GARDENnotes

FALL 2025

Northwest Horticultural Society

Autumn in the Elisabeth Miller Botanical Garden
Image by Richie Steffen

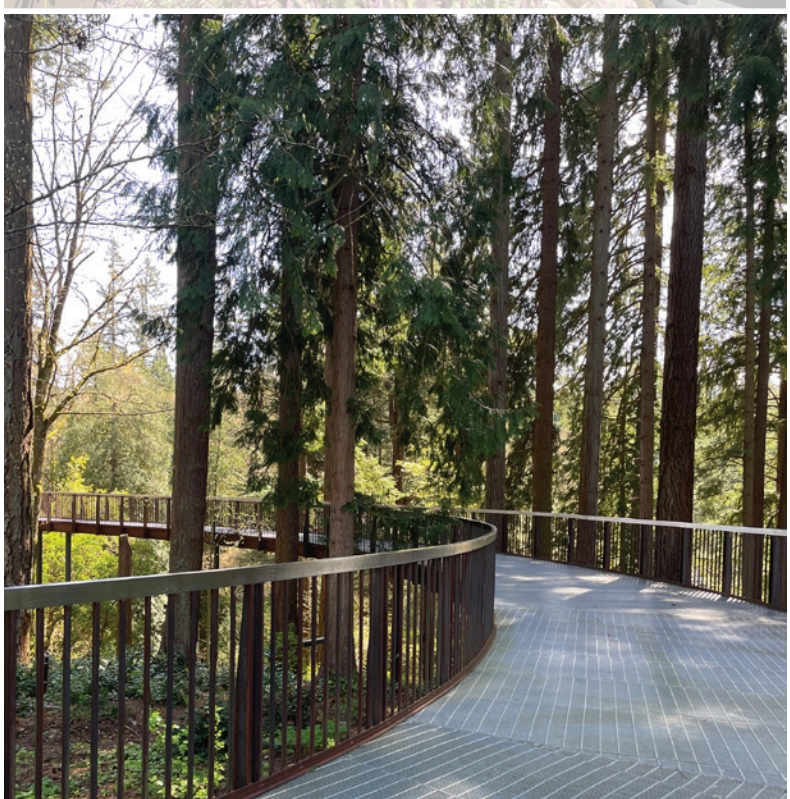
NHS Grants Spotlight:

Leach Botanical Garden

Text and Images by Sue Goetz

The Northwest Horticultural Society (NHS) provides grants to community-focused organizations. The grants program aligns with the NHS mission to educate and enhance the practice and appreciation of horticulture in the Pacific Northwest. As a member of the grants committee, I am passionate about fostering support for non-profits and programs that serve the community, especially underserved populations and making gardens accessible to all. Every year, the committee thoroughly goes through all of the applications. The grants committee is a passionate group, and we find the vibrancy of community and horticulture alive and well in these submissions.

Entry sign to the Leach Botanical Garden



Aerial tree walk

In 2024

four recipients were granted money totaling $15,000:

Seattle Giving Garden Network (SGGN): The mission of SGGN is to facilitate the cultivation of organic, locally sourced produce by Seattle gardeners to supply food banks, street kitchens, and other essential food pantries.

GROW: GROW's mission is to empower communities to thrive by developing and cultivating organic, sustainable community gardens.

Historic Seattle: Their mission is to save meaningful places to foster lively communities and shape a livable city that protects its collective history.

The fourth recipient in 2024 was the **Leach Botanical Garden**. I am the committee liaison for this grant and want to share their progress with you.

The Leach Botanical Garden is a 16-acre unique landscape of native and exotic plants located in outer southeast Portland, Oregon, near SE 122nd Avenue and Foster Road. Read more about the fascinating history of its garden creators, Lilla and John Leach and the transition to public ownership by Portland Parks & Recreation, at leachgarden.org.

The NHS grants committee awarded $4,000 to their project. The funds requested in the grant were specifically earmarked for the offerings and ongoing creation of a children's garden. The request was, "By improving our offerings in the Children's Garden, Leach will increase daily access to nature, increase the diversity of nature available, and create expanded space and programs for our communities and visitors at large. At its core, a Children's Garden will foster a life-long interest in green spaces at a less frenetic pace than a typical playground."

My visit in the spring of 2025 was to see how the funds were being used and how their project was moving along. NHS offers support not only with funds but also encouragement

to follow through with their mission as well as how we can help them. I was excited to explore a public garden I had not visited before. It is located in southeast Portland, and as you drive down Southeast Foster Road, you wonder where the botanical garden is as it is a bit of a hidden gem.

As I walked through the gates, I was struck by a sense of beauty and calm. After driving through a very urban setting, here was the opening to a serene public garden. Children, families, and people of all ages were there. A perimeter fence provides a place that is a haven and secure from the gritty urban areas that surround the garden.

Large rolling lawns, perennial and bulb meadows, and woodland pathways are all wonderful features of the Leach. The most captivating feature, however, is the aerial tree walk — an overview bridge structure that makes you feel like you are walking in the midst of the forest canopy — which is a place where birds perch, and we are now able to join them to see the world from a different perspective than we usually get. Along the forest floor, the *Trillium* collection was beautiful, with other ephemerals and native plants. I could hear the laughter of children walking the paths—a lovely sound in a public garden space. There were places to sit, including a modern pavilion, just one part of an expansive space designed by Richard Hartlage, founder and CEO of Land Morphology, a landscape architecture firm based in Seattle. Landscape architecture magazine describes the project as, "... an experience you didn't know you needed before you walked it, one you won't forget, and one you'll want to come back to experience again."

To the east, you can walk through a line of trees to a natural open grass meadow, which they fondly call the "back five." These five acres are gardened for rewilding and an outdoor classroom. It is a place for children to learn and explore. During my visit, I met Adam Hart, Director of Horticulture, and Jami LeBaron, Program Director. They shared the progress as well as future plans. As we walked around, I could feel the responsibility, passion, and pride they take in the Garden's potential.

They look at the garden area as a muse and ask what they can do with the abundant resources that the natural areas

New plantings on the berm in the Children's Garden

give back. Branches and twigs become building material for fairy houses, and a mushroom glade invites further exploration in the world of fungi. Events include a bilingual soil party (soil education in both Spanish and English), honeybee hikes, and edible gardens. They don't want it to be museum-like but a place of laughter, whimsy, birds, and the sounds of nature. This natural open space filled with sunlight is the area to which the grant money has been dedicated.

A recent check in August 2025 updated me on their progress:

- renovating a play cottage with a new mural
- planting a large berm with colorful and pollinator-friendly plants
- installing large basalt columns and boulders for families to enjoy climbing and for seating
- adding mulch in seating and planting areas
- adding Wave Hill-style wooden chairs that volunteers from Portland Youth Builders built

They are in the process of further improvements and hope to have a grand opening celebration for the space in the spring of next year, once the rainy season is past.

I extend a thank you to all members for supporting NHS. Your support is valuable for helping us fund the community grants program. It is just one of the outreach missions we can do to support all communities. If you know of a group or are involved in a non-profit that could use funding, please let them know about our grants program. Visit our website for information and eligibility at northwesthort.org/grants/ or reach out to info@northwesthort.org, and we can help with any information.

Sue Goetz, CPH and ecoPRO is a landscape designer in Tacoma, Washington, and a member of the NHS board of directors. SueGoetz.com

Outdoor storytime for children in Spanish

Play cottage in the Children's Garden

Springtime meadow in the Children's Garden

END-OF-SEASON GARDEN CHORES MAKE FOR A SMOOTHER START IN SPRING

Text by Kym Pokorny

Images by Richie Steffen

Autumn in the garden

The days are short, the rain often unrelenting, and the holidays fast approaching — but a little time in the garden or garage now can make a big difference come spring.

Clean up garden beds

A common question this time of year is whether to cut plants back now or wait until spring. When it comes to vegetable gardens, the answer is clear: remove everything. Uproot spent plants, including annuals, to reduce the risk of soilborne diseases, which can persist for years.

For herbaceous perennials, the choice is more flexible. Many perennials die back naturally in fall. If so, go ahead and clean up the dead foliage and toss it in the yard debris bin or compost pile — but not if the plant showed signs of disease. Diseased material should never go into home compost.

On the other hand, some perennials are worth leaving in place. Plants such as ornamental grasses, coneflowers, Joe-Pye weed, sedums and black-eyed Susan provide winter habitat for insects and seeds for birds. Similarly, consider adding shrubs or trees with berries to support wildlife through the colder months.

What to do with fall leaves?

Another frequently asked question is whether to rake up fallen leaves or leave them be. Yes —use them! Spread leaves over vegetable beds to help prevent soil compaction from winter rain, suppress weeds, boost fertility and improve soil structure. Leaves are also beneficial around shrubs.

When it comes to perennials, there's a tradeoff: slugs may lay eggs under debris. This can be managed with a low-toxicity slug bait. The benefits of leaf mulch — especially for soil health — often outweigh the downsides. Avoid piling leaves or bark dust near slug-prone plants such as hostas.

Berries of *Callicarpa bodinieri* var. *giraldii* 'Profusion'

Berries of *Malus sargentii* for wildlife

Soil pH and lime

If you move quickly, there's still time to add lime to vegetable beds and lawns. First, test the pH using a simple kit available at garden centers. If your vegetable garden soil tests below pH 6, apply 5 pounds of lime per 100 square feet.

Delay major pruning

Take pruning off your fall to-do list. Most shrubs and trees are better pruned in late February. Pruning too early can stimulate new growth that may be damaged by cold weather. Always know your plants' needs. Spring-blooming shrubs — including rhododendrons, azaleas, lilacs and forsythia — should not be pruned until after they flower.

Remove fallen fruit

Before heading indoors, clean up any fallen or leftover fruit from trees and the ground. Doing so helps prevent disease and pest problems next season, including apple scab and codling moth.

Winter tool maintenance

Once the garden is in order, turn your attention to the garage. Clean and maintain garden tools before storing them for winter. Wash and dry each tool, sharpen blades, oil moving parts, and rub linseed oil on wooden handles to prevent cracking. Basic sharpening can be done at home, but leave pruning saws and chainsaws to the professionals to avoid injury or damaging the tool.

Prepare your lawn mower

Fall is also the time to winterize your lawn mower. The most important task? Empty the gas tank. Start the engine, let it warm up for 30 seconds, shut it off, then siphon the gas. Restart and run the mower until it stops. Gasoline contains 10% ethanol, which draws moisture from the air — and water in your engine is bad news. Also take time to change the oil, replace the spark plugs (check your manual or look online for the correct model), install a new air filter, and check the spark plug gap using a gap tool. Taking these steps now ensures your mower is ready to go when grass starts growing again. Until then, you can enjoy the slower pace of winter — knowing your garden (and tools) are prepped for a strong spring start.

Kym Pokorny was the Public Service Communications Specialist at the Oregon State University Extension Service in Corvallis, Oregon, now retired. She is a member of NHS.

BOTANICAL NAMES

and Where do They Come From?

Text and Images by Richie Steffen
(unless otherwise noted)

Many gardeners find the botanical Latin name of a plant daunting and prefer to rely on common names. Although this may seem more comfortable, flaws can quickly be found in this line of thinking. Many common names vary region to region for the same plant. Common names usually also vary for each language and culture. It is also not uncommon for the same plant to have more than one common name in use in the same region. To further complicate matters, new common names are often made up to facilitate marketing and trademark registrations, throwing the traditional common name to the wind. Botanical Latin may not solve all naming issues, but it does provide a consistent set of rules that are recognized internationally. Typically, but not always, it allows for the same plant to be known under the same name throughout the world. A primary goal of botanical Latin is to clarify plant names and classification.

Botanical Latin as we know it today is probably more correctly referred to as binomial nomenclature, a two-term naming system. The first part is the generic name, referred to as the genus (or genera if plural), and the specific epithet, often referred to as the species. Binomial nomenclature is often credited to Carl Linnaeus, a Swedish biologist and physician. Various versions of binomial naming began as early as the 1620s, and Linnaeus was able to build on these efforts and create a naming system that became popular with his seminal work, *Species Plantarum*, published in 1753. This book classified every plant species known at the time under its genus name. Today, this two-volume book serves as the starting point for modern plant nomenclature.

The rules and guidelines of plant taxonomy (plant classification) have continued to develop since the publication of *Species Plantarum*. Currently, naming rules

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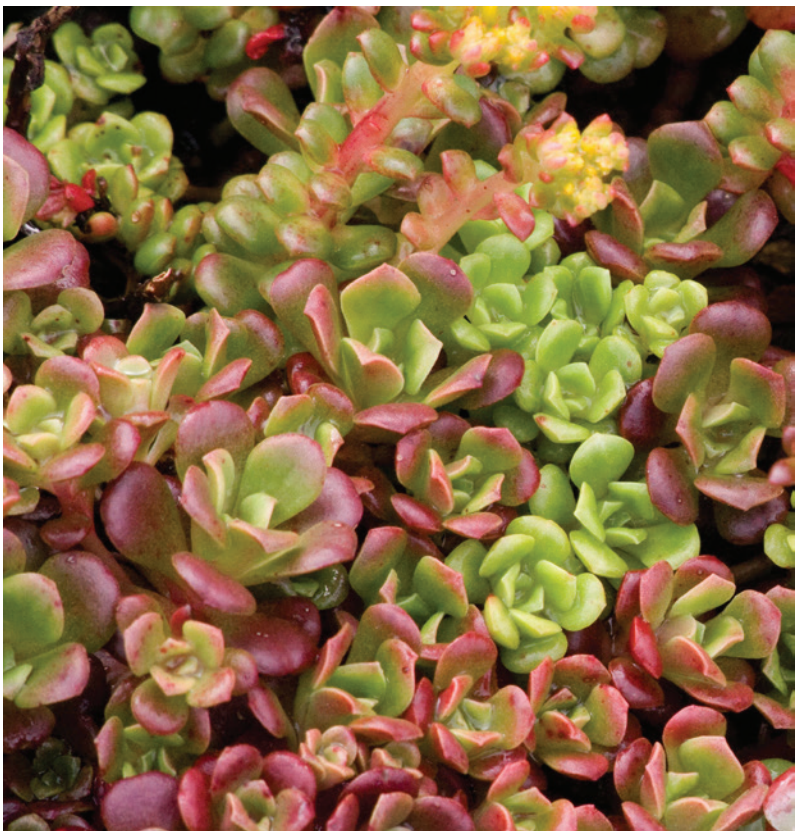
Genus & species: *Trillium grandiflorum* — the genus is *Trillium* (meaning three) and the species is *grandiflorum* (meaning grand or large flowers)



Genus & species: *Sedum oreganum* — the genus is *Sedum* (meaning "to sit" as in the way sedums grow) and the species is *oreganum* (meaning of Oregon)

are developed through international cooperative efforts and are published in the *International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants*. This publication provides the ultimate guidelines for naming plants.

To keep this document current, researchers, taxonomists, botanists and representatives from institutions around the world participate in a very important and influential event called the International Botanical Congress (IBC). The IBC provides an opportunity to bring together scientists and students worldwide to share their research. These congresses are held every six years with the next in Cape Town, South Africa in July 2029. At the IBC, the decisions of the Nomenclature Section are adopted into a revised edition of the *International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants*. The current document is referred to as the *Madrid Code* after the last meeting in 2024 in Madrid, Spain and was published in July 2025. The former code, the *Shenzhen Code*, was 254 pages while the new *Madrid Code*, the 18th edition, is 288 pages.

Although botanical Latin has its roots in Latin, it incorporates languages from around the world. Seeing and understanding a botanical name allows you to know what a particular plant is related to and often provides clues about the plant's appearance, ecology or origin. Botanical names need practice to learn, but over time, they open a door to understanding much more about a plant than a common name could provide. Because of the international and historical influences on botanical Latin, it is impossible to pronounce all plant names correctly unless you have extensive knowledge of the pronunciation of international languages and historical names. All we can do as gardeners is do the best we can, and if someone corrects your pronunciation, ask them to explain why it should be pronounced in that manner.

Botanists and taxonomists are scientists who define our plant world and designate the names of the plants we grow. All plants are given a two-part or binomial name consisting of a genus and a specific epithet. Collectively, this two-part name is referred to as a species. If a species is very variable, it can be further defined as a subspecies and/or variety. Occasionally, forma is used to further designate a unique variation in a species, but this is uncommon. To help understand botanical Latin, it helps to understand what these terms mean and how they are used to group plants together.

Subspecies: *Hydrangea anomala* ssp. *petiolaris* — the genus is *Hydrangea* (the name being derived from the combination of the Greek words hydra ("water") and angeion ("vessel"), or "water vessel" which refers to the shape of the seed capsules; the species *anomala* means "irregular" or "deviating from the normal" which botanists use to describe this species as being unusual or anomalous to other *Hydrangea* species, as it has a vining growth habit versus a shrub-like form; and the subspecies name *petiolaris* means "with conspicuous petioles," referring to the long or prominent petioles, or leaf stalks

Genus (means generic name, the plural is genera) A group of species that share a significant number of traits is called a genus. Traditionally, these common traits were based on recognizable morphological (physical) features of the plant, such as leaves, flowers, seeds and spores. Today, DNA analysis, often in combination with morphological features, is playing a major role in defining the parameters of a genus. The genus name is always capitalized and in italics or underlined if handwritten. A single genus can vary in size from one species to over a thousand. For example, the genus *Rosa* has 285 accepted species, according to Plants of the World Online, which is offered by the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, a botanical research institution based in the United Kingdom. Other sources list between 320 and 350 species. As plants are continually studied and researched, species are merged and split; this is ongoing which is why the numbers may fluctuate over time.

Specific Epithet (abbreviated sp. or spp., if plural)
The specific epithet is the second part of a plant name. It is always in lower case and italicized. If it is handwritten, it is underlined. When combined with a genus the two names are referred to as a species. There is no perfect definition of a species, but it generally represents a group of genetically similar individuals that can interbreed and produce new plants that look very similar to each other. Even though there may be a certain degree of variability between individuals, their DNA will always remain close within the group. DNA analysis is now frequently used to define a species, usually in combination with the traditional practices of observing physical similarities, similar habitat requirements and geographical location of stable populations.

All of the factors that help define a species tend to be a little fuzzy at the extremes. Botanists and taxonomists try to use the widest and most current available information about the plant to, hopefully, make the least arbitrary line to define what is one species versus another species.

Subspecies (abbreviated subsp. or occasionally ssp.) or **Variety** (occasionally listed as varietas, abbreviated var.) While the terms subsp., ssp., or var. are not italicized, the plant names following them are italicized. Extremes in variation within a species can sometimes be considered subspecies or varieties; they typically have significant differences in physical features and /or differing isolated geographic ranges but are still closely aligned in DNA make-up. Many feel that subspecies have more differences than varieties, but in truth, these two terms are used interchangeably. Historically, taxonomists in the United States tend to use the term variety more often in delineating

Variety: *Clematis montana* var. *rubens* 'Freda' — the genus is *Clematis* (meaning a creeping plant or vine), the species is *montana* (meaning "of the mountains"), and the variety is *rubens* (meaning red or reddening) — [This particular variety is a selection called 'Freda']. Courtesy Rick Peterson

differences and taxonomists in Europe tend towards using subspecies more often. In modern taxonomy, the use of the term variety has fallen out of favor worldwide. Rarely, a plant will contain both a subspecies and a variety. It is the responsibility of the author originally publishing the name to explain the reasoning for this and provide clarity on their views of these two terms.

As we continue to explore the world and learn about plants in the wild and in cultivation, name changes are inevitable. Many plants currently in cultivation are represented by a few individuals from limited wild collections or even a single individual that is continuously propagated providing a narrow genetic profile and a limited view of how that species can appear. This limited exposure to a plant is akin to seeing and eating one apple pie then publishing a book describing how all apple pies look and taste. Through continued exploration and study of plants in the wild we can gain a better understanding of the variation or lack of variation within what we consider a species. With the ease of travel today and the level of research happening, it should not be surprising that names change.

As mentioned above, an excellent resource for correct and current botanical names is Kew's Plants of the World Online website (powo.science.kew.org). This is an international cooperative effort to digitize data of the world flora. Plant entries will provide both the current accepted name as well as synonyms. Another site for currently accepted plant names is the International Plant Names Index (IPNI) (ipni.org). Both websites are updated regularly and are the collaborative efforts of several prominent research institutions.

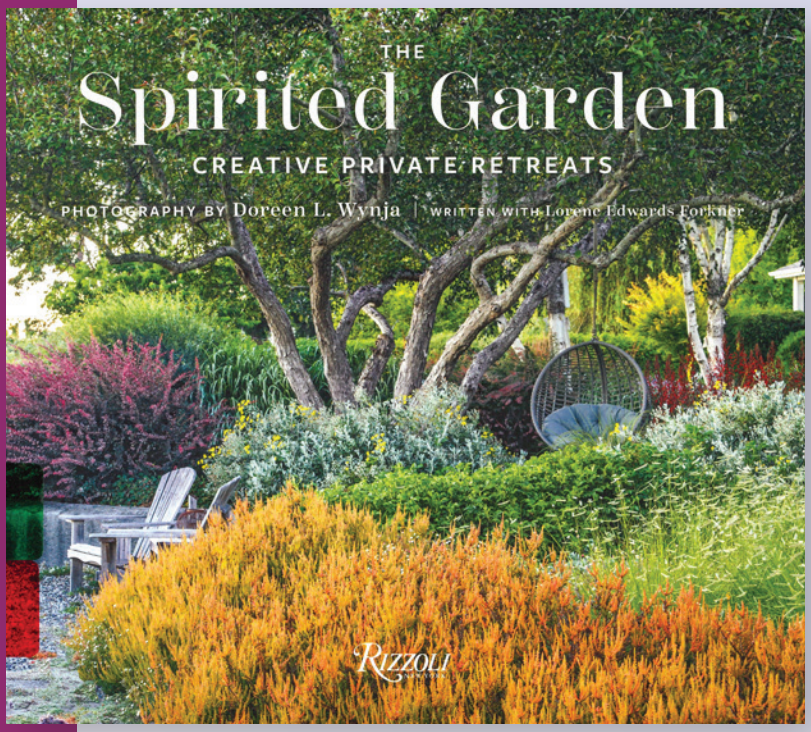
Of course, there are inevitably name changes that one will disagree with on these websites. I detest the idea of the revised fern genus *Hemionitis*. It is a bloated genus of 457 species that has subsumed 52 genera including *Allosorus, Argyrochosma, Aspidotis, Astrolepis, Bommeria, Cheilanthes, Chrysochosma, Doryopteris, Gaga, Myriopteris, Notholaena, Paragymnopteris, Pellaea* and *Pentagramma*. I cannot conceive of who decided this makes naming clearer.

Even though we may not all agree on a given current name, the consistency of the world using botanical Latin provides us with unity and a way of ensuring we are all talking about the same plant. As much as a plant may change its botanical name, the diligence of scientists and researchers to build digitized records accessible by the general public will always allow the average gardener to stay connected with current scientific understanding. Is it perfect? Not in the least. But is it better than before? I must agree that it is better. I just hope I can keep up with the changes!

Richie Steffen is Executive Director of the Elisabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden and a long-time member of NHS.

LITERARY NOTES from the Miller Library

Brian Thompson



Meet the Board tours have been a mainstay of the NHS summer for many years. Private gardens showcase the passion and dedication of their creators, often including unusual quirks of interests.

Capturing this fervor and the distinctive visions of several Washington and Oregon gardens is *The Spirited Garden: Creative Private Retreats*. Photographed by Doreen L. Wynja, and written with Lorene Edwards Forkner, this is one of the most engaging private garden tour books I've seen.

The photographs are stunning as you would expect. But they also tell stories. This can be a gardener peeking through foliage, another resting in a hammock while playing with a frisky cat, or the borrowed landscape of a meadow, distant forest, and lone hiker on a two-page, full bleed spread.

The text, both as an introduction to each chapter, and as caption to the photographs, was the real surprise. Wynja and Forkner create a lively discourse with their subjects, teasing out little snippets of story that make you want to know the gardeners, not just their gardens.

For long-time NHS members, some of these gardeners will be familiar. Most poignant is the chapter about the late Pat Riehl, former president of NHS, who with her husband Walt established a stumpery and fern garden on Vashon Island. Gillian Mathews also has a long history with the NHS, and her cozy garden makes you want stop in for tea — or maybe a glass of wine.

Ann Amato's exuberant garden blurs the distinction between indoors and outdoors with over five hundred houseplants, many spending their summers outside. There is vibrant plant energy in almost every space from kitchen to bathroom to basement. At the time of this writing (early August 2025), I'm looking forward to her upcoming NHS webinar on hardy begonias.

Wynja's selection of this and other overflowing gardens is understandable after seeing her own home in the final chapter. Having a "need for visual stimulation," she collects foliage plants (only a few with flowers), many pots (some intended for that purpose, while others not), and the many, many tools of the gardener. As described in one caption, this is "cramscaping!"

Brian Thompson is the manager and curator of horticultural literature for the Elisabeth C. Miller Library.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear NHS Members,

As I write these words, the brilliant colors of fall outside my window remind me of the **beauty of change**. My two-year term as President is drawing to a close. This period has flown by quickly, yet in some ways has felt long and deeply lived. I'm grateful for every season of this journey and simply hope to have left the house a little better than I found it. This final column is both a reflection and an opportunity to express my gratitude. First and foremost, I extend my thanks to the entire Board and to our members for their support. I would also like to offer special appreciation to a few individuals in particular.

A heartfelt thank you to **Gillian Mathews**, my steadfast collaborator over the past two years. There are countless ways Gillian contributes to sustaining and elevating this organization—she truly has a hand in almost everything that makes NHS excel. After many years of dedicated service to the gardening community, Gillian chose to return to the NHS board once more to help guide it through a challenging transition. We form a special bond with someone when we work together toward the same cause, sharing the ups and downs of trying to pull off what at times seems impossible. It has been both a pleasure and an honor to witness this master at work up close.

The next person I would like to thank is **Richie Steffen**. During my term as President, Richie was not officially on the Board, yet regardless of his affiliation, he remains one of the foundational figures and greatest contributors to NHS, continuing to enrich the organization through his lectures, columns, and teaching, all of which set a very high standard for us. He was also a key force in shaping the webinar program during its formative years in 2021 and 2022. Thank you, Richie, for your deep contributions, your generosity, and your enduring commitment to NHS. I would like to thank my family for their unwavering support throughout this journey. As much as one strives to find balance in all facets of life, it is never easy during such intense and demanding periods—and none of this would have been possible without their patience and understanding.

Finally, I extend my heartfelt thanks to my friend—and our incoming NHS President—**Tanya DeMarsh-Dodson**, whose enduring support, wisdom, and inspiration have been invaluable throughout my tenure. In the months ahead, you will come to appreciate the full breadth of Tanya's talent and leadership. As gardeners, we often speak of "the right plant in the right place." Perhaps it is more fitting to say, "the right plant in the right place at the right time." I may have been that plant during a period when NHS needed greater structure and organization to ensure sustainable growth and foster innovation. That work represents only the beginning—a foundation for what lies ahead. I can think of no one better suited than Tanya to build upon that foundation and lead NHS into its next exciting chapter. I look forward to supporting her and cheering her on as the Society continues to evolve.

On to other good news . . . The remarkable **Sue Goetz**—one of our region's most influential gardeners, educators, and an NHS Board member—has taken on the role of Committee Chair for Garden Notes. With Sue's leadership and **Rick Peterson** continuing as editor, exciting progress and fresh innovations are sure to follow in the months ahead. **Frances Tophill**—horticultural celebrity and author—will be NHS's sponsored judge and speaker at the upcoming Northwest Flower & Garden Festival. We also have an exciting **Spring Symposium** lined up for you, so mark your calendars for **March 14, 2026**! The theme will be "Beyond Tradition: New Visions in Plants and Planting," featuring an extraordinary lineup of speakers. And that's not all—2026 will also be a **year-long celebration of NHS's 60th anniversary**, interwoven with exceptional programming and special events honoring this remarkable organization's legacy.

Wishing you a wonderful fall and holiday season,
Sashi Raghupathy NHS President

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Ginkgo biloba 'Princeton Sentry'
Image by Richie Steffen