

**Woodside-Atherton Garden Club  
Collections Management Fellowship  
at Filoli**

**Introduction**

“Having appropriate documentation of the plants and their management is a distinguishing element of all public gardens, whether they are botanical gardens, arboreta, historical landscapes, research collections, or natural areas.”

-David Michener, Curator of Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum, in the American Public Garden Association’s *Public Garden Management*

*People come to Filoli to appreciate and to celebrate the beauty of nature and the aesthetic achievements of design. Visitors to Filoli are moved by the sights, sounds, and scents they experience as they take it all in, from a single flower to a scenic view. People also come to Filoli to learn. Filoli is a destination for those interested in history, art, and horticulture. Learning at Filoli can be casual, as a visitor reads the name on the label of a fragrant rose, or it can be intensive, as in Filoli’s horticulture internship program. The deep beauty and extensive educational opportunities Filoli has to offer all stem from Filoli’s vast collections.*

*Filoli’s plant collections consist of not only the plants, but also their records. Accessions are the building blocks of Filoli’s record keeping system. When a plant first arrives at Filoli, it is given an accession number and record. The plant’s accession record contains information about its identity, source, and location. With plant holdings that range from the largest ivy collection in North America, to specimens from the Pan-Pacific Exposition, to rare heirloom fruits, Filoli’s records preserve information of historical, taxonomic, and horticultural importance.*

*Commitment to maintaining Filoli’s collections over time calls for updating record keeping methods as database and mapping technology improve and doing periodic inventories to verify accuracy of collections information.*

*A collections fellow will help Filoli to address pressing recordkeeping needs to preserve this valuable resource for the future. By producing updated maps, collections reports, and other educational materials, a collections apprentice will make Filoli’s resources more accessible to staff, to volunteers and to our guests.*

*The creation of a collections fellowship position will not only benefit Filoli, but will provide the opportunity for an emerging public garden professional to learn accurate plant record keeping practices and curatorial techniques, crucial skills much needed in the field.*

## **Filoli's Plant Records and Mapping Background**

No original or working garden plans existed when Filoli became part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Filoli's parent organization. In the late 1970s architects drafted base maps of the garden, and then again as part of the installation of an automated irrigation system in the 1980s. Over the years, these base maps were used to map the plants in some sections of the garden. However for many years, the best source for plant identifications were the plant lists created by a group of Filoli volunteers and overseen by the Head of Horticulture.

In the late 1990s/early 2000s, three successive apprentices worked to create a computerized Vector Works map of the garden plants as well as a FileMaker Pro collections database of all of the plants. Due to staff time constraints, the maps were never finalized and have never been actively used. The collections database has been maintained somewhat better, particularly with regard to the historic orchard collection. The level of sophistication of the chosen mapping system and the learning curve to train successive users of the system have contributed to lack of map maintenance.

In an era when information about natural and cultural resources should be readily available, there is great demand from Filoli's audience for accurate maps, plant lists, plant information and history. Filoli volunteers and docents will greatly benefit from garden maps for their training sessions. Maps will be extremely helpful in providing our guests with information about garden plants and their identification.

Finally, maps and an up-to-date collections database will improve the ability of horticulture staff to best care for Filoli's plants. New staff and interns will benefit from maps in learning the plants in their garden sections. Maps will also be useful in better communicating tasks and annual maintenance requirements for plants. Most importantly, maps and a corresponding plant database will provide a central location where the work-history for a plant can be recorded, making for more thorough and efficient maintenance of the garden.

## **Breakdown of the Project**

Creating a working map and plant collections database for the gardens at Filoli will be an ongoing effort. Several phases of the project will occur over five years, which may be adjusted/adapted as the project proceeds. The project is planned in the following phases:

### **Year 1 Project (2016) - COMPLETED**

- Comprehensive inventories of select plant collections (Orchids, Roses, Peonies) and establishment of protocols for future inventories
- Analysis of available database and mapping systems
- Collection and review of existing plant records and maps
- Evaluation of current and potential use of plant records data and compatibility with available systems

### **Year 2 Project (2017) - COMPLETED**

- Focus: Implementation of IrisBG plant recordkeeping systems
- Cleaning up and checking data to successfully finish migration of existing records to IrisBG
- Supervise hardware and software installations and set up label printing capabilities
- Set up project for continued support by Filoli staff, volunteers and Year 3 fellow

### **Year 3 Project (2018) - COMPLETED**

- Create protocols for effective use of IrisBG by staff and volunteers
- Support IrisBG training and skill development for staff users
- Supervise intern efforts to continue inventory, accessioning and labeling of Filoli's plant collections
- Evaluate existing maps and initiate plans for mapping efforts
- Set up project for continued support by Filoli staff, volunteers and Year 4 fellow

### **Year 4 Project (2019)**

- Continue efforts to inventory, accession, and label Filoli's plant collections.
- Begin mapping efforts of garden bed locations.
- Create protocols for mapping collections and support efforts to train staff and volunteers to complete inventory and mapping projects
- Work toward generation of a report on Filoli's collections as a whole including information on number of accessions, historic accessions, diversity of accession, etc.
- Set up project for continued support by Filoli staff, volunteers and Year 5 fellow

### **Year 5 Project (2020)**

- Continue efforts to accession and map Filoli's plant collections.
- Utilize IrisBG to create interpretation and tours on a selection of Filoli's collections of significance (ex. Pan Pacific Exposition Plants, Ivies, Heirloom fruits)
- Continue garden labeling projects.
- Set up project for continued support by Filoli staff and volunteers

### Final Requirements

Each year, the WAGC Collections Management Apprentice at Filoli will make a presentation to the Woodside Atherton Garden Club while working at Filoli. The presentation will include current status of the Filoli collections management project and any collections reports created as part of the apprenticeship.

### **Job Description**

The Woodside-Atherton Garden Club Collections Management Fellowship at Filoli is an opportunity for emerging professionals in the field of public garden collections and curation to practice the essential skills necessary to maintain plant collections records while expanding their botanical and horticultural knowledge. The Collections Fellow will make a substantial contribution to horticulture and education at Filoli while gaining experience building and maintaining a plant collections mapping and record keeping system.

The Collections Management Fellow will be supervised by Filoli's Head of Horticulture and work with the Garden Supervisor and Horticulturists to complete the project.

#### Skills Required:

- Excellent organizational skills and attention to detail.
- Experience with plant collections management concepts and software.
- Experience with garden mapping concepts, tools, and software.
- Knowledge of temperate plants, including botanical nomenclature and ability to utilize current reference materials to identify unknown plants.

Time period: 6 months

Stipend: \$13.50 per hour