

The Darts Hill Oracle

A newsletter from the Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society

Darts Hill Garden Park is located on 16th Avenue, at 170th Street, Surrey, B.C. Accessible by pre-booked tours only. Call 604-501-5050 for your tour

DARTS HILL IS IN FLOWER!

By Doug Justice: Curator of Collections & Research Scientist, UBC Botanical Garden

Although April is typically the beginning of the “big show” of blooms at Darts Hill (magnolias, camellias and rhododendrons), the headline isn’t too far for March this year. Practically everything is two weeks earlier than normal. But don’t think you’ve missed it all, because the cool, moist weather is making everything last.

One of the most spectacular and garden worthy magnolias is the Yulan magnolia, *Magnolia denudata*



M. denudata

It is in full flower at Darts Hill at this writing (on the Ides of March). Noted for its ivory-white, goblet-shaped flowers, it is one of the earlier magnolias to flower in the Vancouver area. Its resemblance to the more common *M. × soulangiana* (tulip magnolia) is not coincidental. Tulip magnolia is a hybrid derived from the intentional hybridization of two Chinese species, the Yulan magnolia

and the lily-flowered magnolia (*M. liliiflora*). The lily-flowered magnolia is a later flowering small shrub with very dark pink flowers. The original cross (*M. denudata* × *M. liliiflora*) was performed by Étienne Soulange-Bodin at the Royal Institute of Horticulture in Paris in 1820. Since then, crosses using the same parents have been common. The resulting offspring of these repeated hybridizations and back-crossings (hybrids × species, hybrids × hybrids, etc.) now represent the entire spectrum of variation from one parent to the other and are so numerous that they are virtually impossible to identify with confidence.

The tulip magnolia cultivar pictured on the next page is probably *M. × soulangiana* ‘Lennei’, an exceptionally beautiful form and one that is available commercially. Look for other magnolia species and hybrids, including the sumptuous, creamy yellow-flowering *M. ‘Elizabeth’* (*M. acuminata* × *M. denudata*)—which just happens to be Mrs. Darts’ favourite—when you visit Darts Hill on Members Day (March 21st)



M. × soulangiana ‘Lennei’

It seemed to my friend that the creation of a landscape-garden offered to the proper muse the most magnificent of opportunities. Here indeed was the fairest field for the display of the imagination, in the endless combining of forms of novel beauty. **Poe**

Membership Corner

By Marlene Gurvich: Membership Co-ordinator, Darts Hill Garden Society; GardenTime – Shaw TV

It has been a relatively easy transition from winter to spring. We've been fortunate to have had a few warm sunny days in the latter part of winter. But nothing beats the final approach of Spring when you know the chance of frost is pretty much gone. Our gardens bring more joy each day with the surfacing of old and new friends..

With that in mind heed the call to attend one of the Spring Open Member's Days to Darts Hill Garden Park. Francisca's garden is an absolute dream during the Spring months. Many of us are now know the garden relatively well and it is such a pleasure to visit those special places each of look for in our visits.

The obvious April interest comes from the fabulous collection of Rhododendrons and Azaleas. The famous *Rhododendron Augustinii* walk is awash in hues of mauves and blues. Certainly for me one of the most beautiful parts of the Spring Garden. The walkway along the driveway is always a special place with a grand showing of bulbs and spring colour - the flowering orchard makes a delightful backdrop.

We are all aware of Francisca's outstanding Magnolia collection. There are varieties that start blooming in April and others that don't show their blooms til June. However the peak is certainly reserved for the months of April and early May. Take along a good Magnolia book as a walking companion and learn more about the various species Darts Hill is home to. Check out a Firefly Book called "Magnolias" by Rosemary Barrett. Great photos and explanations about the different Magnolia varieties.

Paulownia tomentosa is a magnificent ornamental flowering tree and is an absolutely striking specimen in the garden. It is a very fast growing tree and has accompanying velvety leaves that are absolutely gigantic. However the May bloom is outstanding. They are of the softest lilac and resemble a foxglove like cone of flowers. The smell is what is most striking; sweet as candy and with a colour reminiscent of violets. There are a few of these trees around the Lower Mainland and they are in all truest sense of the words - traffic stoppers! Growing to 100' tall or more and with a soft mauve glow in May it is hard to pass by without a serious look. If you are fortunate enough to be close enough to the flowers - look and smell. An experience not to be forgotten!

By now the garden is in full swing..... the sunny surprise of *Paeonia lutea* as you round a garden bend. The blossoms of the *Malus* and *Viburnum* kick up the colour in the middle garden.

May to June the garden perennials are happily tucked in amongst the shrubs and trees. Favourites include Angel's Fishing Rod (*Dierama pulcherrimum*) and the fragrant *Romneya coulteri*. There are just too beauties to begin listing. Once again bring a good perennial book so you can reference those that catch your eye (or ask one of our knowledgeable Garden Tour Guides).

We are always looking for people to volunteer time at the garden on Member and Public Days, Touring, Gate Keeping etc. We would really like to start seriously sharing the Garden with other Garden Clubs and societies. Can you help? If so please call Kathy at the City of Surrey (604.501.5067) or email myself at gurvichs@shaw.ca

There is so much to enjoy in the Spring garden - make a date with a favourite garden partner - or just go solo. We look forward to meeting you somewhere along the garden path.

Cheers!

Unusual and Rare Trees of Darts Hill Garden Park

By Susan M. Murray © 2003.

Part 3 of 7

Catalpa ovata

Chinese Catalpa or Japanese Catalpa – Garden Bed C4

Rare in the South Fraser Region, Chinese Catalpa is a small tree, growing six to nine metres high. The large dark green leaves are often strongly three to five-lobed. The summer blooming flowers, which are not as showy as their American counterparts, are distinguished by their creamy-white colour and two yellow stripes that age to orange. The floral tube is spotted purplish-brown. The long bean like seedpods are very slender in comparison to the pods of *Catalpa speciosa*.

Cephalotaxus harringtonia var. *drupacea*

Japanese Plum Yew or Cow's Tail Pine – Garden Bed C4

Japanese Plum Yew is a rare and unusual conifer native to Tibet, China, Korea, and Japan. The long, up to 6 cm, evergreen needles are wide, curved and produced in soft 'V' shaped sprays, somewhat resembling the foliage of *Taxus* or yew. The creamy- white male flowers are tiny, but produced in such profusion in April to May that they are quite showy. The fruit of Japanese Plum is like a miniature plum, brownish when mature in the fall with a sweet taste and chewy texture but it is considered inedible. Growing more like a large shrub, Japanese Plum can become a tree with training, eventually growing to five metres.

Cercis chinensis

Chinese Redbud – Garden Beds 3 and 33

From Central China, Chinese Redbud differs from our Eastern Redbud, *Cercis Canadensis*, in several ways. The leaves of Chinese Redbud are shiny, leathery, with five veins instead of seven and generally colour poorly in the fall. The flowers are lavender to crimson. Chinese Redbud, reaching three to four metres in height, is often more shrub-like than tree-like. Chinese Redbud is very rare in the South Fraser Region.

HAVE YOU SEEN OUR WEBSITE? Visit www.dartshill.ca

The Garden is the result of a pioneering spirit, interest and dedication, long forgotten in much of today's society. The Darts' acquired the property in 1943 before it had ever been tilled.



It was covered with bush, which had regrown after the logging of the original forest cover in the 1800's. Evidences of that activity were the skid roads used to haul logs to the sawmill at the mouth of the Campbell River.



Huge stumps remained which had to be cleared by dynamiting...self-taught! Shovels, axes, picks, cross-cut saws and their bare hands were the tools required to claim the land, as nothing was mechanized in those days.



There was no water or electricity at the site, and their water supply was 'divined' by a water witcher, who required frequent lubricating! Their artesian well is 125 feet deep.

Initially the property was an orchard planted with fruit trees including apple, pear, apricot, peach and plum and also walnut and filbert trees. The orchard was so successful that Mr. Darts won the only gold medal ever awarded by the Pacific National Exhibition in that exhibit category.

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE HISTORY? Visit www.dartshill.ca.
Do you have suggestions for our website, please send us an email through CONTACT.

SPRING TIME IN THE GARDEN By Graham Laine: Francisca's Assistant at the Garden

After working at Darts Hill for many years I am always in awe of the many plants that flower through the occasional very cold periods; particularly the *Hamamelis* (Witch hazels), some *Mahonias*, and a scented *Lonicera x Purpusii*. Even the *Grevillea*, after being flattened by snow and freezing rain, sprang right back and continued to flower. It seems to me that a cold snap, far from damaging them, just prolongs the flowering of these plants, and when it gets a little warmer with the lengthening days of late February, they are joined by a whole variety of trees and shrubs whose flowers would prefer it did not slip back to frigid weather. Too many to list, here are just a few;

- The heavenly scented *Chimonanthus praecox*,
- Some early Rhododendrons: *RH. Nobleanum coccineum*, *RH. Ririei*, and *RH. Airy Fairy*,
- Many early flowering *Pieris*.
- The delicately pink flowered *Abeliophyllum distichum*,
- My favorite, *Corylopsis pauciflora*,
- *Cornus officinalis*,
- The larger tree *Cornus mas*.
- The long-flowering Japanese paper shrub *Egeworthia papyrifera*
- and many varieties of *Hellebores* and *Cyclamen*.



We picked a good winter to reintroduce some *Phormium* (N.Z. Flax) plants into the garden. With deep mulching they came through the cold with little damage. I am hoping too that the *Eucalyptus smithii* will survive its move into the field below bed #44. It was wrapped and tied with burlap during the coldest days of early January.

Winter projects in the garden include renovating more pathways from grass to gravel/bark mix, widening some path areas and moving shrubs from congested areas to new beds and other more open places. A new up-to-date survey of the garden has just been completed.

UPCOMING MEMBER DAYS:

Make sure you have the following Spring/Summer dates on your calendar:

- Sunday March 21, 11am to 3pm
- Sunday April 18, 11am to 3pm
- Sunday May 16, 11am to 3pm
- Sunday June 20, 11am to 3pm
- Sunday July 18, 11am to 3pm

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

May 15, 2004 10:00 – 4:00

In compliance with the Society's operating agreement with the City of Surrey, we are opening the garden to the public, free of charge, for this annual event.

Members wishing to volunteer an hour or two at the greeting area can call Kathy at 604-501-5067



Magnolia



Dierama (Angels Fishing Rod) and Alliums



Romneya Coulteri



Surrey Parks
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