



Friends of WCBG

WELLESLEY COLLEGE BOTANIC GARDENS

Fall Newsletter, 2017

WELLESLEY COLLEGE



The Global Flora Project: Greenhouse Trees on the Move

This was the summer of the great move. In order to clear our old greenhouses so that they can be removed in preparation for next spring's building project, we had to find places for all the old, large and rare plants we had decided to bring over to Global Flora, the new greenhouses. Luckily, the Science Center, with its high ceilings in the Focus and outside the penthouse, could provide a temporary home for many. But that was only the first step in the saga of creative problem-solving that characterized our enterprise.

What kind of root ball might a subtropical tree have if it has been growing in the ground in a conservatory for decades? How about a century-old cycad? A screw pine, with its crazy prop roots? All of these were growing in the big central oval of the Tropical House, with bananas, gingers, and more among them. How could we separate them for the big move out? Some were isolated enough to root prune ahead of time, to encourage the formation of feeder roots near the trunk well before the move. Others had to wait until everything else got moved out and we started digging.

We had a great partner in this adventure: Matt Foti and his team of expert tree movers. Their experience, equipment and teamwork were invaluable. We knew the needs of each of the seven trees—species Matt and his crew had never moved before—and they knew the mechanics of moving trees. Together we tackled the daunting task of getting each unique tree from its plot in the old greenhouse into some kind of stabilized pot inside the Science Center, where it would need to live for at least a year before moving to the new Global Flora greenhouse.

After all of the smaller potted plants had been cleared off the benches, a large exit hole was opened in the south wall of the Tropical House. If you look closely at the base of each curved support beam, you can see the wooden supports designed by a structural engineer to get us through the winds of last winter.

The largest doorway into the Science Center measures six feet wide, so that was the maximum width allowed for a root ball, even for the tall screw pine. Initial excavations by the tree movers enabled them to explore just where the roots went and to eventually capture them in burlap. Follow their journey in the photographs on pages 3, 5 and 7.



The hole created in the south wall of the Tropical House provided an exit for the larger trees.

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There has been a huge positive response to the invasion of the Science Center by these spectacular plants. Looking into the canopies from the second floor and getting to know each tree individually is a real treat. You also realize just how large they are, and how exciting the Global Flora landscapes are sure to be!



The screw pine's roots were wrapped to fit through the doorways.



A bobcat lifted the tree from the bottom, tipped it sideways, and took it outside.



And on a journey around to the other side of the Science Center. . . .



. . . and in the door . . .



. . . to its new position in a giant fabric pot sitting in a small hockey rink of stone, and braced by straps to the second floor railings.

by Kristina Niovi Jones
Director, Wellesley College Botanic Gardens



Some of the biggest trees took an aerial route by crane to the Science Center.