

## COASTAL MAINE BOTANICAL GARDENS – “GUARDIANS OF THE SEEDS”

A delightful new attraction opened up last summer at the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens (CMBG): “Guardians of the Seeds.” This unique collection of 5 LARGE, recycled forest trolls is dispersed across the Gardens, beckoning adults and children alike to visit each of them, and to learn their teachings about the value of trees in maintaining a healthy, green world.

Each one of the trolls represents a part of the tree and tells a story about why every part of the tree is important to the whole forest.



### 1. ROSKVA – STANDS FOR THE TRUNK OF THE TREE

Roskva knows a tree trunk has many lives. In its first, it supports the tree and moves food around inside. After it dies, it provides habitat and food for different animals and fungi. Eventually, it becomes part of the soil, where new life will grow.

*Roskva is the heaviest, hardest, and strongest of the trolls. Every day, Roskva climbs toward the sky, and every year, she grows taller and wider. If a troll forgets something, they can always ask Roskva—she counts the seasons and remembers everything that happens around her.*

### 2. LILJA – HOLDS THE SCENT OF THE FLOWERS

LILJA knows how important tree flowers are to the insects of the forest. When insects take pollen and nectar, they also give back to the tree. With their help, pollen spreads, and flowers become fruit. Inside all fruit is the seed that holds the next generation.

*Just last summer, Lilja came out from her hiding place. The youngest of the trolls, she’s still just a child. She loves the colors and the scents of the flowers and when bees and butterflies fly among branches.*





### 3. BIRK – HOLDS THE ROOTS

*BIRK is the wisest and most mysterious of the trolls. He hides in the shadows and listens to the whispers of the soil. He knows everything that happens in the wild, and every day, he tells tales to all the other creatures of the forest.*

### 4. SOREN – STICKS UP FOR THE BRANCHES OF THE TREE

SOREN can see that up in the branches, there is a whole other world. Many animals call the treetop home. Insects are eating and growing; birds and animals are making their nests and feeding their babies. Some lichen, plants, and fungi can only live in the trees.

*Soren is a very curious troll; his head is always turning and twisting, searching for places ever higher. He dreams about drifting around on a cloud in the sky, and when the wind is blowing, he loves to celebrate with a dance.*



### 5. GRO – GRO SMILES WITH THE LEAVES OF THE TREE

Most of us can't eat sunlight, but GRO knows trees can - with their leaves. Leaves, in turn, become the building blocks of animal life: they feed caterpillars and caterpillars feed birds, bears, and everything in-between. Using the sun, leaves make animal life on earth possible.

*Gro is the wanderer. Every fall she disappears, but the trolls are not worried because every spring she returns to the forest. On her return, Gro walks around to make sure every friend of hers is fed. After hurrying to catch a few sunbeams and a handful of raindrops, she creates a feast for the forest.*

The Trolls' teachings are simple:

--Save seeds and plant more trees. These will help preserve diversity among wild plants and food crops. We can protect the genetic diversity of plants by saving seeds, and by planting them, we can ensure a next generation of more resilient plants.

--Reduce and reuse to help stem the loss of 60% of our biodiversity in the last 40 years, driven by population growth and overconsumption. Create less trash by decreasing consumption and through better design of production processes and packaging. Broaden the scope of uses and the life of manufactured goods.

--Discover and share stories of the woods. People and the environment benefit when we spend time in nature. Get to know the nature in our communities and share it with our children, creating a lifelong invitation to environmental stewardship in adulthood. Begin learning the names of trees and wildflowers where you live; note their absence or presence from place to place and year to year. Share your love of life in the forest with others.

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Thomas Dambo, a Danish artist and recycle activist, worked with a team of worldwide and community volunteers to help create CMBG's 5 trolls, part of his global fairytale. Worldwide, there is a larger family of trolls: China, Australia, Belgium, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and South Korea.

The trolls were constructed partially (heads, feet, hands) in Dambo's Denmark studio. After being fumigated for any pests, they crossed the ocean in a shipping container. On-site at the CMBG, a crew of 10 people from all over the world worked with 150 local volunteers and staff for two months to build the bodies and shipped parts into the 5 trolls. The trolls are primarily constructed from recycled pallets and other recycled wood. Each face has a different story of wood source, from salvaged floorboards to a Danish transfer station. Many parts are from local Maine sources, including the roots of downed trees and milling byproducts from salvaged fallen logs.

The exhibit is planned to last for many, many years, subject to the natural wear and tear of year-round outside "living" in Maine.

For more information on the "Guardians of the Seeds" visit the CMBG website: [Home | Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens \(mainegardens.org\)](https://www.maine.org/home). Hover over "Events & Exhibits" to reveal a secondary menu and slide your mouse to "Giant Trolls." The exhibit will again be fully accessible when the 2022 Regular Season begins, May 1 – October 17, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Information on the Coastal Maine Botanical Garden's special exhibition edited for the Scion by Marybeth Parsons, Bexar County Master Gardener