



**FAR REACHES
BOTANICAL CONSERVANCY**



2023 Annual Report

Mission Statement



The FRBC acquires and conserves wild and cultivated ornamental plants new to North America with special emphasis on those that are threatened or vulnerable to loss. We maintain these plants as a living reference collection for education, scientific purposes, and public enjoyment.

Strategic Goals

1. Continue Collection of At-Risk Plants - Conduct horticultural research and collecting expeditions to search for species acutely threatened by immediate human pressure or climate change, particularly those not capable of migration or adaptation, and actively import plants from at-risk specialty collections in Europe and elsewhere.
2. Ensure Conservation and Distribution of Threatened Plants - Pursue ex situ conservation practices and cultivation, with distribution to botanical institutions, public gardens, scientific researchers, and the horticultural community.
3. Broaden Engagement and Education of Diverse Communities - Increase public participation in horticulture and gardening by providing education on how our work and plant collections contribute to understanding and preserving global biodiversity.
4. Build Infrastructure and Organizational Sustainability - Steward the Conservancy's collection and establish systems to ensure the long-term viability of the plant collections and the organization.

Board of Directors

Sue Milliken
Kelly Dodson
Bonnie Berk
Cody Hinchliff, PhD
William Winslow

Key advisors

Aaron Floden, PhD—Consulting Taxonomist
Michael Sundue, PhD—Consulting Taxonomist
Panayoti Kelaidis, Senior Curator at the Denver Botanic Garden
John Massey, owner of Ashwood Nurseries in England

Staff + Volunteers

Elena Smith, Administrative Coordinator
Ann Welch, Website Manager & Media Producer
Dan Post, Chief Financial Officer
Mike Elder, Fern Propagator
Dixie Llewellyn, Microscopist
Kimberly Mills, Propagation/nursery
Wendy Wright-Scevola, Propagation/nursery
Beth Clark, Propagation/nursery

Dear Fellow FRBC Members,



As the days lengthen and the various *Edgeworthia* and *Sarcococca* cultivars in my Cascade foothills garden (several originally sourced from FRBC introductions) fill the evening air with their rich floral perfumes, I am excited to celebrate the beginning of a new year—one that is full of new opportunities for all of us who care about the important work that FRBC is doing. With your continued support, this year is on track to be a great one for FRBC to continue growing as an organization and delivering on our strategic goals of introducing, cultivating, distributing, and providing outreach and education around remarkable and threatened plants.

I am happy to say that as an organization, FRBC is in an excellent position this year. We have a strong and growing team, a better organizational foundation than ever before, a bunch of exciting projects in the works, and lots of new and spectacular plants in the pipeline to be shared with our partner institutions, members, and community. We want to say THANK YOU to you, our supporting members, for all your incredibly valuable support that has been instrumental in helping us reach this point.



As a person who believes in the beauty and magic of plants, biodiversity, nature, and gardens, I want to communicate my gratitude, which I feel on a very personal level, for your support. Your invaluable donations enable FRBC to collect, introduce, cultivate, and distribute world-class plants that might otherwise never reach our gardens, host educational events to support and energize our members and communities, and critically, to sustain and improve the FRBC collections and gardens. This ensures that the unparalleled plant collections that Sue and Kelly have dedicated their lives to developing continue to deliver their myriad benefits to the horticultural world. We are deeply grateful for the contributions of FRBC to the gardening world, and we are grateful to you, every supporter of FRBC, for making all of this possible.

Last year was a historic one for FRBC—we celebrated our fifth anniversary and reached a number of other milestones. I encourage you to check out the rest of this report, especially the **Looking back on a great year** (immediately following this letter) to learn more about FRBC's recent achievements and **An exciting year to come** to get a preview of new developments on the horizon. We have some great stuff lined up for 2023, check it out!

Thank you again for your continued support. We are all very excited for the wonderful things FRBC will be able to accomplish in 2023 because people like you back up your belief in this organization with your very important contributions. Plants are good, and with your help we will help ensure that goodness continues to thrive—in gardens everywhere, as well as our hearts and minds.

Yours in gratitude and love of good plants,
Dr. Cody Hinchliff, PhD

Looking Back on a Great Year



The year 2022 was a historic one for FRBC including (among other things) the celebration of FRBC's five year anniversary in September. Over these last five years, this organization has grown from just a dream in the minds of the founders into a real and maturing force for the advancement and conservation of new, rare, and important plant material and knowledge in the horticultural world. The reverberations of FRBC's work are felt across the continent by members, partner gardens, and the public, primarily in the form of new plant introductions but also in educational opportunities that build community and awareness around these plants, helping to improve long-term prospects for these plants' survival as well as diversifying our gardens and collections.

In another milestone for 2022, FRBC raised more money last year than any previous year, thanks not only to our dedicated and generous members but also to the exceptional work of our administrator, Elena Smith. Elena started working with FRBC in late 2021 and quickly became an invaluable member of our team, planning and executing several popular and successful fundraising events throughout the last year. FRBC's work is far from over in the financial space—we are still a young and developing organization, and we remain vigilant and focused on building and reinforcing our financial foundation. I am pleased to say that our footing is more stable than ever and we are on an upward trajectory with this work. You can read more about this and our plans for building on it further in 2023, in the **Financial report** and **Laying the groundwork for the future** sections later in this letter.

In December, the FRBC board of directors also welcomed our newest director—Will Winslow, a rock gardener and true rare plant aficionado with many friends in the worlds of alpine Ericaceae and various other choice mountain plants. Will brings a diverse set of skills to the board including a strong background in communication and outreach, deep experience in business management and information technology, and connections to a truly international network of world class plant nerds. Will's positive influence on FRBC is already evident in our winter lecture series which includes

Will Winslow was elected as the new fifth Board Director of FRBC

First international FRBC collecting trip since the pandemic to nearby Victoria, BC

We hosted the first in-person FRBC events since the pandemic - four greenhouse tours for FRBC members.

Outer construction on the Collector's Garden was finished

international garden stars who Will helped recruit. Will's passion for plants and commitment to organizational excellence are unmistakable, and we are thrilled to have him on the board.

In the following sections, we highlight some of the FRBC's major achievements from 2022. This is just a subset of the news from the last year, which also includes successes such as numerous new plant introductions, first flowerings, visits by international researchers, movers and shakers in the gardening world, and more. You can keep up to date with FRBC happenings throughout the year by visiting our website at <https://farreachesbotanicalconservancy.org/> and signing up for our periodic email newsletters if you have not already. Our newsletters are appreciably infrequent (not spammy), and contain a variety of news, plant photos and videos, and other original content of interest to plant lovers such as yourself.



Gentiana Braemar



2022 was a very productive year for conservation programs at FRBC! We completed numerous projects and activities accomplishing a number of goals, which are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

New Plant Acquisitions

FRBC acquisitions for 2022 were numerous, and include more plants than we have space to describe here. Over 250 new plants were acquired from a variety of gardeners, collectors, and institutions as well as seed and cuttings of wild provenance. Here we discuss some of the highlights.

In June 2022, Kelly and Sue made a road trip to Ithaca, New York to give two lectures at the North American Rock Garden Society annual meeting, visiting a number of gardens and nurseries on the way to gather rare and merit-worthy alpines for the FRBC collection and gardens. Among other horticultural treasures from this trip, FRBC was gifted an amazing piece of tufa planted with *Ramonda heldreichii*, a rare endemic from Mt. Olympus in Greece, by Esther Benedict of Benedict's Nursery. This *Ramonda* species was formerly in the genus *Jankaea*, and is endemic to Mt. Olympus in Greece. Benedict's Nursery specializes in alpine plants, and also provided a variety of noteworthy plants for the FRBC collection and crevice garden, including saxifrages, daphnes, and ramondas, among others.

They also detoured to Michigan to visit a trio of private gardens, acquiring more plants including clones of *Iris lacustris*, a Michigan native that resembles *Iris cristata* but grows in sunny, gravelly, limestone-heavy areas which *I. cristata* would not tolerate. These clones will be planted around the base of the



Saxifraga sp.



Iris lacustris

FRBC crevice garden with appropriate limestone gravel. Other plants from 2022 for the alpine collection and crevice garden include wild-origin *Soldanella alpina* and *S. pindicola*, and about 30 different winter-hardy cactus and aloes to be trialed for hardiness in the PNW climate. They aren't hardy until they have survived winter and rain in the Far Reaches!

In September, Sue and Kelly visited Paul Spriggs at his home garden in Victoria, BC. Paul has a significant collection of choice alpines, and he offered to share cuttings including from various saxifrages that were in the late great Rex

Murfitt's collection, including several different selections of the circumpolar *Saxifraga oppositifolia* representing Scotland, the Alps and Vancouver Island. Between Paul's generosity and that of other gardeners visited, we have over 80 new taxa encompassing 450, mostly tiny, cuttings. They have been on the mist benches in Doonan, the propagation greenhouse, growing roots.

Linda Beutler, who curates the Rogerson Clematis Garden in Oregon, brought us several choice Clematis including a southeastern US species which is in the process of being described as a new species. We reciprocated with one or two of our own FRBC wild collections. Linda has been a long time supporter of FRBC and is the first person we think of when sharing Clematis for conservation safeguarding, as Rogerson does a great job.



In January 2022, Cody visited the Sierra la Laguna mountains of southern Baja California, returning with some seeds of select natives including the endemic *Nolina beldingii*, a dramatic, treelike, xeric-adapted relative of Solomon's seals (*Polygonatum*). This is known only from the tip-top of southern Baja's highest mountains and susceptible to habitat loss from a warming climate. This species' hardiness in the garden is untested but it does experience freezing temperatures in the wild. *Tigridia orthantha* is another exciting plant from high elevations of southern Mexico, which Cody found in the wild on a recent trip to Oaxaca. Seedlings of both of these species are growing well after having germinated at FRBC earlier this winter.



Nolina beldingii

- ☞ Distribution of approx. 700 plants to botanical institutions and private gardeners
- ☞ Over 100 species flowered, fruited, or spored for the first time in our Collection this year

Plant conservation is at the core of the FRBC's mission and is reflected in almost all our activities and programs. Our approach to conservation involves several key aspects, which can be generally summarized as:

☞ **Acquisition:** We seek out key plants that are poorly known in cultivation, both wild plant species threatened by habitat loss, human activity, and climate change, as well as cultivated plants (often European) grown by only a select few—often a single individual or horticultural entity. Following sustainable procedures ensuring no negative impacts to wild populations, we collect seeds, cuttings, or small plants and bring them back to our nursery for cultivation.

☞ **Introduction & cultivation:** Newly acquired plants are established in our nursery and often planted out in permanent installations in our on-site gardens as well. Plants are grown and propagated for eventual distribution to botanical gardens, horticultural entities, researchers, and home gardeners.

☞ **Distribution:** Ultimately, FRBC plants are distributed to partner institutions and gardeners. Distributing these plants is a cornerstone of our conservation practices—getting them into diverse and geographically separate permanent collections and gardens is our principal strategy to insure against their loss.



Androsace sarmentosa subsp. *primuloides* 'Conwy Jewel'



Paris sp CDHM14652



Tripterospermum sp. YuGu 416



Major on-site garden development projects were another hallmark of 2022, including a charmed and long-awaited visit from Kenton Seth, Paul Spriggs, Ty Danylchuk, and Chris Dixon, who installed a spectacular new expansion to the FRBC crevice garden. Kenton and Paul initially began constructing the original crevice garden in 2019, which began as a joint project with Far Reaches Farm. We also broke ground on the FRBC Collector's Garden—an entirely new project for 2022 which will house shade loving plants, largely from threatened and biodiverse montane forests and other mountain ecosystems of Asia.

The Collector's Garden

The Collector's Garden is an intimate room enclosed within a very large lath structure, and will house detailed plantings of extraordinary and rare FRBC plants. Groundwork and lath house for the Collector's Garden were completed in the fall of 2022, readying it for planting in 2023 with various noteworthy plants from the FRBC permanent collection. For a detailed discussion of the anticipated plantings and their relevance, see **Development of on-site gardens** in the **An exciting year to come** section later in this report.

The plants in the Collector's Garden will be grown in our native soil amended with 130 yds of various materials such as bark, sand, and compost - but we are most excited about the 30 yards of fine basalt chips and flour. Recent research has pointed to the use of powdered basalt as an effective modality for carbon sequestration. The lath structure is made from western redcedar boards which have a higher initial cost than shade cloth (the alternative), but will also last many decades longer. This will result in lower costs over time and dramatically lower maintenance, not to mention the aesthetic benefits. An exterior, 75' raised planting bed has also been constructed on the east side of the main lath structure, with the intent to house our considerable *Roscoea* and Asiatic gentian collection, and select lily species.



Jacques and Andrea Thompson, and Tony Reznicek, get special and enduring thanks for gifting to the FRBC their stash of over a ton of tufa for a special bed in the Collector's Garden. Tufa is very hard to come by, and this limestone benison will be installed as a fantastic home for many of the rare gesneriads, ferns and other lime-loving plants in our collection, and will be essential for our various *Saxifraga* acquired from Paul Spriggs this autumn.

The Crevice Garden

In the spring of 2022 we brought in crevice garden maestros Kenton Seth, Paul Spriggs, Chris Dixon and Ty Danylchuk to double the size of our existing crevice garden. Kenton and Paul built our original crevice garden in 2019, a joint project between FRBC and Far Reaches Farm, which has allowed us to successfully grow some of our very highest alpine Olympic endemic plants such as *Viola flettii*, and *Campanula piperi*, down here in the lowlands. We're even featured as a case study in Kenton and Paul's new book, *The Crevice Garden*.

Plants like these Olympic endemics, and innumerable other spectacular and similarly rare species from mountains the world over, require such specific dry niche environments in the wild, that their foothold on life and perpetuation relies on that perfect balance of timing coupled to temperature, rain, snow, and fog. Climate change is already tipping that balance with noticeable negative impacts to alpine ecosystems. In our crevice garden however, these plants can weather our warm, wet winters and our more intense summer heat, which allows us to happily propagate and share seed from these critically important species.



Watching what Kenton, Paul, Chris, and Ty created in less than 4 days felt like a rare privilege as they seamlessly joined the stone expansion to the first garden, carrying those design concepts to another level. What they created is a beautiful sculpture which provides perfect growing conditions for some of the most challenging plants in the world. This will be an important conservation tool, educational pulpit, and an inspiration to public gardens and home gardeners who can recreate these conditions in any size, including containers.

We are so incredibly grateful that so many of you stepped up to fund the stone purchase, prep work, equipment rental, and bringing in the best crevice crew in the world to make this necessary crevice garden expansion possible. If this was pre-computer, the words would be smeared on the page from tears of gratitude.

Packing growing media into very deep crevices will take many hours of staff time. Finding matching, thin chinking stone for the vertical crevices along with appropriate gravel topping will be a challenge and will be something we have to find and gather ourselves. Sourcing plants, collecting seed and propagating plants will take literally years.

Paul told us these steps take at least twice as long as installing the stone and the expenses entailed are very real. Your financial help in making this happen would greatly accelerate this process, enabling this to become the world-class crevice garden that it is destined to be. We would be very happy to have FRBC members visit this garden by appointment (email: plants@farreachesbotanicalconservancy.org) and lay hands on what your support is enabling.



Distribution of FRBC plants

In October, founders Sue and Kelly undertook a fall road trip to various partner gardens in California and southern Oregon, focused on establishing and expanding long-term relationships and exchange of plants. Distributing rare plants held in the collection to other geographic locations is a key part of the FRBC mission to help ensure their survival. On their trip, they delivered over 150 living specimens of large woody plants which are not fully hardy in the Puget Sound, but will thrive in the less frosty southern climates to which they have been rehomed.

Their first stop was a new private garden in Brookings, Oregon that is destined to have wide recognition for its unexpected diversity in maximizing a uniquely warm microclimate. The next stop was Sonoma Botanical Garden, where the focus traditionally has been Asian plants of wild provenance. They met with Executive Director and old friend Scot Medbury, and new friend Michael Wenzel, Curator of Living Collections. Among the plants they brought, they were most happy to add significantly to Sonoma's *Stewartia* collection with four new taxa including the very rare evergreen species, *Stewartia crassifolia* and *S. villosa*.



At the San Francisco Botanical Garden, Kelly and Sue met with Ryan Guillou, Director of Collections and Conservation, where they were able to appreciably lighten the load of FRBC plants in their vehicle. It was some serious botanical booty ranging from *Aeschynanthus* to *Zingiber*. They had a fun tour of a small but intense part of the grounds, including a visit to their new state-of-the-art greenhouse and nursery facility under construction.

Last but not least on the itinerary was a jaunt down to LA to meet with early FRBC member Terry Huang, who is the Director of Living Collections, Learning & Engagement at South Coast Botanic Garden. The large plants Terry had ordered for Sue and Kelly to bring down by van had a happy reunion with a table full of many other FRBC plants in smaller, more shippable pots, from earlier mail orders.



Educational Programs



One of our strategic goals is to increase public participation in horticulture and gardening by providing education on how our work and plant collections contribute to understanding and preserving global biodiversity. Each year we provide programs in the form of educational webinars, greenhouse tours, and/or on-site workshops related to rare and imperiled plants of the world, the collecting and stewardship of our collection, or other aspects of ex-situ conservation like crevice gardening.

- ☞ 40 Greenhouse Tour in-person attendees (two sold out events)
- ☞ 2 webinars hosted in 2022
- ☞ 11 e-newsletters sent and 285 new subscribers

Behind the Greenhouse Doors

In the late summer, founders Sue and Kelly hosted several very popular on-site greenhouse tours for FRBC members, which provided the opportunity not only to share some exciting new happenings in the FRBC collection, but also some valuable in-person time for members to bond and reconnect over our shared love of fabulous plants.

The tours took members and guests through the Collector's and Crevice gardens as well as two of the greenhouses on-site. Sue and Kelly discussed many special FRBC plants of interest, including stories of how they were acquired, and why they're important. Cody peppered in a few opportunistic snippets on plant evolutionary ecology, including a brief example using various FRBC *Reineckea* collections—which are quite diverse and variable—to show how isolation by distance drives morphological and ecological diversification in plants. This tour was also filmed and sent to all members for free, as a way to include everyone virtually from all over the country.



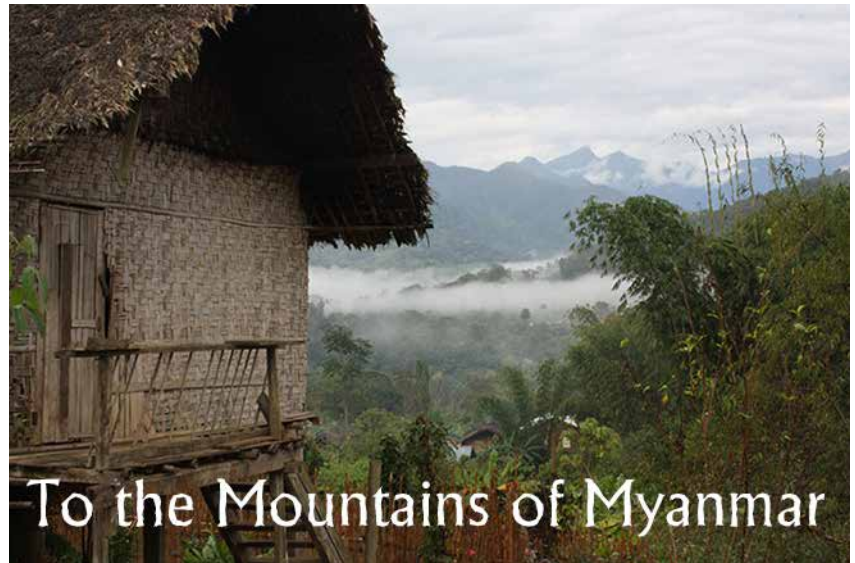
Lectures and Seminars

Kelly and Sue gave a number of lectures, both in-person and virtually, for horticultural societies and botanical gardens in North America during 2022, including at the North American Rock Garden Society Annual Meeting, the Northwest Horticultural Society, the Northwest Perennial Alliance, the Snohomish County Master Gardeners, and the Olympic Peninsula Rhododendron Chapter among others. All their guest speaker fees go to the Conservancy.

We also hosted two webinars for members in 2022.

To the Mountains of Myanmar

A Burmese Adventure with Seamus O'Brien. O'Brien is currently writing a biography of Frank Kingdon-Ward, who in the early half of the 20th century was a prolific plant explorer in Asia, and especially in Burma. As part of his research, Seamus retraces the expedition routes of Kingdon-Ward, and this lecture gives a taste of what plant hunting is like in Myanmar now. Seamus's boots-on-the-ground approach to botanical biographies brings a vivid and personal interpretation to historical accounts and to the rich flora of northern Myanmar.



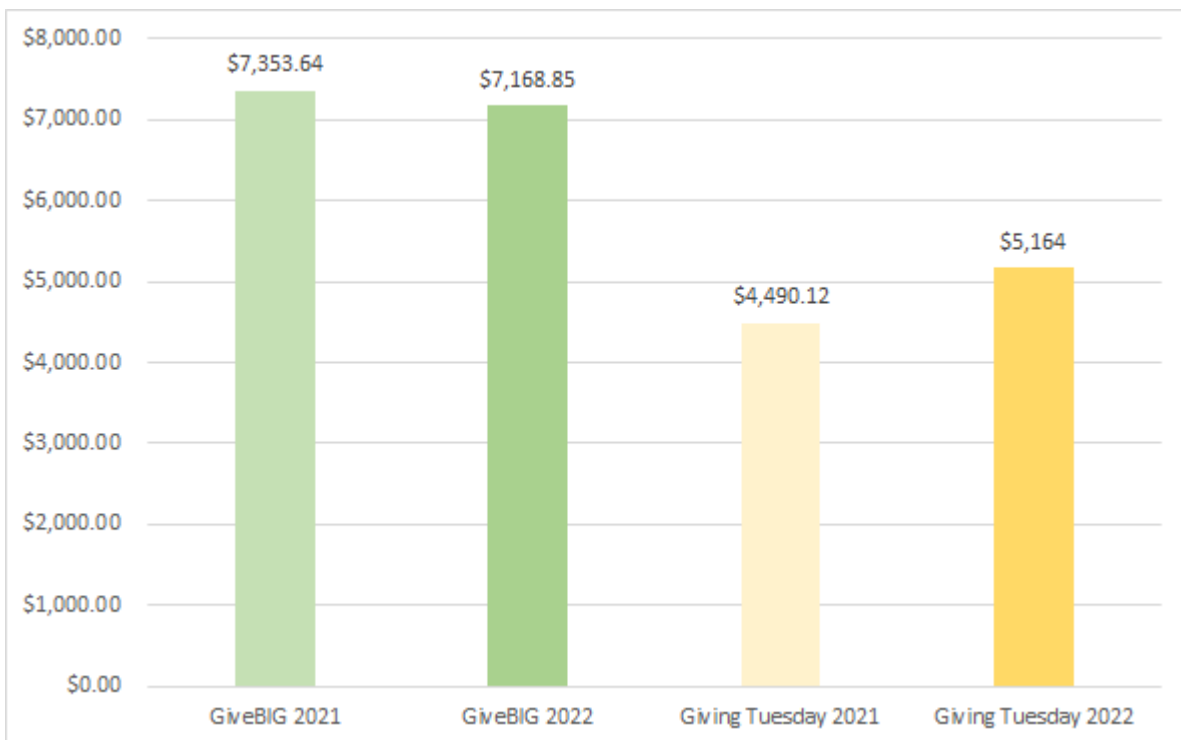
Botanical Bright Spots in 2021

A fun and gratifying look at some of 2021's botanical highlights in the FRBC collection. These include first flowerings for the collection as well as some exciting firsts for cultivation anywhere. Other rarities have earned mention by simply looking particularly good. Also a look at the FRBC Crevice Garden to see how it is succeeding with difficult species, and how this can be a viable conservation strategy for alpine plants most at risk from climate change.

Financial Report

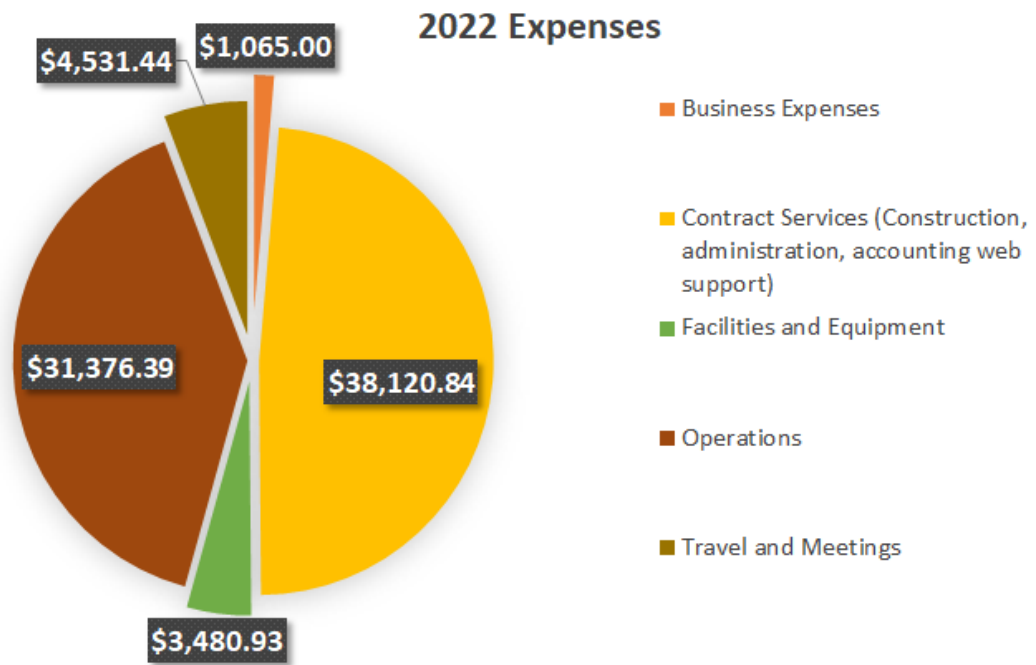
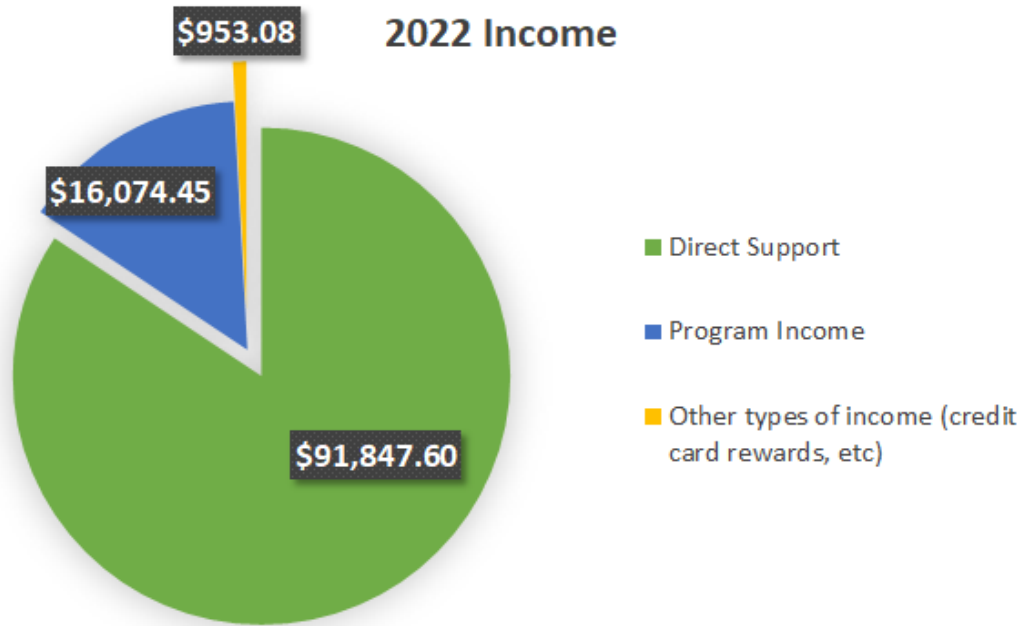


Our most important fundraising events of the year are GiveBIG in the spring and year-end giving in December which is kicked off with Giving Tuesday. In 2022 we ran several programs and outreach efforts around these two major fundraising events, which resulted in \$7,168.85 and \$5,164 respectively. Our donations for GiveBIG decreased by 2.5% from 2021, but GivingTuesday donations were increased by 15%. We were especially grateful for this increase as it was right on the heels of a very successful Membership Drive.



The Membership Drive was our first, taking place in October with an anonymous donor pledging to match donations at 200% up to \$5,000. Our goal was to gain 50 new and renewing members and meet the match cap - We received far and above this amount, with 70 new and renewing members and \$11,626.95 in membership donations. Combined with the match we received a total of \$21,626.95 for this membership drive alone.

- 🌀 34.83% increase in total donations
- 🌀 90 new members
- 🌀 802 new social media followers



An Exciting Year to Come



Plant Introductions

We have some great things lined up for 2023. The primary goals of the conservancy continue to revolve around the collection, cultivation, introduction, and distribution of plants that are new to North American gardens, especially those threatened in the wild and/or at risk of loss in cultivation. This year will see the introduction of material from numerous recent FRBC and partner trips to Asia, the Madrean sky islands of southern Arizona, the magical cloud forests of southern Mexico, and outstanding specialty nurseries and gardens of England, to name only a few. Our newsletters are an excellent way to stay in-the-know about these new plants—sign up for them on the website if you have not already.

The Collector's Garden

One of the most exciting efforts of the year to come will be the installation of diverse plants from the FRBC permanent collections into the newly expanded crevice garden and newly constructed Collector's Garden, an ongoing project since 2021. These gardens will not only serve as exemplary long-lived displays for public enjoyment, but also as test beds, helping to answer critical questions about the cultivation of these plants, many of which are barely known in gardens at this time. Growing the plants in these high-quality, in-ground environments will also dramatically improve their long term health and viability as part of the FRBC collections.

Plantings in the Collector's Garden will focus on shade and part-sun loving perennials and smaller woody species from the FRBC permanent collection. This garden represents a necessary advancement of our on-site infrastructure for growing and displaying our extensive collections of numerous key groups in the collection, many Asian in origin. This includes rare and new ferns of wild provenance, cold-tolerant Gesneriaceae and Araliaceae from recent collecting trips, rare species and forms of beloved genera such as *Arisaema* and *Meconopsis*, and diverse and unique understory shrubs.

Roscoea and *Gentiana*—two genera in which FRBC holds diverse collections of strategic importance for North American horticulture—will figure prominently in the plantings, especially in the exterior bed constructed explicitly for this purpose. These two genera are also among the first within the FRBC

Selected FRBC *Gentiana* and *Roscoea* accessions for the Collector's Garden:



Roscoea humeana 'Snowy Owl'



Roscoea humeana 'Snowy Owl'

collection that we intend to register and maintain under the American Public Gardens Association (APGA)'s Nationally Accredited Plant Collections initiative, a program whose requirements and goals align perfectly with the FRBC's core mission of germplasm preservation, distribution for research, and ex situ conservation. The opportunities afforded by the Collector's Garden for growing and displaying these plants' potential will be essential for achieving these goals.

Last and certainly not least, the Collector's Garden is going to be beautiful, with the Gentians and Roscoeas stealing the show in the later summer and early autumn when they will be at the height of their bloom. We are looking forward to inviting our members out to come see it later this year after its inaugural plantings and for many more years into the future!



Gentiana 'Dark Hedgehog'



Roscoea 'Harvington Raw Silk' P8062-001



Roscoea cautleyoides 'Crugs Late Lemon' BSWJ7781



Gentiana 'Silken Giant'

The Crevice Garden

The existing FRBC crevice garden has already proven to be an outstanding environment for growing many otherwise challenging alpine plants, which thrive in the cool and relatively dry maritime Port Townsend climate with the sharp drainage and protection afforded by the crevices. New plantings in the crevice garden in 2023 will focus on novel, rare, and threatened alpine plants from around the world, including various dwarf Ericaceae and other material recently introduced by FRBC from venerable English gardeners whose collections are at risk due simply to the fact that even world class plant collections do not fare well after outliving their caretakers, recent saxifrage collections from Paul Spriggs of Victoria, BC (see the **New plant acquisitions** section above for details), many unusual wild-collected alpine plants from Asia including gesneriads and *Primula* species, cold tolerant dwarf cacti, succulents, semi-xeric species from the mountains of South America and South Africa, and many others.





In-person visits

With the pandemic winding down and ongoing strong interest from our members in connecting with FRBC in-person, we are looking forward to another in-person greenhouse tour series in 2023 as the weather warms. After the success of these tours in 2022 we are hoping to schedule 2-3 additional tours, spread throughout the growing season. These tours will provide members with opportunities to experience the gardens and greenhouses, learn about new developments in the various conservation work happening here, purchase FRBC plants on-site, and connect with one another over our shared love of special plants. Members can expect invitations as the year progresses. If you are not yet a member but are interested in visiting us, sign up for our newsletter on our website to make sure you stay informed about opportunities.

If the winds of fortune and personnel availability blow in our favor, we may additionally be able to host other in-person events for members in 2023 such as open days at our facility, or FRBC-sponsored field trips. No promises yet, but stay tuned to the FRBC newsletters and social media channels for details if and when they become available, and please contact us at plants@farreachesbotanicalconservancy.org if you are interested in visiting by appointment at a different time.



Lectures

Since many of our members are unable to visit in-person, we will also continue to offer online programs and content for members, including lectures with leaders in the worlds of modern plant exploration and rare plant gardening. We have already debuted our 2023 webinar series, “Dispatches from the Far Reaches.” These lectures feature three international phenoms of modern plant exploration: Vojtěch Holubec of Czechia, Harry Jans of the Netherlands, and from Ireland, Seamus O’Brien. In combination these are prolific travelers, authors, extraordinary gardeners, and top-tier plantsmen.

With the new FRBC crevice garden beckoning to be planted, we wanted to feature some alpine-heavy lectures as this type of ecosystem is one of the most threatened from climate change. It doesn’t hurt that they also have low water needs. See our website <http://www.farreachesbotanicalconservancy.org> for more information about current, past, and future lectures, including how to attend them and how to view past recordings, as well as archives of other fun and interesting materials.

Laying the Groundwork for the Future



As an organization, FRBC is still young and one of our most important priorities at this time is to continue building and strengthening the foundation needed to sustain the organization now and in the future. As with any such complex, long term endeavor, this takes thoughtful planning to ensure that what we do now not only achieves immediate needs, but also builds toward greater future achievements and sustainable growth. From an operational perspective, the past 5 years have seen FRBC grow its annual membership to over 300 members, establish consistent internal management processes, and establish a regular annual calendar of events. We brought on Elena as the FRBC administrator to assist the board and manage fundraising programs. We have also grown our board of directors to a total of 5 members with deep experience in horticulture, academic science, business and project management, and nursery operations. Areas of immediate opportunity that we will focus on in 2023 include:



Implementing formal data management processes (leveraging IrisBG) into daily operations to ensure consistent, accurate, and thorough documentation of the FRBC collections—an important milestone on the path to accreditation with the nationally recognized Plant Collections Network, which we are committed to achieving.

Continuing to build upon our partnerships with botanical organizations in complementary climatic zones with whom we share FRBC plants. Sharing these plants addresses our conservation and distribution goals and helps to streamline the FRBC on-site collections by reducing the maintenance needed for large plants not well-suited to our local climate, while outreach opportunities with partner gardens and organizations help increase the visibility of FRBC's contributions to the greater horticultural community. Recruiting another board member who will bring strong experience in fundraising and financial development to our team. If you are, or know anyone who might be a good fit for this position please don't hesitate to reach out!

There is, of course, much more work to be done and many more opportunities for FRBC to continue to fulfill its potential, but I will save those topics for future discussions. For now, the immediate next steps I outlined above are going to have a major positive impact on FRBC's growth and development, and I am pleased to say that I think we are well prepared to achieve them in the coming year.

Collections management

Efficient data management and record keeping are a primary aspect of maintaining a plant collection with the scope and breadth of the FRBC collection, and an absolute requirement for many of the near-term goals of FRBC, such as APGA accreditation. To this end, we purchased a license for the industry-standard botanical garden IrisBG in 2022 and began the process of planning the migration of our extensive existing database into it. That process has been relatively slow but very educational, and we continue to make steady progress toward a better, more efficient, more powerful data model. The new system will enable us to not only ensure better accuracy and thoroughness in our record keeping but will enable us to use the data in various new and exciting ways, such as making the collection data publicly accessible via the FRBC website, providing powerful historical tracking capabilities for accessions, and easily sharing data with other institutions and our members.

One of the challenges inherent in any data migration process is the need to change actual physical processes and procedures to adapt to a new data tracking system. Much of the work over the past year has focused on discussions and investigations of how to make those changes intelligently and deliberately so we ensure that the transition is smooth and puts us in the position we want to be. Other questions that we needed to resolve (and have) included critically important and challenging abstract topics like "what constitutes an FRBC accession and how can we define this in a consistent and tractable way?" as well as more concrete (and sometimes deceptively difficult) ones such as "which data in the existing database are correct/important (and thus worth keeping), and which data are not?"

At this point, we have a plan, and are following through with the first steps which involve converting the over 11,000 accession records from the existing formats. This work involves a great deal of both automated and manual data cleaning and validation. It takes time and care to do this work correctly, but is worth the effort as the resulting data are vastly more useful as a result. Data cleaning and validation will continue through the summer. Other work to be done leading up to the transition will include building new software and tools to support on-site operations (e.g. generating reports, automated integration with other systems, etc.). We anticipate making the actual switch to using IrisBG as our primary database for tracking the FRBC collection later this year, most likely in the fall after the growing season has settled down. If you are curious about this process and what it will mean for FRBC, keep an eye on our newsletters for more details and of course feel free to reach out with specific questions.

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