

AHS NEWS SPECIAL:

National Children & Youth Garden Symposium in Pacific Northwest

by Julia Polentes

THROUGH ITS annual National Children & Youth Garden Symposium (NCYGS), the American Horticultural Society has helped thousands of garden educators, designers, program leaders, and others from around the country connect kids with plants. Every year since its inception in 1993, the symposium travels to a different location, allowing participants to experience innovative gardens and programs across the country. This year, it will be held July 12 to



Above: Inspiring educators and other adults to connect kids to rewarding gardening experiences is the goal of the AHS's National Children & Youth Garden Symposium. Left: Whimsical clay-pot people welcome young visitors to the Children's Garden at Oregon Garden.

15 in the Greater Portland area of Oregon and nearby Vancouver, Washington.

"NCYGS is all about providing participants with the tools, insights, and inspiration they need to effectively reach their young audiences," says **Amy Bolton**, chair of the AHS Board of Directors. "It's our mission in action: engaging people of all ages and backgrounds in gardening as a way to enrich their own lives as well as take care of the earth."

PACIFIC NORTHWEST CONNECTION

The symposium's local host is the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). **Rick Sherman**, the farm-to-school and school garden coordinator for ODE, has attended the past four symposia. "I have found them to be very valuable for continuing to get the word out about teaching kids where healthy food comes from," he says, "so I jumped at the chance to host a symposium here."

Through his role with ODE, Sherman facilitates regional school garden hub meet-

ings and co-leads statewide summits. These events and resulting networks have allowed school gardening advocates to learn from and support each other, ensuring a higher degree of success. At this year's NCYGS, Sherman will speak about his experiences with creating these networks, which could



Rick Sherman (with a feathered friend)

serve as a model for other areas of the country. He also will lead a pre-symposium tour of three exemplary school gardens in the Portland area (see sidebar on facing page).

MANY VOICES, ONE GOAL

Other presentations—more than 50 of them—will address topics such as creative garden design, generating community support, lesson planning, inclusivity opportunities, garden-to-cafeteria programs, navigation of regulations and funding, ecoliteracy, horticultural workforce development, philosophy of gardening education, and much more.

The entire group will hear a keynote presentation by **Philip Lee** and **Rick Swann**. Lee is the founder of Readers to Eaters, a publishing company that promotes food literacy, fosters inclusion, and celebrates diversity in food culture. Swann is a retired elementary school teacher, librarian, and the author of *Our*

School Garden!, which was awarded the Growing Good Kids Book Award in 2013.



Philip Lee

Brian “Fox” Ellis, a storyteller, educator, author, and environmental activist. He will perform “The Comic Misadventures of Lewis and Clark,” which blends song, history,



Brian “Fox” Ellis

Native American folklore, botany, and humor into an entertaining and enlightening experience for both adults and children. In addition to these scheduled events and activities, there will be ample time for networking with cohorts as well as independent exploration of the Portland and Vancouver area. NCYGS 2017 promises to be a valuable and exhilarating experience for everyone!

Julia Polentes is an editorial intern for The American Gardener.



For more details about the 2017 symposium and to register, visit the AHS website at www.ahsgardening.org/ncygs. Plus get updates by following @AHS_ncygs on Twitter.

OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION



WEDNESDAY, JULY 12. Join Rick Sherman, school garden coordinator at the Oregon Department of Education, for a morning tour of three **school gardens** in the Portland area, including an urban rooftop garden. Each school showcases innovative programs and partnerships. Departing concurrently is a day trip to the **Oregon Garden**, an 80-acre botanical garden in the Willamette Valley. Participants will take part in a behind-the-scenes tour of its Children’s Garden and the Silverton Market Garden, led by Horticultural Manager Ty Boland. Boland will discuss the design of gardens for young visitors and sustainability practices. A picnic lunch will follow, along with time to explore the garden independently.



FRIDAY, JULY 14. In the morning, one of the session options is a trip to the **Legacy Emanuel Children’s Garden and the Family Birth Center Garden** in Portland. They are part of Legacy Health’s collection of healing gardens at its campuses across the region. Participants will get a guided tour and insights into Legacy’s horticultural therapy program.

SATURDAY, JULY 15. For an unforgettable post-symposium experience, **Our Table Cooperative** will provide an overview of its educational programs and a tour of its 50-acre farm, located about 15 miles south of Portland. The picturesque pastures and gardens will provide a serene backdrop for a farm-to-table dinner in the evening.

—J.P.