

## **Report from the *ad hoc* Committee on Cooperation between BSA and AABGA**

*Submitted by*

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Dear Ad Hoc Committee Member (AABGA & BSA):

After some delay, we now have a committee of six willing to serve and develop a statement on ways to improve cooperation and communication between our two organizations [[American Association of Botanic Gardens & Arboreta (AABGA) and the Botanical Society of America (BSA). ]] in the areas of promotion of plants, plant education, and public outreach.

### **Present committee:**

Jack Fisher (Fairchild Tropical Garden, Miami) BSA Co-Chair  
Lisa Wagner (South Carolina Botanic Garden, Clemson) AABGA Co-Chair  
Christine Flanagan (US Botanical Garden) AABGA  
Bruce Kirchoff (UNorthCarolina-Greensboro) BSA  
Bruce Tiffney (UCalifornia- Santa Barbara) BSA  
Gordon Uno (UOklahoma, ) BSA

Many of us and others are members of both organizations, thus many of the activities and goals of the two groups are either related or identical. Our task is to define these areas of common interest, see where one organization might assist the other in achieving common goals, and where particular expertise of one may be of benefit to the other.

It seems to me that AABGA and BSA overlap most closely in the few larger botanical gardens involved with research and graduate education and in those gardens directly administered by educational institutions. If we are to do more than cite obvious interactions, I think we should seek ways to better involve small or non-university affiliated botanical gardens in environmental education, botanical science, and conservation, perhaps by advertising their living collections as an educational resource.

Similarly, institutions and individuals with technical botanical knowledge (members of BSA) can be encouraged to interact and help their local gardens and horticultural plant societies, perhaps via BSA/AABGA-sponsored popular science lecturers. We might also review the policies of both AABGA and BSA on current education and conservation issues to better align them for greater impact and influence. These are my general thoughts.

We can communicate with each other by simply "replying to all", now that committee membership is finalized. I've pasted below the comments that I received from Bruce T., Christine, and Lisa which was not forwarded to all.

From now on, everyone should receive the same input via reply to all or send to all on the committee. Please mail your comments, ideas and suggestions of what we as a committee should specifically recommend to the AABGA and BSA. I hope that Lisa and I will hear from all of you by New Year's Day. Then we will assemble a draft recommendation that we can all discuss and agree on.

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**From Christine Flanagan (US Bot. Gard.):**

"Thank you for your invitation. I would be pleased to participate in the committee. There is much that could be done to give botany a more central role in the activities in public gardens, and similarly, public gardens seem to be an under utilized resource for botanical researchers. Perhaps we should start with a needs/wants/history assessment within both organizations. I know that we (USBG) have sought expert consultants on a number of exhibits and collections matters and have provided assistance to university lecturers and researchers. Identifying these experiences to produce an on-line resource guide (to expertise? to collections? to key managers in public gardens?) for our respective members/institutions may open opportunities and stimulate others to pursue new partnerships. As discussions develop and reach a critical stage, the USBG may be able to support a committee or extended small group meeting. Thank you (Lisa!) once again, for including me.  
Christine"

**From Bruce Tiffney (UC, Santa Barbara):**

"I am interested in the goals of the committee, as I regard the interests of academic botanists (read, the BSA) and botanical gardens as mutually reinforcing. Further, as Ed Schneider is all too well aware, the academic side of the house has a tendency to look down its nose at botanical gardens, when in fact the interaction of the two would lead to a far stronger presence for botany in education and research. Note that I include research here. In a shrinking world full of environmental disturbance, botanical gardens will come (in my estimation) to play an increasingly important role in providing academic botanists access to gene pools that are difficult to access in the wild.... or worse yet, gone.

So, I look forward to ensuing discussions.

By the way, following upon Lisa's lead in providing an introduction, I am a paleobotanist, interested in the evolution of plants to land, the evolution of angiosperms, plant diversity and fossil angiosperm fruits & seeds. I have worked with both the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden and Lotusland Botanic Garden locally, and (just in case my emphasis above makes it sound like my perspective on this group is entirely research-oriented) am active in a variety of educational outreach activities in both Botany & Geology through UCSB & other sources."

**From Lisa Wagner (S.Carolina Bot. Garden):**

"I think our challenge is to think creatively about how we can create opportunities for networking and collaboration between members of our organizations (and potentially the CPC as well) in terms of promoting interest and awareness of plants. But, perhaps, we should also "brainstorm" about what the scope of our "work" as a group might be, and what might be potential outcomes (materials, list-serve, conference, etc.).

Education is one of the largest "groups" within AABGA, and represents a depth of experience in K-12 outreach, science education, conservation, env. education, and promoting interest in plants of all kinds. The AABGA Conservation group also reflects many common interests.

I'd suggest two other AABGA members as potential additions -- Dr. Jennifer White, Associate Director for Education at UC Berkeley Botanical Garden ([jmwhite@uclink4.berkeley.edu](mailto:jmwhite@uclink4.berkeley.edu)) and Christine Flanagan, Public Program Coordinator, U.S. Botanical Garden ([cflanaga@aoc.gov](mailto:cflanaga@aoc.gov)). Both have extensive experience interacting with teachers and the public, and with informal science education. From the BSA side, Dr. Gordon Uno, University of Oklahoma, might be a good addition, because of his undergraduate and K-12 interests.

We all bring diverse experiences and perspectives to this enterprise, which should be interesting and productive.

I was suggested as the AABGA co-chair through my service on the AABGA Board, and because I've been a BSA member for many years. As a plant ecologist trained as an academic botanist (Ph.D in Botany, UCB), I spent 10 years teaching at the undergraduate level and doing research before getting more involved with inquiry-based informal science education here at Clemson, among many other activities.

I look forward to some interesting e-mail discussions in the future."

**From Bruce Kirchoff (UNorthCarolina-Greensboro)**

I believe that the most important collaboration between our two organizations is in the area of education, especially the education of teachers. I am a developmental plant morphologist by training and have worked extensively in botanical gardens. While research is important, I think that providing opportunities for teachers to improve their relationship with plants so that they will conduct more botanical exercises and excursions with students is the most important thing we can do. I know that a teacher education program has been developed by the National Tropical Botanical Garden. Barry Tomlinson is teaching it. Unfortunately their web site ([http://ntbg.org/crs\\_int.html](http://ntbg.org/crs_int.html)) is not currently working correctly or the information has never been posted. My attempt to get information on this course directly from the garden has also not been successful. It would be good to see if the program that they have developed could have wider application.

Bruce Kirchoff