school students visited the Garden for a day’s celebration highlighting the importance of pollinators to plants, people, and ecosystems. Using microscopes, playful exploration, citizen science, art, storytelling, and beehives, students were able to find activities that aligned with their personal interests and learning styles.

“**Fabulous way to teach kids about nature and the importance of bees**”

In 2019 we sold out 100% of our teacher pro-d events!
EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

The VBGA Education Team has successfully expanded and deepened collaborations with community partners throughout 2019. By strategically selecting organizations that align with our goals and values, partnerships have been an effective way to enhance our messaging and increase community awareness. This has manifested as community outreach at offsite events and fairs, as well as collaboration to collectively craft programming and contribute to major onsite events.

"I want to come back 1,000 times because I didn’t see everything. I would love to teach my family about VanDusen Garden. I love nature!"

A new collaboration with the Vancouver Avian Research Centre (VARC) presented a unique opportunity for VBGA members to participate in monthly hummingbird banding workshops. In 2019, VBGA was a major contributing partner in the planning and orchestration of the International School Debates, welcoming passionate youth from around the world to Canada to discuss the role of children in achieving United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #15, Life on Land. Our involvement in events such as this advance the VBGA in establishing ourselves as a significant voice in promoting environmental initiatives and youth empowerment, even on a global scale. More locally, we partnered with Langara College and their Formation and Design program to create the interactive and educational exhibition; Pollen Pals. The exhibition was designed specifically for outdoor environmental education and was a key feature of Pollinators Days 2019.

The VBGA Education Team ventured into the community to make new connections and spread awareness of VBGA and our beautiful sites. We facilitated plant-themed, interactive discovery stations at the Kitsilano Neighbourhood Autumn Fair, and the Native Bee Society of British Columbia’s AGM and we attended secondary and post-secondary sustainability, career and volunteer fairs around the city.

"After this class, I feel so motivated to start gardening now that I feel more confident."

2019 Community Partners

- Vancouver Avian Research Centre
- Environmental Youth Alliance
- UBC Farm
- Fresh Roots
- SFU Entomological Lab
- Entomological Society of BC
- Main Street Honey Shoppe
- Native Bee Society of British Columbia
- Langara College: Design Formation Program
- The Lower Mainland Museum Educators
- Stanley Park Ecological Society and Vancouver Bird Week
- Trust for Sustainable Living
- Government House
- Metro Vancouver Parks
- Farm to School

14,586 people engaged in our education programs and activities up from 12,513 in 2018.
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 $187,000. Our financial statements are audited by BDO Canada LLP. A copy of our full audited financial statements is available upon request. Fundraising events consist of the annual Plant Sale and bi-annual Soil, Manure and Compost sale.

Programing expenses support educational programs, the Yosef Wosk Library & Resource Centre and enhancements at both Bloedel Conservatory and VanDusen Botanical Garden.

**PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:**

- Establishing a seasonal Canadian Heritage Educator position to specifically highlight the Canadian Heritage aspects at VanDusen Botanical Garden
- Additions to the population of free-flying, exotic birds at Bloedel Conservatory
- Design and feasibility studies for a ‘Teaching Garden’ at VanDusen Botanical Garden
- Sponsoring the Silent Skies mural at the 2019 Artists for Conservation Festival
- Additions to the Yosef Wosk Library & Resource Centre
- Publication of ‘The Jewel Atop Vancouver’, a photo-driven booklet commemorating the 50th anniversary of Bloedel Conservatory
- Providing and expanding various course offerings for children and adults including nature camps, field trips, and teacher professional development
- Providing plant material, infrastructure, labelling and interpretation supplies at VanDusen Botanical Garden

*The administration costs shown are not allocated to specific program areas and are centralized support services.*
Thank you for donating to the Vancouver Botanical Gardens Association (VBGA) in 2019.

Building on the legacies of W. J. VanDusen, Prentice Bloedel, and broad historical community support, your 2019 donation helped us provide a world-class botanical garden experience for people of all ages at VanDusen Botanical Garden and Bloedel Conservatory.

Connecting people with nature is now more important than ever and we do this through our environmental education programs, volunteer and member services, botanical collections and library: all funded by your generosity.

As a result of the tremendous support we received in 2019, we were able to respond to the increasing demand for our environmental education programs. We were able to engage 6,665 students and 5,860 adults last year up from 5,839 students and 4,884 adults in 2018.

We established a partnership with the Institute for Environmental Learning (IEL)* that connects the VBGA with a global network of environmental educators. The IEL’s goal is to support community-based research on best practices for environmental learning in both the formal and informal education sectors.

We want to say a special thanks to the families of those who included the VBGA in their estate plans. Their generosity helps us continue connecting people to plants.

Thank you all for your support!

*Institute for Environmental Learning (IEL)
In 2010, the IEL was chartered as a Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) on Education for Sustainable Development by the United Nations University (UNU).

Vancouver Botanical Gardens Association gratefully acknowledges the generosity of our donors whose support is critical to sustaining our activities, programs, and services allowing us to continue connecting people to plants, deepening their connection with nature.

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 team at 604-257-8190.

## THANK YOU 2019 SUPPORTERS

### LIFETIME CUMULATIVE GIVING

(1985 to December 31, 2019)

- **Alma Society ($15,000 plus)**
  - Loretta and Glenn Barr*
  - BMO Financial Group*
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2019 DEVELOPMENT
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IN MEMORY

In Memory of Susan Jennifer Brown  
In Memory of Elaine Feldcamp  
In Memory of Dr. Edgar F. Harden  
In Memory of Grace MacInnes  
In Memory of Sandra Zipay

ADOPT A TREE’S  
NAMED FOR:

Noah, Lila and Luke Chang  
Adrienne and Brian Clark  
Rolf Cutts  
Dori-Lyn Johnson  
Antonio Luis Eguizabal  
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Alex & Ena Munro  
Robert B. Rieveley & Mabel Porter  
Josephine E. Walton  
Olivia Yarmoluk

* Represent donations made with naming recognition featured throughout our botanical garden and facilities. Note that additional donors have also been acknowledged throughout our premises for their generosity.
The VBGA is incorporated under the BC Societies Act, and is a registered charity; Charitable No. 119281301 RR0001

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

The VBGA can be contacted at

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