BOTANIC GARDENS

hold documented collections of living plants for the purposes of scientific research, conservation, public display and education. They aim to protect and sustain biodiversity by exploring the world of plants and their relationships.
Leach Botanical Garden has operated as a public park for almost thirty years.

The Garden is the only public, botanical garden in the METRO area.
Leach is named for the couple who created it: John and Lilla Leach.

They bought this property in the 1930s, built the Stone Cabin and outdoor cooking area across the Creek, added the Manor House, and laid out the garden.
Lilla was an exploring botanist in the early part of the 20th Century- an unusual thing for a woman then. She is credited with discovering five species of plants.

The most famous is the *Kalmiopsis leachiana* for which the Kalmiopsis Wilderness Area in Southern Oregon is named.

They spent much time exploring the regional mountain ranges in search of plants, many examples of which make the Garden collection unique.
John was a pharmacist and community leader.

His business, the Phoenix Pharmacy, stood on Foster Road.

One way he pursued his botanical interest and his professional training was through creation of a “physic garden”.

He was a staunch supporter of the YMCA which was called the Leach YMCA. He was a founder of the Junior Rose Festival and was involved in many other public pursuits.
They did not have children, but employed many neighborhood youngsters to help around the Garden. Some of those ‘Leach kids’ are local business leaders today.

One of them is Kathleen Lansing of Lansing Linoleum.
John and Lilla's will left their estate to the City of Portland.

In the 1970s, the city rented out the house and little was done with the surrounding grounds.

In 1981, on the verge of the property being turned over to the YMCA (a provision in the will), Charles Jordan came out to see the place. He realized that it was a unique treasure.

The Park Bureau agreed to take over ownership of the property if the friends of John and Lilla would form a non-profit to operate it.

Leach Garden Friends was incorporated thirty years ago, and the partnership has been a success ever since.
The Garden opened to the public in 1983.

Over one hundred volunteers donate thousands of hours annually to keep the Garden open.

During the past thirty years, Portland's political, community and business leaders increased the campus at Leach with the goal of ultimately making it a destination park facility on the Eastside.
The original Leach estate encompassed 4.5 acres. The Garden currently comprises nearly 17 acres, although only about six acres is developed.

Before developing the new acquisition areas, a master plan was needed.

In 2006 and 2007, the Portland Park Bureau led a master planning process for the Garden. The plan identified important improvements to make the Garden better able to serve visitors. Restrooms, better parking, places to orient visitors to the Garden for example.

The plan was adopted by City Council in 2010.
In 2008, the Lents Town Center Urban Renewal Area boundary was amended to include Leach in anticipation of first steps toward implementing a design based on the Master Plan.

In the past two years, PDC funds from the URA were invested in a full survey of the Garden, demolition of abandoned buildings, and acquisition of a key piece of property.

Currently a schematic design process for approximately six acres in the Upper Garden is underway. Mayer/Reed Landscape Architects are leading the effort.
Berry Botanic Garden, Portland’s other botanical garden, closed its operation in 2010 leaving Leach as the sole public garden of its type in the area.

Many Berry volunteers, plants from the collection, and a key staff person transferred to Leach.

Leach Garden Friends, in the past two years, has
- strengthened its board of directors,
- initiated and completed an assessment of its botanical collection,
- and drafted a business plan to demonstrate how improvements solidify its economic foundation and increase the ways it serves the public.
The annual calendar at Leach Botanical Garden has always been a rich one.

It includes educational events such as Children’s Nature Fair and Garden After Hours.

It includes Saturday tours and Wednesday morning Honeybee Hikes. The latter is aimed at small children and their adults.
Classes and lectures on botanical, horticultural and environmental topics take place year round.

Art classes such as Botanical Illustration, animal and insect classes, Ikebana and flower arranging are also found in the Leach catalogue.

Since 2010, Portland Audubon has based its eastside operations at Leach as it reaches out to underserved populations. The Environmental Education Association of Oregon also is housed at Leach.
Leach Garden’s scores of active volunteers put on fundraising activities such as the Holiday Bazaar, the Plant Sale, and the English Teas each year to support the Garden’s operations.

These events are immensely popular. The English Teas sell out within days of being announced.
The Board of the Garden has taken seriously the need to prepare for the impending changes to the Garden. In an extended strategic planning process in 2011, a set of values was identified and adopted.

The values were accompanied by a vision statement identifying what the garden should be.

These tools have been used to frame our discussions of the current design process.
Leach Garden Values

Celebrate the relationship of humans to nature

Excite the imagination

Cultivate, collect, grow, preserve and care for plants

Share stories from and of this place

Stimulate engaged learning

Practice stewardship

Celebrate pioneering women botanists

Promote involvement in the natural sciences
Leach Garden Vision

A botanical garden that features Oregon native plants and the historic Leach collection

A horticultural resource for the public as well as for the serious gardener

A hands-on laboratory for environmental education that encourages engagement with the natural sciences

A model and demonstration site of environmental sustainability

A museum celebrating John & Lilla Leach and their contributions to Pacific Northwest botany and to the southeast Portland community

A visitor attraction

A place of beauty and respite
Leach Botanical Garden is the signature public space in East Portland.

For nearly thirty years, community leaders have worked toward development of the Garden's capacity to effectively serve visitors, share the Leach story and the extraordinary botanical collection.

The community has invested substantial resources in the Garden. Leach has the capacity to be a must see destination in Portland.

Leach is also a place where the many and diverse citizens of the Outer Eastside can feel welcome and find opportunities to learn, to explore, to reflect, and to experience a sense of belonging.

Opportunities for the Garden will be found in partnerships. Institutions of higher education could join with Leach to make the 'outdoor classroom' a resource close at hand. We have had discussions with PSU, PNCA, NCNM and others to that end.

The Garden and partners such as Zenger Farm could be a gateway to exploring the surrounding natural landscapes.
Leach Botanical Garden- Portland's Outer Southeast gem