



Reference Garden Program

Purpose of the ACS Reference Garden Program: Provide access to a wide variety of conifer collections throughout the United States that will:

- educate various gardening groups, such as Master Gardeners and the general public about growing conifers;
- familiarize gardeners with new varieties of conifers;
- demonstrate conifer uses in the home landscape and provide inspiration as to new uses of conifers in the garden;
- promote new memberships and build enthusiasm in current American Conifer Society membership;
 - promote new institutional memberships in ACS, and closer working relationships between those member institutions and ACS.

Overview: To participate in the ACS Reference Garden Program, a Garden must be “sponsored” by a small group of current ACS members (2-4), the Garden must initially meet certain specified criteria and annually must complete and submit a short summary of their conifer-related activities for the prior year. The ACS members sponsoring the garden may NOT be employees of the garden.

Guidelines for Garden Participation:

- The Garden must be a current Institutional Member of ACS.
- The Garden must be not-for-profit and open to the public at least 40 hours per week.
- The Conifer collection must have a minimum of 30 conifers representing a minimum of 8 genera. The collection does not have to be situated in a specific conifer-only garden but may be located throughout the property.
- The plants must be accurately labeled as to genus, species and cultivar.
- The garden must be properly maintained: weeded, pruned and mulched.
- Provisions must be made to display the ACS Brief Look at Conifers and the ACS Membership Application.
- The Garden must agree to submit a short annual summary of their conifer-related activities (format to be provided by their ACS Region) each year by the designated deadline.
- Once designated as a Reference Garden, the participating Garden may complete and submit a Regional Grant Request Form to expand their current collection, enhance their conifer program through educational programs, more descriptive signage or additional educational materials. Grants may not be used for garden overhead, salaries or labor expenses. The Terms of Agreement between the requesting Garden and the Region are specified in the Grant Application.

The ACS Member/Sponsor Role:

To participate in the ACS Reference Garden program, a Garden must be sponsored by a small group (2-4) of current ACS members. The ACS Member/Sponsor will:

- Provide the Garden with the Reference Garden Application Form and review it for accuracy and completeness before submitting it to the ACS Region in which the garden resides. A physical review of the grounds and signage must be completed before the application can be submitted.
- Work with the appropriate people at the Garden to determine the best way to showcase the conifer collection to visitors (updated plant lists and maps, additional front desk information, docent/volunteer training about the conifer collection, etc).
- Physically review the Reference Garden on an annual basis to ensure that the required criteria are being met.
- Work with the appropriate person at the Garden to complete the Annual Reference Garden Summary and report on the garden status by submitting the annual summary and photos to the ACS SE Region.
- Act as the liaison between the Reference Garden and the local Region of the American Conifer Society.
- The ACS Member/Sponsor MAY NOT be a current garden employee.

The ACS Region Role:

The American Conifer Society Region will:

- Provide the Reference Garden with ACS Membership brochures via the ACS National Office manager.
- List all Reference Gardens in the regional newsletter, on the ACS website and in any literature publicized by the ACS on a national level.
- Publicize all Reference Gardens at regional events.
- Form and maintain a Reference Garden Committee whose role will be to:
 - Review all Reference Garden applications for completeness and approve those gardens that meet the criteria.
 - Review the Annual Summary submitted by the Reference Garden/ACS Member-Sponsor to ensure that the Reference Garden continues to meet all participation requirements.
 - Review all Grant Requests and award appropriate amounts to those requests deemed most appropriate based on the information submitted and available Regional funds.