Minutes for the Woody Landscape Plant Germplasm Committee

Held in Conjunction with the Southern Nurseryman’s Association Meeting

Georgia Convention Center, Atlanta, GA

Thursday, July 23rd, 2015

Our business meeting was preceded by a tour of the Atlanta Botanical Garden beginning at 8:00 a.m. WLPCGC participants included; Tim Rinehart, Eric Anderson, Kevin Conrad, Pam Allenstein, Mark Widrlechner, and Stan Hokanson. Our tour hosts included Jenny Cruse Sanders, Ron Determann, Matt Richards, Amanda Cambell, Mary Pat Matheson, and Sabina Carr. Our group was treated to a detailed insight into the workings of the Conservation and Horticulture Operations Departments. All agreed four and one-half hours was not enough time for the garden tour.

The business meeting was convened by chair Hokanson at approximately 12:45 p.m. in the Spanish Suite 3 at the Georgia Convention Center. In-person attendees included Tim Rinehart, Eric Anderson, Kevin Conrad, Pam Allenstein, Mark Widrlechner, and Stan Hokanson. On-line attendees included John Redlund, John Preece, Kim Hummer, Gary Kinard, Alan Whittemore, Mung Mung Gu, Richard Criley, and Ryan Contreras. We had a poor phone connection for on-line participants that made communications in both directions very difficult if not impossible. (NOTE: The chair will make an effort to have a better system in place by our next meeting)

Our meeting agenda included the following three items; 1. Re-write of our Crop Vulnerability Statement, 2. Evaluating our process for funding Germplasm Collection and Evaluation proposals, 3) Questions/comments on Curator reports.

Our discussion of the Crop Vulnerability Statement (CVS) began with a review of the previous two WLPCVSs, which was provided by Richard Criley. This was followed by reviews of the current apple, strawberry, and *Prunus* crop vulnerability statements. It was quickly noted that these single crop documents were quite difficult to compare to ours because we work with so many disparate genera. However, we deemed it was possible to draw inspiration from them in a number of specific instances.

Tim Rinehart noted that this document serves two purposes; to establish priorities and needs for the user community regarding which germplasm to collect and evaluate and, to provide recommendations for funding agencies. Two questions quickly arose which were not readily answered; 1) who is our user community?, and 2) on what basis do we establish priorities?

Regarding our user community, suggestions included public and private sector breeders, pathologists, public gardens, public, municipal organizations, homeowners. It was noted that a review of distribution records would give us a better notion of our user community. Regarding the basis for prioritization, a number of suggestions were made, including; threatened status of taxa, level of demand, crop value, curator priorities and/or capacities. An informal survey of the WLPCGC will be conducted to discover the potential basis for prioritization of woody landscape plant germplasm collection and evaluation. It is conceivable that priority lists would vary depending on the basis of prioritization.

Kevin Conrad suggested one approach to establishing priority lists would be to focus on genera for which we can identify expertise to clearly identify 5-10 species.

Another suggestion was to identify important, but threatened woody plant germplasm collections that could be saved from extirpation.

Several references were made to the difficulty of dealing with current treaties involving the international collection and movement of plant germplasm. Mark Widrlechner noted that not all international collaborations will be under the same constraints and it might be worth identifying what countries are open to sharing germplasm and then determining if there is woody landscape plant germplasm worth collecting in said countries. These would become priority taxa.

The overarching sentiment was to avoid being paralyzed by the sheer breadth of taxa for which we are responsible. The common theme in all comments was clearly to use some pragmatism in determining germplasm priorities.

The chair (Hokanson) committed to putting together a broad framework for the form of the new WLPCVS and circulate it with the CGC for further comment and refinement as the first step in revising the current document.

The remainder of the meeting involved a discussion of the process the WLPCGC utilizes to solicit and evaluate Exploration/Exchange proposals and Evaluation proposals.

The group felt the process we have been using to solicit and evaluate Exploration/Exchange proposals is fine. Forwarding the call for proposals through the Working Groups at ASHS whose members might have interest in working with woody landscape plants has worked satisfactorily. The weakness in this process currently is lack of an up-to-date CVS for woody landscape plants.

Considerably more time was spent discussing the process for woody landscape plant germplasm evaluation proposals. In our 2014 conference call meeting there was widespread agreement to firmly center the process on extant collections; however, no specific process was detailed. Pursuant to last year’s discussion, the group decided the curators for woody landscape plant collections would develop an evaluation project in conjunction with appropriate collaborators in year one. These pre-proposals would be evaluated by the WLPCGC with an opportunity for suggestions for the evaluation process and/or additional collaborators. The curator would then oversee the development of a full proposal with the collaborators that would be submitted for consideration at the National Plant Germplasm Laboratory in year two.

The group will write a document detailing the process we will pursue for soliciting and evaluating WLP Exploration/Exchange and Evaluation proposals.

Due to the length of time needed to discuss agenda items one and two and the poor (near non-existent) phone connections, the assembled group decided to forgo agenda item three, discussion, comments on curator reports. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:30 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Stan C. Hokanson, Chair, WLPCGC