

University of Washington Botanic Gardens

The University of Washington Botanic Gardens is one of the College of Forest Resources' most widely recognized education and research units and one of the Pacific Northwest's key horticultural features. UW Botanic Gardens comprises the Center for Urban Horticulture, the Washington Park Arboretum, the Elisabeth C. Miller Library, the Otis Douglas Hyde Herbarium, the Union Bay Natural Area, Union Bay Gardens, and the University of Washington shorelines. The organization's mission is to sustain managed to natural ecosystems and the human spirit through plant research, display, and education. The living plant collection contains 10,013 specimens representing 4,190 distinct taxa. The UW Botanic Gardens serves students, faculty, and staff, as well as the general public interested in horticulture, restoration ecology, and conservation. Over 300,000 people visit annually; 250,000 of them visit the Washington Park Arboretum, which has one of the most important tree collections in North America. Volunteers play an important role and contribute many hours of service through the Miller Library, Saplings School Programs, Rare Plant Care and Conservation, and other programs.

Facilities include:

- The 230-acre **Washington Park Arboretum** is jointly managed by UW Botanic Gardens and the City of Seattle's Department of Parks and Recreation, with support from the Arboretum Foundation. It is free to the public. The Arboretum participates in an international seed exchange program, distributing documented, wild-source seed of species native to the Pacific Northwest; its seed list is distributed to 457 institutions in 59 countries.
- The **Center for Urban Horticulture** serves as the meeting place for over 100 organizations, including 60 horticultural groups. The Center's Merrill Hall is the first sustainable building to be built on the UW Seattle campus; it houses administrative offices and research labs, the Elisabeth C. Miller Library, and the Otis Douglas Hyde Herbarium. It also provides classroom, office, and plant clinic spaces to Washington State University King County Extension and the Master Gardener Foundation of King County.
- The **Union Bay Gardens** consists of five specialized gardens housing 463 herbaceous perennials and cultivars and supporting a nursery undergoing plant production of 340 accessions, 85 percent of which are from wild-collected sources.
- The 74-acre **Union Bay Natural Area** and four miles of shoreline serves as an outdoor laboratory for UW research and as a publicly accessible wildlife habitat where more than 200 bird species have been sighted.



Volunteer Guide training at the Washington Park Arboretum.

- The **Elisabeth C. Miller Library** is the most important horticultural library in the Pacific Northwest. It houses 15,000 books, 200 magazine subscriptions, 1,000 nursery catalogs, and video and electronic resources. It offers a range of free services to the gardening public as well as to the academic community. The Library receives over 15,000 visitors annually.
- The **Otis Douglas Hyde Herbarium** houses over 17,000 plant specimens. The Hyde Herbarium is probably the nation's largest collection of preserved cultivated plants. It serves as the official herbarium for the Washington State Noxious Weed Board and provides free plant identification help to the public.



Restoration work in the Union Bay Natural Area.

Research programs include:

- Biology of invasive species, including assessment of invasive potential of introduced plants and impacts of current invaders.
- Biology of rare plants and their propagation for reintroduction into the wild.
- Restoration ecology, including prairie restoration; Oregon white oak (*Quercus garryana*) stand dynamics and restoration; site conditioning by live willow staking; long-term response of Roemer's fescue to initial site conditions; and work in the Union Bay Natural Area, which serves as an outdoor laboratory.
- Plant physiology and the impacts of global climate change on plants, including the effect of elevated CO₂ on physiology and invasiveness of reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*).
- Collaboration on affiliated projects, including: the human dimensions of forestry and urban greening; human responses to land use changes along the urban to wildland gradient; the relationship between forests lands and the built environment; assessment of eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) in Westcott Bay, San Juan County; forest soil microbiology and forest pathology; tissue-to-whole-tree responses to environmental stresses; and growth of trees from diverse ecosystems.

Public education programs:

UW Botanic Garden educational programs involve more than 10,000 individuals annually. They reach both professional and general audiences. Youth programs reach 8,000 students in grades K-12 each year through the Youth Saplings School Programs, the Youth Explorer Day Camp, and the Youth Explorer Pack Program.

Partnerships create results:

- The **Rare Plant Care and Conservation** program partners with over 20 federal and state landholding agencies to monitor 350 rare plant populations. In 2003, the only state-of-the-art climate controlled storage and lab facility for seeds of Washington's rare plants, the **Miller Seed Vault**, was built at UW Botanic Gardens; it currently stores seeds of 50 rare Washington species and has received 2,107 accessions.
- **UW's Restoration Ecology Network (UW-REN)**, involves undergraduate students in research through a restoration capstone course; since its inception, the program has completed 41 collaborative restorations.
- **UW Botanic Garden's Volunteer Programs** make many projects possible. In 2007, more than 250 volunteers contributed over 10,000 hours.



Youth Saplings Program, Washington Park Arboretum.

For More Information: Visit the University of Washington Botanic Gardens website, www.uwbotanicgardens.org

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