



THE CONSERVATORY NEWS

Summer 2010

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

At long last summer has arrived in Seattle, finally pairing gorgeous weather with the lengthy nights to which we are treated along our northern latitude, if only for a few weeks. Our beloved Conservatory

perches stoically at the northern end of Volunteer Park as it has for the past 98 years. Yet, an air

of uncertainty permeates, as rumors of impending city-wide budget cuts circulate. While there has been no official say from the City of Seattle Parks & Recreation Department, the Friends of the Conservatory are certain that our treasured Victorian-inspired greenhouse will not be immune to scrutiny as the mayor and city council struggle to close a record budget shortfall in 2011-2012. The mayor is said to be finalizing budget-cut decisions in August, which will then be sent before the city council for a final vote. Sources inside the Parks Department have suggested that the Conservatory could potentially be closed as early as January of 2011. It is unclear what would become of the collections housed within, or indeed the historic structure itself. Common wisdom dictates that once shuttered, the chances of reopening and restoring the carefully cultivated collection would be slim to none.

The Friends of the Conservatory, however, are not willing to let this happen without a fight. While we are

bracing for the possibility that we may sustain cuts, or even closure, we remain cautiously optimistic that with help from the media and the community, we will have enough support to remain

open through the next year and beyond.

We are encouraging all city council members and the mayor to visit our

historic structure to experience the amount of care and dedication that has gone into the Conservatory for the past century. Several local organizations have linked arms with the Friends of the Conservatory, including the Capitol Hill Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Seattle Business Association, and the Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks, all of which have written letters in support of the Conservatory to the city council.

Perhaps our most powerful allies, of course, are the voices of support in our community. Our members, our neighbors, and our thousands of visitors together have the power to keep the Conservatory's doors wide open for years to come. Our elected officials have an obligation to listen to the public, and we want to make sure they are given ample opportunity to make themselves heard. One very promising note is that the city council voted the Conservatory an official Seattle landmark in early July. While the timing may be coincidental, and

doesn't necessarily exclude closure, this designation does offer certain protection to the external structure of the Conservatory.

Awareness is critical. The more people we can make aware of the situation, the better our chances will be of being heard by the city.

A healthy signature petition was launched at our Spring Plant Sale in May. Already more than 2,500 individuals have signed in support of the Conservatory. The signatures will be delivered to the city council before they vote on the proposed budget in September. In addition, we have compiled a list of simple ways to help support the Conservatory, available on our website: <http://volunteerparkconservatory.org/SavetheConservatory.html>. Every voice counts, and we are trying to make it easy for the community to help.

We want to get the public and media involved! **We are hosting a "Luau on the Lawn" event on August 5th from 6:00 - 8:30 pm.** This special evening will allow a rare chance to visit the Conservatory after hours to enjoy elusive evening blossoming specimens. The public will also be offered a first-time opportunity to go behind the scenes into the mysteries of the lower production houses and potting sheds. It should be a night to be remember, and stand as an example of the riches the Conservatory has to offer now, and with luck, far into the future.

-President Anthonio Pettit



IN AND AROUND THE CONSERVATORY

SPOTLIGHT ON GARDENER NILE KURASHIGE:



PHOTO: Giselle Blythe

Nile's passion for Victorian greenhouses began when she was admitted to Barnard College in New York City. A beautiful old Victorian greenhouse perched on the rooftop of a brick building caught her attention. She hoped she might work there one day, but by fall they had torn down the old greenhouse to make room for the state-of-the-art, Arthur Ross Greenhouse. She got a job there nonetheless and loved every minute of it; but she still dreamed of working in a Victorian greenhouse one day.

At Barnard, she studied biology and conducted research on plant evolutionary ecology. Her advisor, a plant physiologist, used to say that plants are amazing because plants can do everything we do and more. She loved learning about plants in college enough to continue her studies in graduate school.

Later, she was admitted to the University of Toronto, where there was a beautiful Victorian greenhouse. By the time she got there, however, that greenhouse was in the process of closing down as there was a state-of-the-art rooftop greenhouse built on top of the Botany building. This old greenhouse, unlike the one at Barnard, was saved and moved to become the new Allan Gardens Children's Conservatory an expansion of the existing Allan Gardens. In graduate school, Nile researched plant-insect interactions and conducted experiments in the new greenhouse. After graduation Nile had almost forgotten about her dream to work in

a Victorian greenhouse. In 2004, she was looking for a job in Seattle as her husband Matt was interviewing at Microsoft.

She came across a job listing with the City of Seattle and became really excited because she thought it was the right job for her. All the other jobs she had seen were only loosely related to her field, but with this one she felt she had hit the jackpot.

When Nile and Matt came to see if they wanted to re-locate to Seattle, she met with Stephanie Johnson-Toliver (Conservatory Senior Gardener Emeritus) and spoke with her about the position. At the interview she remembers Stephanie asking her

how she felt about working in an old greenhouse when all her experience had been working in state-of-the-art, brand new greenhouses. Nile told Stephanie that she had always wanted to work in a Victorian greenhouse and that she had missed the opportunity twice because of bad timing.

After working at the Volunteer Park Conservatory for five years, Nile now works behind the scenes on production in the lower greenhouse. She still loves the curved glasses of the Conservatory. She loves the historical building for its big heating pipes under the benches, the creaking sound that the vents make, and the white wash that is applied in the summer.

Nile says she thanks her lucky stars that she finally is working in a Victorian greenhouse!



Agave nectar, also called agave syrup, is a sweetener commercially produced in Mexico from several species of agave, including the Blue Agave (Agave tequilana). Agave nectar is sweeter than honey, though less viscous.

To produce agave nectar from the Agave tequiliana plant, juice is expressed from the core of the agave, called the piña. The filtered, hydrolyzed juice is concentrated to a syrup-like liquid that ranges in color from light to dark depending on the

degree of processing. The syrup contains iron, calcium, potassium and magnesium. Agave nectar's glycemic index is comparable to fructose, which has a much lower glycemic index than table sugar (sucrose).

Agave nectar is said to be 1.4 to 1.6 times sweeter than sugar, and is often substituted for sugar or honey in recipes. Vegans use agave nectar to replace honey in recipes. It is also used as a sweetener for cold beverages such as iced tea because it can dissolve quickly.

Agave nectars are sold in light, amber, dark, and raw varieties. Light agave nectar has a mild, almost neutral flavor, and is therefore sometimes used in delicate tasting foods and drinks. Both amber and dark agave nectar are sometimes used "straight out of the bottle" as a topping for pancakes and waffles.

Next time you visit the Cactus House, look for the Blue Agave next to the Ponytail Palm. - Giselle Blythe

FALL PLANT SALE

The FOC Fall Plant Sale happens on **Saturday, September 11, 10 am to 3 pm.** Join us on the lawn across from the Conservatory to purchase orchids, cacti, bromeliads and many other unique indoor plants like those seen in the Conservatory. Check out our information booth for expert advice!

You'll need containers for those new plants! All containers in the Gift Shop will be **20% off** the day of sale!

PLANT SALE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Do you have some time to help? Shifts begin at 7:00 a.m. to set up, 10:00 for sale, and 2:00 to begin take-down. We also need drivers with pick up trucks to transport plants, tables and tents.

Please call 206-322-4112.
foc@volunteerparkconservatory.org



LUAU ON THE LAWN!

Join us **Thursday August 5th from 6:00 pm - 8:30 pm** for an evening event at the Conservatory.

Enjoy a Polynesian entertainment and special peek behind the scenes with tours led by Conservatory Docents.

Wine and hors d'oeuvres for current and new FOC Members - new memberships encouraged!

FREE AND OPEN
TO THE PUBLIC!

ONE TOUCH OF
NATURE MAKES THE
WHOLE WORLD KIN.

- Shakespeare

WHAT IS IN BLOOM:

Come check out our ever changing displays.

Summer: Delphinium 'Magic fountain mix' and 'Astatat', Brugmansia, Hollyhock 'Queeny Purple', Tibuchina - Princess Flower, Traechelium 'Devotion Series'

Fall: Queen of the Night Epiphyllum, over 20 varieties of exhibition style Chrysanthemums, coleus, Canna 'Red King Humbert', assorted ornamental grasses

SHOP LOCAL – SHOP GREEN – SUPPORT THE CONSERVATORY!

Join the Friends of the Conservatory!

Your membership in the Friends helps to support the Conservatory and its programs. Join us!

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Method of payment:

Check enclosed (payable to FOC) Visa MasterCard

Card # _____

Exp. date _____

New Member

Renewal

\$40 Individual

\$25 Senior/Student

\$50 Supporting

\$100 Sustaining

\$500 Patron

\$1000 Conservator

Other \$ _____

Mail to: FOC, 1402 E. Galer St., Seattle, WA 98112



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CALENDAR

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|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| July 1 | First Thursday: Docents available in Conservatory 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. |
| July 3 | First Saturday: Docents available in Conservatory 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. |
| July 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 | Plant Talk: Carnivorous Plants Short talk in Conservatory 1 p.m. |
| Aug 5 | First Thursday: Docents available in Conservatory 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. |
| Aug 5 | FOC Evening Event: Luau on the Lawn 6:00 - 8:30 p.m. (page 3) |
| Aug 7 | First Saturday: Docents available in Conservatory 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. |
| Aug 7, 14, 21, 28 | Plant Talk: Carnivorous Plants Short talk in Conservatory 1 p.m. |
| Sept 2 | First Thursday: Docents available in Conservatory 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. |
| Sept 4 | First Saturday: Docents available in Conservatory 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. |
| Sept 11 | Fall Plant Sale: 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. <i>Volunteers Needed!</i> (page 3) |
| Sept 4, 11, 18, 25 | Plant Talk: Carnivorous Plants Short talk in Conservatory 1 p.m. |

