



THE GARDEN CONSERVANCY

THE PRESERVATION OF THE CHASE GARDEN

PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to outline a vision and strategy for the preservation of the Chase Garden.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GARDEN

The garden created by Emmott and Ione Chase in Orting, Washington, is a significant personal expression of the modernist and naturalistic garden styles as they developed in the Pacific Northwest in the 1950s and 60s. As one of a small number of gardens targeted for preservation from this era in the northwest, the garden has an important role to play in illustrating the history of the development of styles that drew inspiration from modernist ideals, Japanese tradition and the region's landscape. The progression from the simple form of the house, the stylized design of patios, pond, and lawn into the woodland has much to offer those who want to make gardens appropriate to the region. Using unpretentious garden plants in a naturalistic arrangement and with a special emphasis on native plants, the Chases have created a garden of serene beauty in a dramatic setting.

MISSION

The mission of the Friends of the Chase Garden is to continue the artistic vision of Emmott and Ione Chase and to preserve their garden for public enjoyment and education.

VISION FOR THE GARDEN

- Manage and interpret the site as a public garden while retaining its residential character.
- Establish the garden as a horticultural education resource for eastern Pierce County and the Puget Sound region through tours, programs and outreach.
- Develop a destination nursery featuring native plants and groundcovers.
- Promote the Chases' practical approach to garden-making and their love of nature through the use of native plants and ecologically sound gardening.
- Continue the high standards of maintenance established by the Chases through the efforts of a professional garden staff and volunteers.

GARDEN CONSERVANCY INVOLVEMENT

In 1994 the Garden Conservancy approached Emmott and Ione Chase and expressed an interest in preserving the garden. The following year the Chases donated a conservation easement on the property and made provisions in their wills to leave the 4.5-acre property to the Conservancy. The easement

requires the Conservancy to see that the basic conservation values of the garden are protected in perpetuity.

Because the Conservancy believes that gardens are best conserved by local organizations, the Conservancy formed the Friends of the Chase Garden in 1998 and in the long-run plans to turn the property over to the Friends once that organization is capable of properly managing the garden.

The Conservancy and the Friends currently share management responsibilities. The Friends manage public visitation and outreach, and most importantly, raise the funds needed to maintain the garden. The Conservancy provides charitable status and administrative support, employs garden staff and guides planning. The Friends are informally organized and have instituted a membership program and a small Task Group to conduct their affairs. The annual budget for the garden is approximately \$50,000. There is no endowment for the garden except for an anticipated life insurance contribution of \$25,000.

Jeannette Matthews works full-time as horticultural manager and directs one part-time gardener and a small crew of volunteers. She has been at the garden for 8 years and worked in close consultation with Ione Chase in maintaining the four-acre garden and developing new parts of it. She is a Garden Conservancy employee, paid for with funds raised by the Friends.

The garden is open every Friday and Saturday, mid-April to mid-June, and offer tours for groups and individuals; the garden also participates in the Conservancy's Open Days program. Between 400-500 people visit the garden a year and a fee of \$5 per visitor is collected. In the last year nearly \$3,000 was raised from tours and admissions. Two brochures, including a garden map, have been produced.

The garden is thoroughly documented. Slides, photos, videotapes and plans have been organized and a property survey done. A history of the garden, based upon oral interviews with the Chases, has been completed. A plant inventory and documentation of maintenance practices are complete.

The Friends of the Chase Garden raise funds mainly through a membership program, year-end appeal, admissions, special events, and plant sales. Approximately \$45,000 was raised in 2008. The Friends have \$12,000 in a reserve fund. A task group of five meets every four to six weeks to plan events, tours, publicity and workdays. They have developed a membership program, a newsletter and a web site. In addition, the task group promotes the garden at fairs and flower shows, speaks to civic and horticultural organizations and pursues various avenues to develop local and regional awareness of the garden. Revenues generated from plant sales have been a focus of activity.

FEASIBILITY STUDY AND LONG-RANGE PLANNING

In 2001 the Conservancy commissioned a feasibility study to determine the physical needs of the property as a public garden and resulting costs and revenues. The study reported on the following topics:

- The garden will not need to obtain a Conditional Use Permit. As a non-profit public garden, the garden use would be permitted outright, a potential hurdle that has been resolved in garden's favor.
- Parking – Several options outlining short-term and long-term solutions were examined. Short-term parking has been installed based upon study's recommendations. Any increase in capacity for the long-term requires acquisition of adjoining properties, providing room for 26 vehicles.
- Use of Buildings - Examined needs such as restroom facilities, greeting point, meeting facilities, plant sales, office space for staffing and use of the house for a meeting facility and class rooms.
- Recommended use of the house as a meeting facility after investigating comparables in the area.

- The study outlined three scenarios for physical development of the garden from minimal development to acquisition of the adjoining three parcels for staff housing, maintenance and parking needs.

SCENARIOS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GARDEN

The feasibility study outlined three options for the management of the property once the Chases turn it over -- from the least intensive to the most. These scenarios quite likely represent three stages in the development of the garden.

The first scenario assumes that when ownership is transferred to the Garden Conservancy, the house will be rented out as a residence or office and the Friends and the Conservancy will continue to maintain the garden and open it for increased, yet modest public visitation. This solution requires a limited amount of new resources and improvements and allows for of classes and workshops and a nursery and gift shop. Present garden staff would continue under Conservancy administration. This scenario provides for the immediate preservation of the garden but is not a healthy long-term operational plan.

The second scenario involves using the house for educational purposes and renting it out as a meeting facility. Upgrades such as restroom facilities, a new septic field, bringing the building up to code and upgrading utility spaces would have to be done. This use is compatible with management as a small public garden. A part-time facility manager position would be established and capital expenses in the neighborhood of \$40-60,000 are anticipated. This would allow public visitation and visibility of the garden to increase noticeably. A lack of a designated parking area separate from the garden could be a major drawback.

The third scenario continues the use of the house for program needs as well as for rental income, but also foresees the purchase of additional land adjacent to the garden. This land would be used for parking, nursery and off-site staff uses. With a separate parking area screened from the garden, large events in the house or in the garden could be held without detracting from the quality of the garden experience. It is assumed that purchasing and upgrading the adjacent property would require an investment of \$250,000. With increased usage of the property, a full-time facilities manager/executive director would be needed. Increased rental of the house, greater admissions and nursery sales would add considerably to revenues generated on site.

The feasibility study concluded that the third scenario is the most likely to ensure the long-term success of the garden. It is important that there be room for growth for the Chase Garden to thrive as public garden. The vision for the Chase Garden as representative of the northwest style of the 1960s will have broad appeal as time goes on, while as a horticultural education center for residents of Pierce County, the garden will need to have adequate facilities and remove certain support functions from the core.