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ARS 2020 International Convention: Introduction and Pre-Tour Description

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Photo credits as noted.

The six chapters of ARS District 4 are excited to be hosting *2020 Vision, Looking forward reflecting back* – the 75th anniversary celebration of the American Rhododendron Society. An exceptional experience awaits the attendees of the 2020 ARS Spring Convention, based at the Heathman Lodge in Vancouver, Washington, across the Columbia River from Portland, Oregon, only minutes away from the Portland International Airport (PDX). The primary convention dates are Wednesday, April 29, thru to Sunday, May 3, 2020.

The ARS was incorporated in January, 1945, following a first meeting of founding members E. R. Peterson, George Grace, W. G. Tucker, H. H. Harms, John Bacher, John Henny, and Rudolph Henny, all of whom had outstanding collections of rhododendrons. Within six months, the first annual rhododendron show was held on Park Avenue in front of the art museum in downtown Portland. Seventy-five years later, the 2020 convention, hosted by the six Oregon chapters, returns to the Portland area to a setting of snow-capped peaks and verdant hills in a state that is home to many of the major nursery suppliers in the country. Today, *Rhododendron* is still celebrated as a diverse and fascinating genus, with hybridizers continuing to create beautiful new crosses and international plant explorers continuing to locate and identify new species.

The 75th anniversary meeting at the Heathman will feature an extraordinary lineup of international speakers and vibrant gardens. Among the outstanding gardens and nurseries included on the Portland area tours will be the treasured rhododendron destinations of Crystal Springs Rhododendron Garden and The Cecil and Molly Smith Garden, along with locations new to Portland convention visitors: Iseli Nursery, the Stewart Garden (formerly Dover Nursery), Sebright Nursery, Woodburn Nursery, and the Lan Su Chinese Garden. Major presentations will be provided by Jens Nielsen, Kenneth Cox, Lionel de Rothschild, Steve Hootman, Valerie Soza, Steve Krebs, Juliana Medeiros and others. It will be a most memorable event to celebrate the 75-year history of the ARS!

In addition to the lineup of featured speakers and Portland-area garden tours, 2020 Vision offers the options of an “Around



Iseli Nursery, Boring, OR. Photo: Mike Stewart.



Tumwater Falls State Park.



'Mrs. G. W. Leak' at Whitney Gardens. Photo: Harold Greer.



Whitney Gardens. Photo: Harold Greer.

the Sound” pre-tour, scheduled for Monday and Tuesday, April 27-28, in addition to a “Willamette Valley and Oregon Coast” post-tour, scheduled for Sunday through Tuesday, May 3-5. This will afford the opportunity to visit some exceptional northwest destination gardens and nurseries too distant for inclusion in the daily convention tours.

“Around the Sound” will depart from the Heathman Lodge early on Monday, April 27, and return the evening of Tuesday, April 28. One overnight accommodation will be included along with two lunches, one breakfast, and two dinners. The itinerary will follow breakfast at the Heathman and will include the following locations.

1. Tumwater Falls Park & Falls Terrace Restaurant (<https://olytumfoundation.org/>) (<http://fallsterrace.com/>)

Owned by the Olympia Tumwater Foundation, Tumwater Falls Park is open to the public and is free of charge. It houses a one-half (0.8 km) mile scenic loop trail along the Deschutes River which has three cascading waterfalls, with interpretive signs featuring pictures that illustrate the history of the area. You can glimpse the old Olympic Brewery from the lower falls, which was built in 1906, using artesian wells to make a beer of unparalleled quality, and hence its motto “It’s the water!”

In the spring, rhododendrons and many native plants in the park provide beauty to the area. Visitors enjoy the Washington Salish Native Plant Garden there year-round with its large variety of native flora. The park receives an average of 250,000 visitors per year.

The state-built fish ladders were added in the early 1950s to help spawning salmon climb past the falls on the Deschutes River. In late February 2019, the Washington’s Department of Fish and Wildlife launched a \$9 million effort to revamp its salmon facilities at the park, including building larger adult holding and juvenile rearing ponds and an extended fish ladder with underwater observation windows for the public.

The Falls Terrace restaurant is a family-owned, fine dining experience that offers beautiful views of Tumwater Falls. The restaurant offers fresh local food and a selection of fine wines from its seasonal menus and is considered one of the best dining experiences in the Pacific Northwest. Here, following a tour of the grounds, you will be provided with a prepaid lunch.



Far Reaches Farm: *Sanguisorba hakusanensis* 'Pink Squirrel'. Photo: Kelly Dodson.



Meconopsis baileyi 'Hensol Violet' at Far Reaches Farm. Photo: Kelly Dodson.



Heronswood: *R. augustinii*. Photo: Heronswood.



Heronswood: *R. kesengiae*. Photo: Heronswood.

2. Whitney Gardens (<http://www.whitneygardens.com/>)

About an hour's drive from Tumwater, following a scenic drive up the west side of the Hood Canal, we will arrive at Whitney Gardens, the famous destination rhododendron nursery and majestic seven acre (2.8 ha) garden at the foot of the Olympic Mountains. Among rare trees and ponds, you will see a beautiful array of rhododendron hybrids and species. Whitney Gardens features an abundance of azaleas, magnolias, maples, conifers, kalmias, camellias, perennials, trees, shrubs and ground covers.

Over 15,000 people visit this garden each year. Whitney Gardens is adjacent to the Dosewallips River estuary, where it fans out into the glacially-formed Hood Canal. Visitors can dig for world famous clams and oysters or hike through the Brothers Wilderness and enjoy seeing its eagles, great blue herons and seals. You may even catch a glimpse of the local elk herd as it passes by. Following our tour with host Ellie Sather, the coach takes a 45-minute drive to the northernmost destination on our tour:

3. Far Reaches Farm (<https://www.farreachesfarm.com/>)

Far Reaches Farm is just outside Port Townsend on the Quimper Peninsula. Port Townsend, famous for its Victorian homes, was called "the city of dreams" due to the early speculation that the city would be the largest harbor on the west coast, guarding the entry to Puget Sound. Far Reaches Farm has thousands of taxa in their collection, which are augmented by their own seed collecting expeditions and exchanges with botanic gardens around the world. Wander through the display gardens and you're guaranteed to see a plant or two you have never seen before. Far Reaches will arrange for pick-up of plants purchased online at least two weeks prior to the tour stop (keeping in mind the limited space on the bus). Hosts and owners Kelly and Sue are often featured speakers at area plant gatherings. As part of our visit here, take the opportunity to sample some of the area's locally produced wines during a brief happy-hour party.

4. The Point Hotel (<https://www.thepointcasinoandhotel.com/>)



The Point Hotel & Casino, Kingston, WA.



The courtyard at The Point Hotel.



Bloedel Glen. Photo: Bloedel Reserve.



Bloedel Reserve birch trail. Photo: Bloedel Reserve.

A short drive from Far Reaches, we arrive for our dinner and overnight stay at The Point Hotel & Casino, owned and operated by the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe. The hotel was completed in 2016 and is located on the Kitsap Peninsula in Kingston, a 30-minute ferry ride across Puget Sound towards the Seattle area.

The Point Hotel’s design is rooted in a style known as Coast Modern. The Hotel has adapted key architectural ideas from the long-house and other traditional tribal architecture with the all-cedar plank construction that is historically known to the Port Gamble S’Klallam.

A buffet dinner will be offered in the Event Center, which adjoins the Spindle Whorl Courtyard, with its fire pit and tribal art, just outside of the Hotel lobby. Both the hotel accommodations and conference areas are separate from the casino itself and are smoke-free.

Tuesday morning, you will experience a full buffet breakfast in the same banquet room before boarding the coach for a brief ride to:

5. Heronswood (<http://www.héronswood.com/>)

The process of making a garden called Heronswood began on September 1, 1987. That evening, the cofounders, Daniel Hinkley and Robert Jones, took possession of the house and property, pulled open the gate, and startled a great blue heron from the nearby pond. Over the course of two decades, Heronswood Nursery and Garden has showcased a vast inventory of rare and unusual trees, shrubs, vines and perennials, mostly plants Hinkley had collected in his lengthy biannual botanical adventures throughout Eastern Europe, Asia, Central and South America, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia. Following a period of ownership by the Burpee Company, and some years of neglect, the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe purchased Heronswood in 2012 at auction, and has been committed ever since, again under Hinkley’s direction, to making a new Heronswood with a greater polish and botanical wonderment than its original forebearer. Your tour of Heronswood will be introduced by Dan Hinkley.

6. Bloedel Reserve (<https://bloedelreserve.org/>)

Following a short journey south to Bainbridge Island, we will visit the Bloedel Reserve, which is a wonder of nature, created by the imagination, vision, and a passionate love of the natural world by founders Prentice and Virginia Bloedel. Working with the rugged geography of the land, they artfully transformed a rough-hewn Northwest forest into a harmonious series of curated gardens, structural features, and distinctive landscapes, with nature as canvas and paint.

Internationally recognized for the inspirational beauty of its refined gardens, natural landscapes, and preserved forests, Bloedel also excels in the environmental stewardship of its 150 acres (60.7 ha). Open



Fay Bainbridge State Park.



Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden. Photo: Steve Hootman.



The Victorian Stumpery at the RSBG. Photo: Steve Hootman.

year-round, there's something new to discover in every season: ever-changing landscapes, guided walks, expert lectures, summer concerts, special seasonal events, and more.

7. Fay Bainbridge State Park (https://stateparks.com/fay_bainbridge.html)

A short ride will take us next to Fay Bainbridge Park, a 17 acre (6.9 ha) marine camping park with 1,420 feet (432 m) of saltwater shoreline on the northeast corner of Bainbridge Island. The park offers sweeping views of Puget Sound, the Cascade Mountains and features sandy beaches. On clear days, Mount Rainier and Mount Baker are both visible. The tour stops here to enjoy specially prepared box lunches. After lunch, you'll be able to rest and relax while our coach makes the 90-minute journey to the ultimate rhododendron species destination in the northwest, if not the world.

8. Rhododendron Species Foundation and Botanical Garden (<https://rhodygarden.org/cms/>)

“Around the Sound” will culminate with a tour and banquet at the Rhododendron Species Foundation & Botanical Garden (RSBG). The RSBG is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to the conservation, public display, and distribution of *Rhododendron* species. Home to the largest collection of species rhododendrons in the world, the garden displays over 700 of the more than 1000 species found in the wilds of North America, Europe, and Asia, as well as the tropical regions of southeast Asia and northern Australia. Conservation has come to be of primary importance in recent years with the destruction of rhododendron habitat in many areas of the world.

Steve Hootman, well-known and respected Executive Director and Curator of the RSBG, will introduce us to the garden, and there will be a banquet under a tent outside the Rutherford Conservatory. The final leg of the tour will be to return to the

Heathman Lodge for your overnight stay ahead of the convention, which will start the following morning.



The Rutherford Conservatory at the RSBG. Photo: Steve Hootman.

Please note: Registration for the ARS 2020 convention will open on or about December 1, 2019. The pre-tour and post-tour options will be available to reserve at that time. For more details on the “Around the Sound” pre-tour, the “Willamette Valley and Oregon Coast” post-tour, and the convention in general, please visit www.ars75.org.

Steve McCormick is VP of the Portland Chapter and a member of the organizing committee of the 2020 ARS Spring Convention.