

FOREWORD

The sixth Global Botanic Garden Congress was held in Geneva, Switzerland, between 26 and 30 June 2017. Hundreds of delegates from around the world met to discuss the challenges faced by botanic gardens and conservationists around the theme ‘Botanic gardens in society: visions for the future’. The Congress was expertly organised by Botanic Gardens Conservation International and the Conservatoire et Jardin botaniques, Geneva, and there were many excellently delivered, informative and thought-provoking presentations. The Sibbald Trust, based at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE), provided funding for the editorial team of *Sibbaldia* to present a new poster to promote *Sibbaldia* along with leaflets and stickers to ensure that the botanic garden community knows where to find this journal both online and in hard copy.

One presentation which particularly stood out for its clear delivery and succinct points was given by Jean Franczyck, CEO of Chicago Botanic Garden. She made several comments regarding the importance of botanic gardens joining with partners to progress conservation. She particularly emphasised that we need to work with others, not solely with those whom we ‘like’, but also with those who can do things that we as botanic gardens cannot do. In this way we achieve more than we can on our own. I think that this point is clearly made in Ed Ikin’s Guest Essay on the art and science of planning the future of a garden, and we are very grateful that Ed has shared some insights into the fantastic work that he and his team are doing at Wakehurst Place.

Tony Conlon has written regularly for *Sibbaldia* on the range of Ericaceous genera in his care at RBGE and he has authored two papers in this volume. The first looks at how to cultivate the showy genus *Cavendishia* from the Americas. The second, principally authored by George Argent, is a description of a new species of *Dimorphanthera* which has been in cultivation for many years but has only just flowered, thus reinforcing the value of botanic garden collections and Tony’s diligent care of the genus.

The UK has had connections with the Himalayan country of Nepal for over 200 years, and RBGE has played an important part in recent years through taxonomic work on the beautiful flora of Nepal. However, since 2015, RBGE horticulture staff have been working in collaboration with the National Botanic Garden, and its developments in the year in which the bicentenary of UK/Nepalese relations was celebrated is profiled.

Amongst other aims, *Sibbaldia* seeks to promote the value of botanic garden collections for plant conservation. A species can be a familiar garden plant but become terribly endangered in the wild. Two articles in this volume illustrate how crucial botanic garden collections that are then maintained year after year can be to a plant’s survival: Hitchcock’s and Rebelo’s article on the restoration of *Erica verticillata* demonstrates just this. Likewise gardens can play a huge role in learning about the behaviour of endangered plants and we are delighted to publish the exciting discoveries that Jeanmaire Molina *et al.* have made with *Rafflesia* species and their collaborations with partner Marius Gabin who grows the plant in a natural forest habitat in Malaysia. This is a notoriously difficult parasitic plant to cultivate and propagate.

Botanic garden horticulturists often need to innovate to maintain plants which are out of their natural habitat and subject to stresses to which they are not adapted. Clive Lundquist *et al.* present a novel approach to growing shade-loving forest floor plants which tend to suffer from root rot and are frequently short lived in cultivation. The method is easy to emulate and we hope that many who grow these plants are tempted to experiment with his method. David Gray at Benmore Botanic Garden on the west coast of Scotland has been experimenting for several years with ways to confound the deer population of this large garden. Here he elaborates on experiences gained and a successful solution complete with diagrams for anyone who wants to try it.

There are so many ways to display plants to the public but where straightforward aesthetics used to take precedence, the need to communicate the conservation message is leading to exploration of a combination of aesthetics and more informative displays. Nikos Krigas *et al.* describe their attempts to faithfully display the flora of the Ionian Islands, while also showing the distinctions between the islands. The care with which they carried out this project is also evident.

We know that botanic gardens are extremely important for the local community as well as for tourists and visitors, and Sophia Shaw has previously written two excellent essays (Shaw, 2015a & b) describing just how valuable our green spaces are for a variety of users. Here Jenny Foulkes writes about the Edible Gardening Project based at RBGE and the number of groups which have benefited from this project. Finally, Tony Garn, Supervisor at RBGE, has decades of experience looking after the Garden for visitors and he has been highlighting notable plants throughout the seasons for many years. In his article he has brought them together along with some reflections on the challenges facing botanic gardens.

David Rae, former Director of Horticulture and Learning at RBGE and the instigator and Editor of *Sibbaldia* for the last 15 years, is stepping down as Editor. The new Editor will be Kate Hughes, the current Sub Editor.

REFERENCES

- SHAW, S. (2015a). Gardening and mental health. *Sibbaldia*, 13, 3–14.
- SHAW, S. (2015b). The positive effects on mental health of visiting botanic gardens. *Sibbaldia*, 13, 51–60.