Canada’s Royal Garden

a photography book by Mark Zelinski
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome to Royal Botanical Gardens</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Runciman, Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage and Charm: the Birth and Rebirth of RBG</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr David Galbraith, Head of Science</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encounters by Chance, Encounters by Design</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duncan Ross, Director of Marketing and Visitor Experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature, Plants, and Human Well-being</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara McKean, Head of Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wonder of Plants</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Mack, Head of Horticulture, and Alex Henderson, Curator of Collections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Nature Reserve at the Head of the Lake</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tys Theysmeyer, Head of Natural Lands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hidden Garden</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tys Theysmeyer, Barbara McKean, Jim Mack, and Dr David Galbraith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falling in love with Royal Botanical Gardens</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various Contributors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Welcome to Royal Botanical Gardens
by Mark Runciman, CEO

"Royal Botanical Gardens puts nature’s beauty on display, but it isn’t a park system. It teaches but it isn’t a school. It protects and preserves forest and marsh, but it isn’t a conservation authority. It collects and propagates botanical knowledge and plant life, but it is not a library, museum, or laboratory. It is all those things and more than their sum.”
—Dr Leslie Laking, RBG’s Director, 1954-1981

On behalf of our Board of Directors, our hard-working staff and volunteers, welcome to Royal Botanical Gardens.

As part of Canada’s 150th anniversary celebrations in 2017, we would like to share some of the wonderful things that we so proudly steward for the enjoyment of people in the heart of the Hamilton/Halton community, within the province of Ontario, and from this great country of Canada. I also wish to recognize the long history of First Nations and Métis Peoples in Ontario, and show respect for the communities of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory and the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nations.

Before describing what makes Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG) so special, it is important to understand what makes a botanical garden different from other sorts of gardens. We feel the best description comes from Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI), of which Royal Botanical Gardens is a member. They have a list of criteria that may be met in part or whole by any institution that is considered a botanical garden:

• A reasonable degree of permanence
• An underlying scientific basis for living plant collections
• Proper documentation of the collections, including those of wild origin
• Monitoring of the plants in the collections
• Adequate labelling of the plants
• Open to the public
• Communication of information to other gardens, institutions and the public
• Exchange of seed or other materials with other botanic gardens, arboreta or research institutions
• Undertaking of scientific or technical research on plants in the collections
• Maintenance of research programs in plant taxonomy in associated herbaria

This list, however, is not exhaustive. In fact, Royal Botanical Gardens does much more.

Royal Botanical Gardens is Canada’s largest botanical garden, with more than 2,700 acres (1,110 hectares) of green space, cultivated gardens, parklands and nature sanctuaries. We are one of the largest urban nature sanctuaries in North America, a unique and irreplaceable asset.

The funders of Royal Botanical Gardens are vast and include the people of Ontario through the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, for which we are an attraction and service agency; City of Hamilton, Regional Municipality of Halton, Royal Botanical Gardens members, the Auxiliary of Royal Botanical Gardens, and many corporations, foundations and individuals. Though we are not of which Royal Botanical Gardens is a member. They have a list of criteria that may be met in part or whole by any institution that is considered a botanical garden:

• A reasonable degree of permanence
• An underlying scientific basis for living plant collections
• Proper documentation of the collections, including those of wild origin
• Monitoring of the plants in the collections
• Adequate labelling of the plants
• Open to the public
• Communication of information to other gardens, institutions and the public
• Exchange of seed or other materials with other botanic gardens, arboreta or research institutions
• Undertaking of scientific or technical research on plants in the collections
• Maintenance of research programs in plant taxonomy in associated herbaria

This list, however, is not exhaustive. In fact, Royal Botanical Gardens does much more.

Royal Botanical Gardens is Canada’s largest botanical garden, with more than 2,700 acres (1,110 hectares) of green space, cultivated gardens, parklands and nature sanctuaries. We are one of the largest urban nature sanctuaries in North America, a unique and irreplaceable asset.

The funders of Royal Botanical Gardens are vast and include the people of Ontario through the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, for which we are an attraction and service agency; City of Hamilton, Regional Municipality of Halton, Royal Botanical Gardens members, the Auxiliary of Royal Botanical Gardens, and many corporations, foundations and individuals. Though we are not
Northern Cardinals (left) and Caspian Terns (middle) are frequent sightings for birdwatchers visiting Cootes Paradise Nature Sanctuary.

Fields of yellow native goldenrod crown Princess Point on the south shore of Cootes Paradise Marsh. Native prairie habitat is returning to this property with the help of RBG’s Natural Lands staff.

A day on Cootes Paradise Marsh often includes encounters with Mute Swans. As striking as they are, Mute Swans are a non-native invasive species that is taking hold in natural areas. Our wetlands are also home to native Trumpeter Swans, who often are the losers in territorial skirmishes with these European birds.

A day on Cootes Paradise Marsh often includes encounters with Mute Swans. As striking as they are, Mute Swans are a non-native invasive species that is taking hold in natural areas. Our wetlands are also home to native Trumpeter Swans, who often are the losers in territorial skirmishes with these European birds.
Growing with the times, the David Braley and Nancy Gordon Rock Garden is our oldest garden landscape. Opened in 1932, it recently underwent a major rejuvenation and reopened in 2016 with a new horticultural design and a new visitor centre.

The warm pastels of sunset catch stained glass petals and leaves of Bloodroot, a sculpture by American artist Karl Unnasch. Installed in 2016 as part of the Dan Lawrie International Sculpture Collection, this and other exciting art installations await visitors to Hendrie Park.
Heritage and Charm: the Birth and Rebirth of RBG

By David Galbraith, Head of Science

When we walk through a botanical garden, we encounter many things. The plants that are present are living things, just like we are. There for our enjoyment and enlightenment, they are at once under the control of the gardener and living their own lives. Some gardens can seem timeless, as though they are primeval landscapes that have always been there. Others are newer, perhaps with purposeful designs that frankly speak of renewal and growth.

Royal Botanical Gardens consists of a series of individual gardens and nature sanctuaries that tell several stories. They are a landscape, a quilt of different land uses that interact, change, and always give visitors something new to experience.

Just as older buildings can represent our heritage, so too can gardens and other landscape features, telling the story of a past that can inform our future. Beautiful garden designs can combine with natural features in generating a real sense of place, something valued by generations of people who may be part of the local neighbourhood or who come from far corners of the earth to experience a garden’s beauty.

In its origins, Royal Botanical Gardens was conceived as a complex landscape rather than as a singular block of cultivated garden space. As early as the First World War, civic leaders in Hamilton were planning beautification projects of various sorts. In the 1920s some of these projects came into existence, in large part because of the work of Thomas Baker McQuesten and his colleagues on the City of Hamilton Board of Park Management. The most ambitious of these projects, perhaps, was redeveloping the north western entrance to Hamilton along the highway to Toronto. Launched in 1927 as a design competition for architects of the British Empire, it resulted by 1932 in a magnificent new bridge over the Desjardins Canal and a large complex of gardens along the Burlington Heights. The 55 acres of gardens were in part a war memorial, and featured the imaginative conversion of an abandoned 5.5-acre gravel pit into the Rock Garden.

Another significant project was the creation of a botanical garden for Hamilton. In 1928 the Board of Park Management purchased lands along the south shore of Cootes Paradise Marsh. This provided ample land for another important project — 50 acres of gardens were in part a war memorial, and featured the imaginative conversion of an abandoned 5.5-acre gravel pit into the Rock Garden.

Another significant project was the creation of a botanical garden for Hamilton. In 1928 the Board of Park Management purchased lands along the south shore of Cootes Paradise Marsh. This provided ample land for another important project — 50 acres of gardens were in part a war memorial, and featured the imaginative conversion of an abandoned 5.5-acre gravel pit into the Rock Garden.
The Rock Garden was a creative masterpiece. Situated in an abandoned gravel pit (below), on a 1928 design by Carl Borgstrom’s company (with 10,000 tons of Niagara Escarpment limestone), it quickly became a favourite landmark for the region. A postcard from 1932 reveals an almost lunar landscape, in sharp contrast to the lush mature garden of today (below). Many of the small conifers ringing the walls of the garden in 1932 are still found there today.

Though formerly best known for its spring tulip and summer annual displays, the new Rock Garden is now a year-round garden attraction that reaches its colourful peak in late summer and fall.

In the 1960s the Lilac Collection was moved and expanded. Leslie Laking (Director, 1954–1981; above) worked with staff to create both a large collection and an exquisite garden experience, the Katie Osborne Lilac Collection (left), on the site known informally as the Lilac Dell.

Heritage and Charities, 1500 Rymal Road East, Hamilton, Ontario, L8E 0E7, Canada
Encounters by Chance - Encounters by Design
By Duncan Ross, Director of Marketing and Visitor Experience

“Sometimes you will never know the value of a moment until it becomes a memory.”
—Dr. Theodor Seuss Geisel (1904-1991)

For thousands of years people have been drawn to gardens and places of natural beauty. Their motivations are consistent. They come to be rejuvenated, they come to connect with nature, themselves and others, and they come to be inspired. However, today people are bombarded by an endless digital stream of images, messages, and advertising of all shapes and forms, which makes it very challenging to connect with local residents and introduce travellers visiting Ontario and Canada to the world of nature.

Royal Botanical Gardens is a very inspiring and attractive destination for visitors from all over the world. The Gardens is a National Historic Site, one of the most important sites in a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, and Canada’s only royal sanctioned garden. These internationally recognized designations have resulted in RBG being the most visited tourist attraction between Toronto and Niagara Falls. A visit to RBG has changed dramatically since the turn of the century. Visitors still walk the same paths and trails to view our internationally recognized plant collections but now they can also enjoy a moonlight dinner in the magnolia collection or a nighttime Pumpkin Trail walk.

Our gardens have also become a canvas for artistic entertainment experiences to showcase plants and the natural environment. Weekend events can transform Hendrie Park into a garden full of fairies, pixies and gnomes to engage the imagination of children, while other programs in the Arboretum take families on a journey to solve mental and physical challenges all based on nature. Indoor exhibits in the winter months foster a year-round relationship with families and our members. Frogs, turtles, snakes, insects and even woolly mammoths have been the exhibition themes in the past. Seasonal attractions, such as the popular Holiday Traditions, explore the myths, tastes, decorations and traditions of Christmas and other cultural holiday celebrations. These education events may start a conversation about pollination, bird migration, climate change and the importance of the tree canopy, and hopefully spur interest in science, nature, and the understanding of cultural diversity in young minds.

The adult mind is also stimulated by programs like a tequila tasting surrounded by agave plants, yoga in the garden, a holiday season craft beer festival or a captivating lecture by thought leaders on a wide range of subject matter from conservation biology and astronomy to landscape design.

With the opening of the rejuvenated Rock Garden in 2016, Royal Botanical Gardens set the stage for new era in artistic and creative collaboration to attract new audiences. The Rock Garden now hosts outdoor performances of the works of William Shakespeare, the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra can perform year-round in the David Braley and Nancy Gordon Rock Garden Visitor Centre, and innovative light, sound and music performances, such as RBG’s signature event, Luna, can be choreographed using the walls of the Rock Garden bowl and water features as stunning backdrops that could never be created in a conventional theatrical venue.

The boundaries of art and creativity are continually expanding at RBG. The Dan Lawrie International Sculpture Collection in Hendrie Park...
There are plenty of places for quiet moments at Royal Botanical Gardens, including the Mediterranean Garden, our public conservatory.

Exploring rich cultural traditions — including special events like whiskey tasting — makes Royal Botanical Gardens a great place to encounter the plant world. The world’s favourite beverages are flavoured with plants.

Since the early days of the Rock Garden in the 1930s, Royal Botanical Gardens has been a favourite place for weddings and other life celebrations.

The serious side of life is as important as the celebrations. We host corporate, government, academic, and other events, such as the 2016 Bay Area Economic Summit.

Would our founders of 80 years ago recognize the beauty of the rejuvenated Rock Garden today? With a full-service restaurant and the magnificent new Great Room, the visitor centre is a fine addition to this horticultural landmark.

Would our founders of 80 years ago recognize the beauty of the rejuvenated Rock Garden today? With a full-service restaurant and the magnificent new Great Room, the visitor centre is a fine addition to this horticultural landmark.
Ever you are, take a moment and look around you. Directly or indirectly, plants are responsible for pretty much everything that you see. All life needs plants: this message forms the core of our programming at Royal Botanical Gardens, promoted by our dedicated staff team who work with external partners in our communities, across Ontario, throughout Canada, and around the world. Together, we battle against two conditions that affect the majority of people in today's society — plant blindness and nature-deficit disorder.

Plants provide us with oxygen, food, medicines, fibre, and a myriad of other products that drive the global economy. Considering their importance to our survival, it seems counterintuitive that plant blindness — the human inability to really see the plants in one's environment — is so pervasive around the developed world. Climate change poses enormous threats to all life on Earth, so one might expect that people everywhere would be raising a ruckus over the fact that over 20 percent of the world's plant species are threatened with extinction. If the list of things provided by plants isn't compelling enough to raise this concern, then consider that plants are a natural carbon-sequestering technology — and along with the many other ecosystem services they provide, they do this for free.

Plants provide us with benefits beyond climate change mitigation and the tangible trove of coffee, wine, and chocolate. Plants are a source of intangibles, like inspiration, joy, vigour, and health — the building blocks of human wellness. Plant-mediated wellness comes from much more than just a healthy vegetable-based diet and the use of healing herbs. Touching and smelling plants, or being in plant-rich environments has a positive impact on mood, memory, and focus. People living near green space are healthier and fitter, and the impacts of poverty are reduced when lower income residents have nearby access to natural areas.

While time in nature benefits all throughout life, at no time is this more important than childhood, when the seeds of a lifelong connection to nature are best sown. Biophilia, the human attraction to other forms of life, is innate; hardwired at both evolutionary and individual developmental scales. Throughout time, humans have grown up outdoors in close touch with the natural world. Our brains, our bodies, and our souls have always been shaped by this contact. Only recently is it even possible to imagine a childhood spent indoors away from the touch of nature.

A growing body of research helps us understand the physical, emotional and intellectual costs of this relatively new phenomenon. Nature-deficit disorder (NDD) is a term coined by author Richard Louw, whose 2005 book, Last Child in the Woods, focused the world's attention on the emerging evidence and concerns about the growing disconnect between children and nature. Not a medical condition in itself, NDD is an umbrella term that describes the symptoms associated with an inactive indoor childhood. These symptoms range from increases in weight and cardiovascular issues, to early onset diabetes, "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

~William Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, Act III, Scene iii (1609)
Royal Botanical Gardens’ Junior Gardeners program has taught a new crop of children to garden each year since 1947. Having a chance to touch the earth and see plants grow from seeds, and take home produce they have nurtured, is the ultimate in personal growth experiences. Guided by skilled staff and volunteers, Junior Gardeners grow their life-long attachment to gardening and to nature.

Veggie Village showcases food gardens that are ornamental, functional and multicultural. Produce from the garden is served in our cafés, and shared with local food banks.

Pokeweed (top) is native to the southernmost areas of Canada. While it has a history of medicinal use, used incorrectly it is poisonous.
Plants are fascinating. They provide us food to nourish our bodies, fibre to build roofs over our heads, fuel to keep us warm, raw materials for the medicines that keep us well and cure what ails us. Our lives depend on plants.

While plants provide support and regulate our lives, they also inspire. Their diversity of shapes, sizes, colours, and uses have captivated our imagination and beguiled our senses since the dawn of humanity. They have inspired human endeavor in art, literature, film, architecture, mythology, and religion. They conjure up feelings and bygone memories that stimulate our emotions and awaken our senses by laying eyes on them, hearing their sounds, or smelling their complex fragrance. Who among us has not been touched by the vivid fall colours of a leaf-peeper drive through the countryside, been captivated by the rustling of leaves brought on by an approaching summer storm, or been intoxicated by the heady sweet perfume of lilacs permeating the spring air?

Botanical gardens provide us with avenues by which we can explore the plant world with curiosity and wonder. They help us appreciate the importance of preserving, conserving, and unlocking the mysteries of the plant world. When we understand the life of plants we begin to understand the true complexities of life on Earth.

Royal Botanical Gardens’ plant collections contain more than a few of these natural wonders. Take for example the living fossil, Dawn Redwood, growing in Hendrie Park. Thought at one time to exist only in the geological record, live plant populations of Dawn Redwood were discovered in remote parts of China in the early 1940s. It is truly remarkable to think that this charismatic tree, endangered in the wild, once growing alongside dinosaurs, has survived major extinction events, outrunning geological time itself.

Sacred Lotus, also growing in Hendrie Park, is remarkable due to superhydrophobic leaves. Water spilled on a leaf does not wet the surface but simply rolls off. As water rolls across the surface it removes debris, such as dust or dirt, and is self-cleaning so that the plant can photosynthesize at maximum levels. This process, known as the lotus effect, is of great interest to scientists and engineers interested in biomimicry who are, as a result, seeking to design new products including coatings, paints, glass, and textiles that are better protected from debris and remain dry when in water.

Found in Morrison Woodland Garden, Eastern Skunk Cabbage is a thermogenic plant. Such plants are amazingly able to raise their temperature above that of surrounding air temperatures. Flowering when snow and ice are still on the ground, this plant is able to melt
Central to the biology of reproduction for flowering plants are stamens, the structures that produce pollen. These usually form a circle around a slender pistil, which receives the pollen and guides the genetic material from pollen into the ovule, where fertilisation takes place.

Plants within the Mediterranean Garden may come from one of five different locations around the world that share a common climate. These areas include the western coast of Chile, California, South Africa, Australia, and the Mediterranean itself.
Plants may share colours but not be closely related. Here Pickerelweed (top left), a Bearded Iris (top right), Grape Hyacinth (lower right), Pulmonaria (immediate right) and a Clematis cultivar (above) all show beautiful purples and blues.

The intense blue of a tropical waterlily in Hendrie Park’s reflecting pools (above) contrasts with the delicate tones of Porcelain Berry (right). Native to China, Porcelain Berry is a major invasive species in North America.
A Nature Reserve at the Head of the Lake

By Týs Theÿsmeÿer, Head of Natural Lands

“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will ensure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature — the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.”

—Rachel Carson, Silent Spring (1962)

Using this area as a transportation crossroads, people have shaped the landscape at the western tip of Lake Ontario, the Head of the Lake, for thousands of years. This area, which encompasses Royal Botanical Gardens’ lands, hosts a significant nature reserve — full of hidden gems and spectacular vistas — that is most relevant today for its support of internationally significant ecosystems.

Establishing a nature reserve at the Head of the Lake is a natural extension of this extraordinary landscape of inspiration. The land, in a mere two kilometres, rises 400 metres from Lake Ontario to flat table lands above the Niagara Escarpment. These features converge into a network of cliffs, ravines and creeks, spilling into winding shorelines and sheltered inlets, ending in two large marshes — Cootes Paradise Marsh and Grindstone Marsh. Underpinning it is a glacial spillway known as the Dundas Valley, which is further bisected by old glacial Lake Iroquois beach deposits, that form Burlington Heights. This sand and gravel bar is a remnant feature derived from a lake whose shores were 40 metres higher than Lake Ontario’s. Standing upon it provides for spectacular vistas.

The environmental richness found here stems from the wind shelter of the Niagara Escarpment and the environmental productivity found in the rivermouth marshes. Fish were once produced for Lake Ontario in the tens of millions in Mother Nature’s version of natural fish hatcheries. For birds, this area is a needed rest stop in a continent-wide network of ecological islands, hosting birds travelling as far north as the Arctic (in spring), and as far as southern Chile (in fall). The extraordinary remnants of the original natural fauna are now mostly found in the towering forests within the ravine slopes, dominated by more southerly Carolinian species. In the cooler ravines, northern species add to the plant diversity, with both forest types sheltering many rare and endangered plant and animal species. Remnant trees of the pre-European forest can still be found across the property, often oak species that hint at an earlier climate drier than today’s.

The formal protection of Cootes Paradise as a nature reserve in 1927 did not stay environmental losses. Uncontrollable factors of inflowing polluted waters and the introduction of Eurasian species arriving through the old port towns of Dundas, Aldershot, and Hamilton took their toll. More than a few of these new species found the impaired environment and the lack of competition from missing native species to their liking, and thrived. Today, one-third of the naturally occurring plants within the nature sanctuaries are of Eurasian origin. Most famously, an Asian fish, the Common Carp, quickly grew to a population of over 100,000 that levelled the marsh vegetation by the 1950s. Peoples’ passion for these lands was daunted but not defeated, and so began the wetland plantings, species reintroductions, and carp removal efforts that continue to this day, now symbolized by the Cootes Paradise Fishway. The waters are improving and so is the marsh plant life.

“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will ensure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature — the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.”

~Rachel Carson, Silent Spring (1962)
Paddling through the lush waters of Grindstone Creek reveals some of our ongoing problems with invasive species. In this case, Manna Grass spreading near the shore will soon be eliminated and the area restored to native meadow marsh habitat.
resenting a botanical garden is a little like a theatrical performance. Our guests see what’s on the stage before them — beautiful gardens and wonderful plants, professionally tended and arranged by the eye of an artist, or magnificent natural areas protected, as much as is possible, from the effects of human activity. At Royal Botanical Gardens about 500,000 people every year take in the sights, sounds, smells and experiences of our nature sanctuaries and gardens.

There’s more to tell, though, about what happens behind the curtains of this natural theatre. Many talented people, both staff and volunteers, put in long hours to make visitors’ experiences memorable and meaningful. More than that, there’s much to be done to fulfill RBG’s mandate: to serve the people of our region, our province, and our country through excellence in programs of horticulture, conservation of nature, education, and science. As Mark Bunciman noted in his introduction, it’s these sorts of activities that define a botanical garden. While the public sees the show from the front of house, much of RBG’s value to our community can be found day-to-day behind the scenes.

Volunteers and staff alike contribute to the work in Royal Botanical Gardens’ herbarium, a collection of approximately 40,000 dried plant specimens. Scanning a specimen produces a large-scale digital image, complete with colour correction and scale bars.

"One will weave the canvas; another will fell a tree by the light of his ax. Yet another will forge nails, and there will be others who observe the stars to learn how to navigate. And yet all will be one. Building a boat isn’t about weaving canvas, forging nails, or reading the sky. It’s about giving a shared taste for the sea, by the light of which you will see nothing contradictory but rather a community of love." ~Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Citadelle (1948, translated from the French)
The Hidden Garden

Connecting children and nature is a hallmark of our programming, and first-hand experiences with plants and animals are the most powerful ways to build that connection.

Visitors to RBG Centre enter through Stedman Exploration Hall (above left and right) where the rich complexity of our mandated activities is introduced in interactive exhibits. During the winter months, travelling exhibits bring to life the connections between RBG, plants and the environment. From carnivorous plants to chocolate, rainforests and the Ice Age (centre), we offer families and groups fun and engaging learning opportunities. Every day, our Education Officer travels the world via interactive videoconference, taking RBG to a global audience (left).
Falling in Love with Royal Botanical Gardens

"We are the children of our landscape; it dictates behavior and even thought in the measure to which we are responsive to it."

~Lawrence Durrell, Justine (1957)

"To me, Royal Botanical Gardens epitomizes the kind of farsighted leadership of people like Thomas Baker McQuesten, its founder. At a time when resources were scarce he visualized an institution that would educate and civilize his community for generations to come. Like other McQuesten-inspired attractions including the Niagara Parks System and Gage Park in Hamilton, RBG has endured many decades after McQuesten conceived it. Royal Botanical Gardens is a symbol not only of the aesthetic and cultural objectives it represents but of the value of visionary public policy-making."

~John Best, Publisher, journalist, and biographer of T. B. McQuesten

"I remember the first time I heard about Royal Botanical Gardens. It was before we moved from the West and we were visiting our daughter at Christmas. I saw a billboard advertising RBG and decided that, when we moved here, I would definitely check it out. The next time I thought about RBG was on a hot day in July when I was halfway through unpacking from the move and I just had to get out of the house. I arrived at RBG on a lovely sunny July afternoon and fell under its spell immediately. The gardens were exactly what I needed; they lifted my spirits, cheered my mind and relaxed my sore, tired muscles. What amazes me is that, in spite of hundreds of visits, they have the same effect every time I visit."

~Ali Brown, Secretary, RBG Auxiliary

"When I visit RBG I see things I can do and plants that would do well in my own garden...."

~Dr. Geoffrey Arron, President, RBG Board of Directors

"I love books, I love plants, I love gardening, as well as the fascinating people I met along the way-- at RBG I got it all. And much more... and we still love the Gardens after half a century of affiliation."

~Mark Paterson, Curator, Cruickshank Botanic Garden, University of Aberdeen, Scotland

"I cannot separate my dual Canadian/British citizenship from my formative years growing up in the unique and magical midst of RBG. I found it a venue of perpetual inspiration with wonderful trails becoming my living classroom. Opportunities abounded, from youth programs like the teen Discovery Club to horticultural training as a Summer Gardener. Beyond doubt, RBG provided a vital platform for me to pursue my horticultural career."

~Ina Vrugtman, RBG’s Librarian, 1969 to 1995

"I fell in love with RBG because of the amazing diversity of plants, especially when this diversity is intensified during the beautiful colours of autumn!"

~Jon Peter, Curator & Manager of Plant Records

"On warm afternoons in early spring, my parents would pack a thermos of tea and take us to see the ‘witchy tree’ at RBG. This was a gnarled old crab apple along the north shore trail. We would make our way through the thile deft, then crunch through the fallen leaves up the trail to where the witchy lived. Once we arrived, we’d eat our small picnic and scatter the crumbs for the squirrels. Decades have passed since then. My own children have explored the RBG trails, and one day their children will visit as well. This is the legacy the RBG passes along to all of us. Valued and loved by generations."

~Rosalind Almiji, Hamilton, Ontario

"I love books, I love plants, I love gardening, as well as the fascinating people I met along the way-- at RBG I got it all. And much more... and we still love the Gardens after half a century of affiliation."

~Ina Vrugtman, RBG’s Librarian, 1969 to 1995

~John Best, Publisher, journalist, and biographer of T. B. McQuesten

"To me, Royal Botanical Gardens epitomizes the kind of farsighted leadership of people like Thomas Baker McQuesten, its founder. At a time when resources were scarce he visualized an institution that would educate and civilize his community for generations to come. Like other McQuesten-inspired attractions including the Niagara Parks System and Gage Park in Hamilton, RBG has endured many decades after McQuesten conceived it. Royal Botanical Gardens is a symbol not only of the aesthetic and cultural objectives it represents but of the value of visionary public policy-making."

~John Best, Publisher, journalist, and biographer of T. B. McQuesten

"I remember the first time I heard about Royal Botanical Gardens. It was before we moved from the West and we were visiting our daughter at Christmas. I saw a billboard advertising RBG and decided that, when we moved here, I would definitely check it out. The next time I thought about RBG was on a hot day in July when I was halfway through unpacking from the move and I just had to get out of the house. I arrived at RBG on a lovely sunny July afternoon and fell under its spell immediately. The gardens were exactly what I needed: they lifted my spirits, cheered my mind and relaxed my sore, tired muscles. What amazes me is that, in spite of hundreds of visits, they have the same effect every time I visit."

~Ali Brown, Secretary, RBG Auxiliary

"When I visit RBG I see things I can do and plants that would do well in my own garden...."

~Dr. Geoffrey Arron, President, RBG Board of Directors

"I love books, I love plants, I love gardening, as well as the fascinating people I met along the way-- at RBG I got it all. And much more... and we still love the Gardens after half a century of affiliation."

~Ina Vrugtman, RBG’s Librarian, 1969 to 1995

"I fell in love with RBG because of the amazing diversity of plants, especially when this diversity is intensified during the beautiful colours of autumn!"

~Jon Peter, Curator & Manager of Plant Records
“RBG was one of the first places my husband took me when we started dating, and there’s no question that it was love at first sight! Then, when the time was right, he chose a lovely little perch alongside the Rock Garden’s storied waterfall to propose that the RBG and its beautiful blooms would forever be the gardens of my dreams.”

~Barb Philips, Burlington, Ontario

“We have special memories of RBG. I guess you would have to say we love it. In October 1956 we were fortunate to have our wedding photographs taken in the beautiful Rock Garden. Sixty years later we again visited the same stairway in the newly renovated Rock Garden, to commemorate our anniversary.”

~Tom and Doreen Bochsler, Burlington, Ontario

“Why I fell in love with RBG you ask...simple...the serenity, the beauty and the amazing people that bring it all together!”

~Ruth Lee, RBG Board of Directors

“I fell in love with RBG because of the passion of the people that work there.
“I fell in love with RBG because of the beauty everywhere.
“I fell in love with RBG because of simple joy of seeing nature at its best every minute of every day.
“I fell in love with RBG because of the peace it brings to my soul.
“I fell in love with RBG watching children’s faces as they frolic in nature.”

~Marlene Southerland, Retired RBG Executive Assistant

“In the gardens and the sanctuary lands of RBG, I’ve had the privilege of meeting fascinating people from all places and cultures. Royal Botanical Gardens is a treasure of living things, not just for Canadians, but for the world.”

~Mark Zelinski, Photographer/Publisher Mark Zelinski Photographic Design