

Charlottesville Botanical Garden



Nepenthes edwardsiana

Capturing more than the imagination

The City of Charlottesville is recognized as one of the most desirable and aesthetically conscious places to live in the United States. This proposal is for a Botanical Garden to be added to the wealth of assets and visitor destinations currently in Charlottesville. In addition to being a tranquil place of beauty, this Botanical Garden is envisioned to educate, display and to preserve some of the most amazing, rare and endangered plants in the world. The preservation and educational missions of the garden reach far beyond the City's boundaries, expanding the potential for grants and contributions from private, corporate or institutional donors who are interested in environmental and species preservation. This is an opportunity for Charlottesville to showcase an example of sustainable growth.

Depending on the final design, the garden could occupy as little as fifteen acres, providing an engaging and meaningful landmark in a town whose history is imbued with horticulture and historic gardens. Applying a preservation mission to a manageable group of plants within the garden is in sync with the values and sympathies of many Americans who would like to do something about the loss of genetic diversity. The Center for Historic Plants, at Monticello, is one successful example where Charlottesville has become involved with the preservation of history and beauty.

Education is intrinsic to the garden, a place where young and old can marvel at and learn about the natural world, a place where people can actually get to see, in real life, plants that are disappearing from habitats close to home and far away. This visual element is an important educational component which cannot be duplicated any other way. The educational mission would encompass science, natural history, human activities relative to nature, information about the garden itself. It would also serve as a hub, connecting resources with people. The extraordinary plants to be highlighted within the garden will stimulate the curiosity and interest of visitors.

Charlottesville has the opportunity to preserve one of the most significant horticultural treasures in the world. Among the most threatened and fascinating group of plants in the world are the insectivorous plants. One of the largest collections of Pitcher Plants is currently in need of a permanent home. Pictured in National Geographic Magazine, the collection owned by Robert Sacilotto, of Botanique Nursery is arguably the best collection of its kind. Wherever they are displayed, the Pitcher Plants' beauty, variety of forms, colors and insect-trapping strategies amaze nearly everyone. When different types of plants, such as orchids, flowering vines and many more botanicals are added, the overall effect will be dazzling. Different "climate zones" can be created along with different types of gardens or buildings which share continuity in design elements.

- Visitation
- Preservation
- Education
- Beauty
- Environmentally Conscious Design
- Biodiversity
- Research
- Networking



The garden is proposed to include:

- Conservatory & Greenhouse(s)
- Horticultural Work Areas
- Pavilion
- Wetland Bog Gardens
- Rock Garden
- Meadow Area
- Shade Garden
- Hardy Orchid Garden
- Water Gardens
- Woody Trees, Shrubs and Vines



Conradina verticillata

The **Conservatory and Greenhouse(s)** are proposed to be as environmentally conscious and efficient as practically possible. Insulated glazing and energy efficient designs are also cost effective. Before a larger conservatory is built, it may be less costly and necessary to construct one or more ancillary greenhouses, once a site plan is approved. Showy tropical plants will be featured here. These structures will greatly expand visitation, interest and use throughout the seasons

Horticultural Work areas, placed in efficient, relatively inconspicuous places, would include a Head Houses (a room before entering the greenhouse) work areas, a tool/equipment shed, and storage rooms.

A **Pavilion** would be an ideal place for lectures, community presentations, weddings and as a rain shelter. The design is suggested to be simple and open, with good views of the garden.

Wetland Bog Gardens This outdoor display area will feature the North American Pitcher Plants, other types of insectivorous plants, orchids and other ornamentals. Endangered species and a large, diverse gene pool of plants will be a landmark effort of preservation combined with educational, scientific and visual appeal. Plants found nowhere else in the world will be displayed as new horticultural entities are unveiled.

Rock Gardens can be an enchanting alternative to traditional flower gardens. Many endangered plants live in these habitats which require very little water. Colorful flowers and unusual plant forms have evolved to cope with the harsh rocky or scree environments.

Meadows provide food and cover for wildlife as well as bountiful flowers. A meadow can be a viable alternative to a lawn, requiring much less maintenance and water.

A **Shade Garden** will include native wildflowers, ferns and simple plants such as mosses and club mosses. Introduced ornamentals will also be displayed.

Hardy Orchids are admired by nearly everyone. Many are native to Albemarle County, Virginia and the U.S.A. Some wonderful introduced types will also be showcased. (Tropical orchids would be housed/ displayed in greenhouses.)



Cypripedium pubescens

Water Gardens provide another world of flowering and foliage plants. Miniature ecosystems seem to appear out of nowhere as frogs, salamanders, insects and turtles find their way toward water. Educational opportunities abound in aquatic habitats. Water plants can be used to filter and clean turbid water. Biofiltration, the purification of water, can be demonstrated within an aesthetically pleasing design. These systems are becoming more crucial as the world's population grows. Water gardens also allow Lotus, Water Lilies and a myriad of beautiful plants to be displayed.

Trees, Shrubs and Flowering Vines are an essential component of a representative botanical display. Evergreens offer winter color, while flowering woody ornamentals are characteristic of Virginia's natural landscape. These plants add height, form and contrast. A formal Arboretum is not planned, but could be added. Since trees occupy considerable space, additional land may be needed to accommodate an extensive display of trees and large shrubs.

Addendum

Currently, a non-profit, 501(c)(3), corporation is being formed to assist in the funding, implementation strategies, and organizational needs intrinsic to a project of this magnitude. This group of talented individuals are pooling their efforts in "Charlottesville Botanical Garden" (CBG). The **web site: charlottesvillebotanicalgarden.org** contains additional information. Many other City, County participants and resources will be necessary. Once a final site is approved, the City officials would be well advised to involve the University of Virginia, the Parks Dept. and numerous other entities which could add specific talents. There are many pitfalls and obstacles to be dealt with before they cause difficulties.

A design team should be formed, which includes architects, landscape architects and persons extremely familiar with the infrastructure needs, legal issues and horticultural demands of such a facility. An executive director to organize efforts is strongly recommended. The author of this document has been instrumental in the creation and management of botanical entities, and would welcome the opportunity to be part of such a team. Implementation with sequencing strategies worth examining are in the process of being written. **Three potential sites have been evaluated: McIntire Park, Biscuit Run and Morven.** All sites have serious issues which need to be considered. At this time Morven appears to offer the greatest potential.

Expense offsets could include revenues generated by grants, donations, entrance fees, charges for weddings or large group tours, plant/seed sales (within 501(c)(3) guidelines) and fund raising events. Fortunately, a logical development and construction of the garden can proceed in phases which begin with less costly components, yet provide a wonderful experience for visitors. Certain site components will be mandatory as initial construction projects. Other features can be added as revenues permit. With the cooperation of many people, this dream for the future can take shape, improving the quality of life for decades to come.