

FOREWORD

The year 2018 was a busy one for *Sibbaldia*; it was the first year in which we produced more than one volume. In July, Volume 16, *The 10th Flora Malesiana Symposium Proceedings* (eds Peter Wilkie, Kate Hughes & Mark Newman) came out. This volume is a celebration of the highly successful symposium which was held at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) on 11–15 July 2016. The volume contains 13 papers from the wide range of presentations delivered and includes a lovely image of all the delegates gathered in the Garden. As ever, all articles, including the photograph, are available to download from the *Sibbaldia* website, and printed copies can be ordered by email (see next page for details).

David Rae conceived the idea of *Sibbaldia*, a journal for botanic garden horticulturists, which has perhaps become even more popular than he imagined it might be. I have worked with him on it since Volume 2 in 2004, editing, authoring and supporting authors and readers. David stood down as Editor in December 2017 after the publication of Volume 15 and I am delighted to take on the role. I thank him for sharing his extensive horticultural and editorial experience with me to enable me to do this, and I hope that he will still feel welcome to provide comment and copy as he sees fit!

This, Volume 17, covers a fantastic range of articles, with many on the practical cultivation of little known or difficult to cultivate plants, which was precisely David's aim when he established *Sibbaldia*. I am delighted that this volume reflects this ideal: an opportunity for botanic garden horticulturists to communicate the work they do. Hilgenhof *et al.* write about their detailed work at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew to propagate plants for the enormous undertaking of renovating the Temperate House there. Robert Blackhall-Miles of Fossil Plants, UK, has successfully grown an endangered species in Proteaceae from Chile. Elspeth MacKintosh at RBGE discusses a method for growing bulbs, which she calls 'friends in pots'. All share their techniques for growing rare and challenging plants and displaying them so that visitors can appreciate them.

The conservation of species is a significant part of the mission of most botanic gardens and growing them well is essential to their conservation. Ensslin and Godefroid provide compelling evidence that the cultivation of wild plants in botanic gardens can change their genetic and phenotypic status and that, because of this, horticulturists must take great care of their conservation collections to ensure that they are not negatively affecting the very populations they aim to conserve. Gardner *et al.* describe a long-term project to grow and display threatened *Taxus baccata* plants while engaging the public in the story. Denvir *et al.* are using similar principles with threatened oaks and they provide an example of targeted collection and cultivation of *Quercus brandegeei* in Baja California Sur, Mexico. Stephen Blackmore, in his Guest Essay, makes a case for conservationists and landscape planners to use public spaces outside botanic gardens, in cityscapes, to grow native and endangered species to great aesthetic effect and to widen the conversation about conservation. He argues that there is a huge unused space that could be used to cultivate plants and educate passers-by. The nursery staff at RBGE

are pursuing the conservation of rare and historical collections of rhododendrons using micro-propagation methods where other methods have failed, and Neil Davidson shares the setbacks and successes of this sometimes fiddly task here.

Three articles highlight the importance and potential of amenity displays to engage and educate the public about conservation and research. Hitchcock & Hey describe careful horticultural and curatorial work which has gone into developing a phytogeographic display demonstrating the diversity of the genus *Erica* (more than 780 species) in southern Africa at Kirstenbosch Botanic Garden. They also describe the successes they have had engaging the public with this method of display.

The family Gesneriaceae has long been an important research family for RBGE, and there are several genera which make popular houseplants, *Saintpaulia* and *Streptocarpus* among them. The living collection of the latter genus at RBGE is one of the most comprehensive in the world, and, as such, it is critical for evolutionary developmental studies. Möller *et al.* describe how the plants have enabled their research into flower forms and their plans for sharing this with the public. Bryophytes tend to draw less attention than flowers in garden displays but Hazel France's bryophyte survey, carried out as part of the BSc in Horticulture with Plantsmanship at RBGE, identifies opportunities for making more of these diminutive but ever-present plants, to tell visitors about them and to increase capacity to cultivate rare and interesting species.

For many botanic gardens, it is the sheer number of years they have been managed as research and amenity spaces which makes them so valuable, and this is the case with the Garden Profile in this volume, Bogor Botanic Gardens in Indonesia. Congratulations to Bogor on the 200th anniversary celebrations that were so successful in bringing the Gardens to a broader audience in 2017 and also for being the first tropical Garden Profile in *Sibbaldia*. I encourage readers from other tropical botanic gardens to get in touch if you have an anniversary or area to celebrate for future Garden Profiles. Finally, the Walled Garden at Benmore Botanic Garden in Argyll on the west coast of Scotland was a productive garden as far back as the 1860s and it now forms an integral part of that Garden for amenity and education. The collections have aged over the years, however, and renovation is planned. David Gray has carried out detailed research into its history. This research provided valuable information and perspective contributing to new and exciting plans for the area, which will bring it up to date and make a beautiful and useful space with a recognition of its place in history.

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