

Welcome to Ontario and the Royal Botanical Gardens

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ROYAL BOTANICAL GARDENS

Mission

Royal Botanical Gardens' mission is to promote the public's understanding of the relationship between the plant world, society, and the environment.

Vision

Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG) to be a recognized and supported global leader in how we use plants in bringing people, place, and sustainable behaviours together.

Funders

Royal Botanical Gardens is funded by the people of Ontario through RBG members, The Auxiliary of RBG, many corporations, foundations, individuals, Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture, City of Hamilton, and Regional Municipality of Halton.

Overview

The Royal Botanical Gardens has a long history in Canadian horticulture. Established in 1931, RBG is the most visited tourist destination between Burlington and Niagara. Royal Botanical Gardens is also Canada's largest botanical garden based on area at 1,100 ha (2,700 acres) in size. Of that, 121 ha (250 acres) are of cultivated gardens and 971 ha (2,450 acres) are of natural lands (Fig. 1). The natural lands space includes 27 km of trails, 30 km of shoreline, 24 streams, 17 bridges, 7 boardwalks, and over 1100 spontaneously occurring plant species within natural forests, wetlands and meadows. Of the approximately 1100 plant species, over 750 are native to Ontario which represents 37% of Ontario's native plants and 19% of Canada's native plants. The cultivated gardens and living collections feature over 8000 taxa of plants in over 40 different gardens and collections. At the forefront of these collections are the historically significant Katie Osborne Lilac Collection which features over 700 taxa and is home to the International Cultivar Registration Authority (ICRA) for *Syringa* (Fig. 2). The entire space is home to approximately 250 birds species, 68 fish species, 37 mammal species, 13 reptile species, 9 amphibian species, and an undetermined number of insect species. This diverse and rich region can be considered a biodiversity hot spot and is home to 50 species that are "at risk" in Canada.

Royal Botanical Gardens environmental mandate is to be a living laboratory for science, connect children and adults with nature, demonstrate sustainable gardening practices and undertake ecological restoration and plant preservation. There is continually much work going on at RBG, with the gardens and natural lands constantly evolving. The latest evolution for RBG is the multi-million dollar renovation of RBG's first garden, the historic and cherished Rock Garden (Fig. 3). This garden is currently under construction and will open with anticipation in 2016.



Fig. 1. RBG has five major garden areas dispersed along Plains Road West (shown here) and York Boulevard through Hamilton and Burlington. Image of Hendrie Park garden and RBG Centre taken in 2013.



Fig. 2. Royal Botanical Gardens is the International Cultivar Registration Authority for *Syringa*. The Old Lilac Collection is featured in this historic image from around 1960.



Fig. 3. The Rock Garden, opened to the public in 1932, is currently undergoing renovations for reopening in 2016.

CONFERENCE

It was an absolute honour to host “The Botanical Pre-Tour” on Wednesday for many delegates from your Society. We were pleased we could show off some of our garden attributes and we appreciated your enthusiasm, comments and suggestions. I was also honoured to be asked to open up the presentations on Thursday to provide an overview of RBG and highlight some statistics from the Canadian and Ontario nursery industry.

As I mentioned at the end of my presentation, I believe the public garden “world” and the nursery “world” could do a better job of collaborating and sharing of relevant information in order to move forward in our respective missions. The relationships may be strong between particular gardens and nurseries but not all, not in my experience at five major public garden institutions across North America. I think there are plenty of mutual benefits we could all gain from a closer relationship and I would look forward to more discussion of this topic in the future.

It was excellent to be surrounded by so many great plants people, local and international industry professionals, and individuals who I have only read about and who have inspired me for years. (I can’t believe I officially met the legendary Tim Brotzman!!!) Thank you to the organizing committee and to everyone involved with IPPS for including the Royal Botanical Gardens in the IPPS Eastern Region Conference 2014.

