

The 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.

Garden photos - Graham Laine has submitted these photos taken over the past few months.



Francisca and Gus enjoying a walk in the January snow.



Cedrus atlantica glauca pendula; this graceful 10 foot weeping tree was rescued from a City facility in late February and will, hopefully, survive the move to this spot below the house.



Hepatica nobilis; a small semi-evergreen perennial with blue-purple flowers in late winter, growing in a sheltered partial shady site below the corkscrew hazel in Bed #25



Corylopsis pauciflora; in March with its masses of yellow fragrant flowers followed by bronze turning to green leaves and also having good fall colour.

Guides of Darts Hill Garden

As submitted by Mary Dunn

The Guides of Darts Hill are a group of people with diverse backgrounds and experiences, but we have one thing in common: a love of plants, an appreciation of the wonderful resource we have at Darts Hill, and a desire to share our enthusiasm with others. Some of us are involved professionally in horticulture, with our own nurseries, or in landscape design or maintenance, but most of us are simply passionate gardeners, having been badly bitten by that gardening bug. The bug seems to infect us with the hunger for knowledge, and the Guides have great education sessions in the garden, some provided by our very knowledgeable members, and some by 'outside' experts.

We all have our pet plants at Darts Hill. I make a special trip each fall to swoon at the *Enkianthus perulatus* in its blazing autumn colour. The *Fagus sylvatica aspleniifolia* (Fern-leaved Beech) is lovely at any time of year, but for me, especially so in winter with its bronze carpet of leaves, and its striking branch structure revealed. And.... and....

But as guides, one of our necessary skills is flexibility. Tour groups come in amazing variety, and we are careful to tailor each tour to the interests of the group, and not focus on our personal favourites. We have guided groups whose members speak ten different languages, none of which is English. We have guided school groups, groups whose members have mental disabilities, groups of students studying horticulture, groups whose level of gardening knowledge varies from specialists in a particular genus (with far more knowledge in their field than we have), to people who simply want a pleasant walk in a lovely garden. We have been frequently rewarded for our efforts by the appreciative comments and letters from tour groups, but another important reward comes from the sharing of experiences and knowledge with the people we encounter. Each tour is a learning experience for us too.

We are looking forward to another season of guiding in the garden. Can we encourage you to tell your friends, and perhaps get a group together and book a tour? We'd love to see you all year, as Darts Hill is truly a garden for all seasons.



PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

Sunday, April 24, 2005 10:00 – 4:00

Darts Hill Garden Park will be open to all the public, free of charge, for this annual event. In respect of the wishes of Mrs. Darts – no pets please.

Members wishing to volunteer an hour or two at the greeting area on this day can call Kathy at 604-501-5068.

Unusual and Rare Trees of Darts Hill Garden Park

By Susan M. Murray © 2003.

Part 6 of 7

Magnolia campbellii

Campbell Magnolia or Pink Tulip Tree

Magnolia Walk and Pasture and Garden Bed 27.

Fabulous in bloom, with huge water lily-like blossoms, the flowers of Campbell Magnolia are 25 cm across with twelve to fifteen large tepals. The outermost ring of tepals is relaxed while the inner ring stand to attention in the centre of the flower. Campbell Magnolia blooms in early May, before the leaves emerge. Flower colour is variable, ranging from white to rosy pink to red. The overall effect is mesmerizing. Add a powerful scent and it is hard to top the floral extravaganza of this tree. Unfortunately it may take years to bloom. Native to the Himalayan Mountains in northern India, Nepal, Butan, Tibet and southwestern China, Campbell Magnolia reaches a mature height of forty-five metres in its native habitat. The leaves are large too, growing up to 30 cm long with an elliptical shape.

Quercus chrysolepis 'Vaccinifolia'

California Live Oak, Canyon Live Oak or Goldcup Oak

Garden Bed 26.

California Live Oak grows in southern Oregon and along the coastal mountain ranges into California to elevations of 2,800 metres. It extends east into Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. In its native range, it is a squat densely branched evergreen tree reaching a height of eighteen metres but with a substantial spread of thirty metres or more. The unlobed leathery leaves are oval in shape and occasionally spined like the leaves of English Holly. As the new dark green leaves emerge in the spring they are golden in colour. When mature, the waxy golden to glaucous blue colour on the lower surface is notable. The young shoots are thickly covered in tan hairs. The acorn is oval in shape with a downy golden scaled cap that encloses 1/3 or less of the acorn. The scaly bark is white grey. California Live Oak is exceptionally rare in the South Fraser Region

Quercus ilex

Holly Oak, Holm Oak or Evergreen Oak

Magnolia Walk and Pasture.

Holly Oak is very rare. The South Fraser Region is as far north as Holly Oak grows in the Pacific Northwest. Native from the Mediterranean to the western Himalayas, Holly Oak reaches a mature height of twenty metres in its natural range. Its dense evergreen crown becomes rounded with low swooping branches. The lance shaped leaves are dark green, leathery and somewhat Holly like, but usually lack a spined margin unless the tree is young. The new leaves, when unfolding in the spring, are covered in brown felt on both surfaces but quickly lose this, remaining felty on the underside of the leaf, especially on the veins. The bark of Holly Oak is scaly and grey.

Up the Garden Path... with Lilacs

By Norma Senn

Dr. Senn is a member of Darts Hill Garden Society, the director of the UCFV Dept of Agriculture Technology in Chilliwack and a professor of horticulture in that department. You may also know Norma through the Vandusen Botanical Gardens Master Gardeners program.

When I was a student, we were taught that garden plants should do at least two things to provide garden interest, and shrubs offering year round interest were to be used as much as possible. With this in mind, our professor tended to sneer at lilacs, saying they were nice in bloom, but didn't do much else for the garden. He was more or less right, since during the summer, they are what I describe as "green blobs in the landscape plants", and they don't have much fall colour, or any special fruit or winter interest. But, who cares? When they are in bloom, lilacs put on a great flower display, the fragrance is wonderful, and where winter hardiness is an issue, there are excellent selections of lilacs that can be found growing into Zone 2. Many of the hardy selections are the results of breeding programs run by Agriculture Canada in the early to mid part of the last century.

The most common species grown is *Syringa vulgaris*, the Common Lilac. There are many varieties available, with flowers that range in colour from pure white through lavender blues, wine reds and dark purples. Look for such varieties as Belle de Nancy (double pink), Victor Lemoine (single lilac), Charles Joly (double, dark purple), Ludwig Spaeth (single, wine red), Madame Lemoine (double white), President Lincoln (single lavender blue). This is a partial listing, and there are many other good varieties available. A recent cultivar introduction, 'Sensation', has a white picotee edge surrounding a wine red flower that provides a lovely two-tone effect. There are also some new Russian cultivars of Common Lilacs that are entering the North American market. They are reliably hardy and have a longer blooming period than some of the older varieties. Look for Russian sounding names like Krasavitsa moskvy and Nadezhda.

Flowers come in large sprays, and they may be double or single. While all of the cultivars of *S. vulgaris* have fragrance, some are definitely more fragrant than others. If you're considering buying a new plant, it's well worth sniffing the blooms to choose one with really good fragrance. They make good cut flowers too, but they are best cut early in the day when the stems are turgid. Since the stems are woody, it is helpful to crush the bottom two or three inches of woody stem with a hammer before arranging the flowers. They use a lot of water, so use a deep vase.

In time, the Common Lilac becomes a very large, deciduous shrub, easily reaching 15 to 20 feet in height. It can be a "thug" because of its habit of suckering. I've seen old, abandoned lilacs spread to an area of 20 by 20 feet. The leaves are heart-shaped and a nice deep green. Personally, I prefer lilacs left to grow in a naturalistic style, but they can be pruned into more formal shapes, and many people use them as large hedges or screens.

One of my favourite lilacs is Meyer's Lilac, *Syringa meyeri* var *paladin*. This has a much more delicate growth habit than the other species. The heart-shaped leaves are only a couple of inches across, and the fragrant, pale lavender flowers are borne on small heads in late May. The plant is slow growing, and the ones I have in my garden are only 3 feet tall, after ten years of growth.

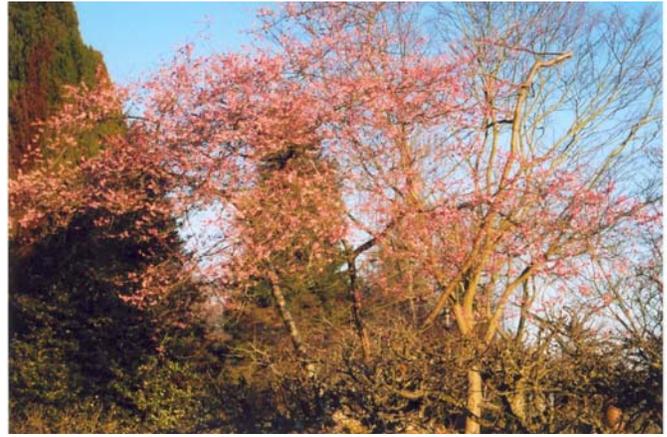
Syringa reticulata (used to be known as *S. amurensis japonica*), the Japanese Tree Lilac is actually a small tree that is suitable for most gardens. It is hardy to Zone 4. This is the last species of lilac to bloom, and it has large panicles of creamy white flowers appearing in late June. The foliage is an attractive shade of bright green, but it is the lovely bark that adds to the winter garden. Tree trunks have coppery red bark that is marked with prominent lenticels. The Japanese Tree Lilac can reach a height of about 30 feet, but is usually smaller than that. It is a well-behaved tree that is best grown as a single trunk, rather than allowing multiple trunks to form. But, it can be grown in small groups by using multiple plants. It grows well in average garden soils as long as the pH is near neutral. It needs even soil moisture and good drainage. The major problem that may arise is that this species can suffer from Lilac Borer, an insect pest that bores into the wood where it causes damage by eating wood. The Japanese Tree Lilac can also suffer from scale insect infestations in the mildest parts of B.C., but for those living in colder climates, scale insects aren't usually a problem.

Lilacs need full sun for best growth and a good flower display. Average garden soils are suitable, and while they do tolerate acid soils, they prefer a near neutral pH, so if you live in a region with acid soils, liming the soil at planting time and then applying lime on a regular basis is recommended. While Lilacs benefit from lime, they are not tolerant of high pH soils (greater than pH 8).

Lilacs can be purchased in the spring as bare root shrubs or as container-grown plants. They should be planted in full sun, and they need regular, deep watering to get them established. It may take three to four years to have plants start to flower, so don't be too impatient. Once they are established, the larger species of lilacs need to be pruned regularly to keep them in bounds and promote flowering wood. Ideally, individual branches should be cut back as close to the ground as possible, immediately after flowering. Try to remove about one quarter of the shoots each year, always selecting the oldest shoots for removal. The oldest shoots will be dark, heavy and thick. This is the practice of renewal pruning, and it is recommended for many of our large, multi-stemmed shrubs.



Cornus officinalis in Bed 34 is a very attractive, large shrub with flaking bark and flowering bright yellow in late Winter.



Prunus subhirtella whitcombi – here in late February, our earliest flowering cherry below the house is benefiting from the removal of the large clump of Lawson cypress that was hard up against it to the south.

UPCOMING MEMBER DAYS:

Make sure you have the following Spring/Summer dates on your calendar:
The garden is open to members and their guests from 11:00 – 3:00 pm

- Sunday March 20
- Sunday April 17
- Sunday May 15
- Sunday June 19
- Sunday July 17



Thank you to Evelyn & Hugh for helping at the Meet & Greet area in February.

Looking to the future!

In the spirit of the vision of Francisca Darts and her husband Edwin, the Society is working towards the creation of the place for horticultural learning. Volunteers are the driving force as we move forward. We are seeking volunteers to join these Committees that have been established

- 1) Budget/Finance
 - To manage the financial affairs of the Society.
- 2) Fundraising/Endowment
 - To raise operating funds
- 3) Newsletter
 - To prepare the Oracle for publication
- 4) Membership
 - To increase and maintain Society membership
- 5) Nominations
 - To recruit Board members
- 6) Publicity/Public Relations
 - To increase garden profile to the horticultural community
- 7) Guides
 - To provide tours of the garden
- 8) Garden Operations
 - To direct operations of volunteers

If you would like to be part of these new groups, please contact Susan Murray at susan.murray@telus.net

Changes to The Oracle

To keep printing costs to a minimum, colour versions of this newsletter are available at:

www.dartshill.ca

Questions can also be directed to the Society through the website.

In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt.

Margaret Atwood



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CITY OF PARKS

An organization working in partnership with the City of Surrey to ensure the preservation of Darts Hill Garden Park



DARTS HILL
• Garden Park •