

SPRING 2007

The Oracle

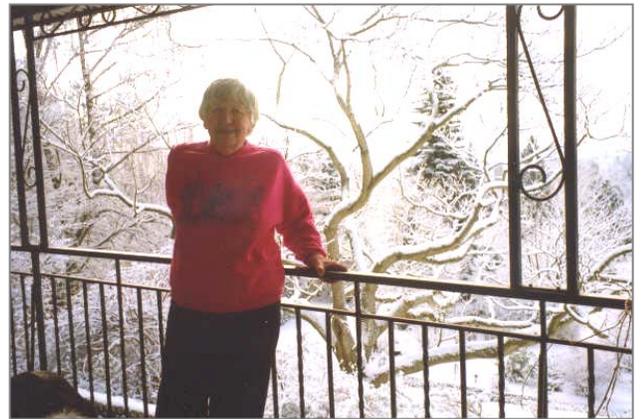
A newsletter from the Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society

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.



The mid December wind storm brought down the large white pine on the 16th Avenue fence line. I am going to miss looking up at the witches broom which is over a meter in diameter and weighed in at 22kgs.
- Graham Laine

Happy Birthday Francesca –
March 15, 1916



March 1st 2007, Francesca on her deck overlooking the snow in the garden.

ANNUAL SPRING OPEN HOUSE

Due to tremendous interest in visiting this garden, this spring will see two days where the public can come to enjoy the fabulous Darts Hill Garden Park. Spring is a time when this garden shows off the colours and fragrances of flowering shrubs, perennials and the largest selection of tree species in the Pacific Northwest. This garden represents a great opportunity to see many unusual and rare plants as well as good old fashioned easy to find favourites. Guides will be on hand to point out plants of special interest and to answer all your questions.

The garden will be open to the public from **10:00 AM to 4:00 PM** both days.

April 29, 2007 - **free admission.**

May 6, 2007 - **admission by donation (members are free)**

For more information, call 604.501.5050 or contact us at <<http://www.dartshill.ca/contact.asp>>

Propagation Committee

The Propagating Committee is meeting on March 13, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. We will review last years activities and discuss plans for this coming year. We are looking for new members to help us increase the number of plants propagated. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Sanne Dryborough at sdryborough@shaw.ca or phone 604-536-4506.

Membership Coordinator update:

We are coming to the end of another fiscal year at Darts Hill, although it is, of course, the beginning of another growing and blooming year in the garden. Our Annual General Meeting, will be held on Saturday March 17th, and will be followed by the opportunity to walk around the garden. This will also be our Members' Day, one day early this month. So don't forget – the garden will be closed on Sunday March 18th, which would be our usual day.

To date we have a total of 167 memberships – we are continuing to grow our membership base.

I am very pleased to report that several of you have told me that you have enjoyed our little monthly contests to coerce you into looking closely at plants in the garden. I last published a list of the questions and answers a year ago (how time flies!) so that you would know one plant that is interesting to look for in any particular month. I will update that now with the answers from June, 2005, when we started the contest, to date.

June 2005 – *Robinia hispida* - fuzzy red seed pods, in Bed 31.

July, 2005 – *Clematis heracleifolia* 'Davidiana' – pale blue blooms, in Bed 32.

September, 2005 – *Vitex agnus-castex* (Chaste Tree) – blooming with spikes of violet flowers in Bed 46.

October, 2005 – *Colletia hystrix* 'Rosea', pink, fragrant flowers, now in Bed 36.

November, 2005 – *Ampelopsis brevipedunculata* (Porcelain Vine), with robins' egg blue and speckled berries, in Bed 4.

January, 2006 – *Edgeworthia papyrifera* (Paper Bush) - white, downward-facing buds in Bed 46.

February, 2006 – *Parrotia persica* (Ironwood), with small dark red flowers, in Bed 25.

March, 2006 – (The question was to find three deciduous conifers in the garden.) *Larix laricina* *adpressa*, in Bed 30, *Taxodium distichum*, in Bed 20, and *Pseudolarix amabilis* in Bed 39.

April, 2006 – *Pyrus salicifolia* 'Pendula', - white flowers with pink anthers, in Bed 33.

May, 2006 – *Illicium floridanum*, an evergreen shrub with star-shaped, maroon flowers, in Bed 32.

June, 2006 – *Lyonia ovalifolia* var. *elliptica*, a member of the Ericaceae family, with white urn-shaped flowers, in Bed 32.

July, 2006 – *Magnolia macrophylla*, with huge creamy-white flowers up high, in Bed 13.

September, 2006 – *Genista aetnensis*, with fragrant yellow flowers, in Bed 34

October, 2006 – *Fothergilla major*, in Bed 21.

February, 2007 - This month we featured the Witch Hazels, or *Hamamelis*, of which there are 10 in the garden. Six of these were: *Hamamelis* 'Sunburst', in Bed 12, *Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Ruby Glow', in Bed 25, *Hamamelis mollis* 'Dartshill Wonder' in Bed 7, *Hamamelis mollis* in Bed 25, *Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Diane' in Bed 41, and *Hamamelis japonica* 'Arborea', in Bed 17.

Thank you to all the participants. I hope the winners are enjoying your new plants from Darts Hill.

I look forward to seeing you at the AGM, and of course in the garden. While I am retiring from the Membership Co-ordinator position, I remain a Guide.



An early winter snowfall enhances the bare form of the sweet chestnut, weeping birch and the walnut X. Heritage tree below the house.



A collection of plants flowering in the garden in late January into February. Included in this vase:

Several varieties of *Corylus avellana* (Filberts)

Metasequoia glyptostroboides

Hamamelis mollis

Hamamelis X intermedia 'Jelena'

Hamamelis X intermedia 'Diane'

Hamamelis X intermedia 'Sunburst'

Grevillea victoriae

Helleborus orientalis

Jasminum officinale

Gaultheria (*Pernettya*) *mucronata*

Lonicera X purpusii 'Winter Beauty'

Chimonanthus praecox

Salix gracilistyla 'Melanostachys'

Erica carnea 'Springwood Pink'

Greenery of *Danae racemosa*

Ilex aquifolium myrtifolia

Salix matsudana Var. 'Tortuosa'.



The late December heavy snow storm brought down many tree limbs and branches. The mature red flowering crab-apple was split apart and now only one piece of trunk (the rear in this photo) remains to help pollinate the orchard.

FAUNA CORNER



Two deer check out the no entry sign below the house while two eagles soar overhead.

Garden Operations Update:

As I make notes here in the garden on March 1st. following another snowfall overnight, there would be plenty of material to write on the unusual and even extreme weather conditions over the past three to four months. In most gardens and particularly a garden as diverse as "Dartshill" there is going to be damage to, and loss of some plants when they have to deal with high winds, heavy snow load, periods of warm sun and then rapid descent from cool to frigid temperatures and prolonged cold winds.

During the high winds in December the large PINUS STROBUS (white pine) on the 16th Avenue fence line came down. Quite apart from the loss of a very attractive mature tree, this pine was providing partial shade to plants growing beneath and acted as a wind break to the new bed #50. Three seedling pines from this parent have been planted in the same area as replacements.

We are looking forward to the Spring and Summer when the two large Rhododendrons moved into bed #50 will put on some new growth after braving it through all the weather extremes since November.

We are steadily planting out this new bed with special plants moved in from other areas of the garden and adding to this we will do our best to accommodate all the suggestions sent in by our members. Francisca and I thank you. Submitted by Graham Laine.

Graham Laine has recently had an article published in one of the Royal Horticulture Society's publications. The article is about Darts Hill Garden Park and we hope to have a copy for the next edition of the Oracle.



The Colletia hysterix rosea flowered late into the fall on new growth after dying to the ground last winter.

The following 4 pages are excerpts taken from commentary during an taped interview with Francesca Darts in the mid 1990's. This interview was taken for the Heritage Services within the City of Surrey.



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



Dartshill Project - (History section)

Francesca Darts transcriptions from from tapes P1, P2 & M1

HEADINGS

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ETC ETC ETC

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- Life with purpose

Second Growth and Early Logging

P1 1:10 - 1:23 {:13}

Second growth trees - which were not very big - because it had been logged of these huge timbers in say '75 or '85. So the skid road was still there.

Skid roads

P1 3:36 - 3:39 {:03}

Well, when we bought this property, they still had the skid roads on it.

Coast Meridian Road

P1 4:10 - 4:32 {:22}

Mind you, the road along here, 168th Street, that was Coast Meridian Road. And that is an old, old road and it has meaning on the maps at the municipality - and you're east of the meridian or west of the coast meridian.

Searching for property

P1 7:45 - 8:25 {:40}

We looked in the Panorama Ridge, and the view was beautiful but it was too stoney. We went down to where that 'wynd' place is now - Nico-Wynd - and we looked at acreage there. But it had no view and sometimes was under water and we didn't like that - we wanted to plant trees, you see. So we just happened to come down Meridian, and it was dusk, and it was beautiful, and we said "How did we ever miss this? So we just slowly came down, and we saw this particular area - which had the trees on it - and a little log house which is now gone.

Buying the property

P1 9:06 - 9:15 {:06}

It was owned by a Mr. Winters, who was an old gentleman, who was selling off all his property in Canada.

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P1 10:31 - 10:47 {:16}

...and no he didn't want to sell us 5 or 10 acres. He had 50 acres and we'd have to buy the lot or nothing. And we didn't have that kind of money, believe you me!

We didn't even have money for 15 acres, let alone 50 acres. So, anyway, we bought it.

Surveying

P1 4:55 -

Ed got a surveyor, which was tough in that time, because most of the surveyors were working for the army, no matter what the age, you see.

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P1 10:20 - 10:40 { :20 }

So he surveyed the property next to us, and next to that, and next to that - that were those 3 lots - One was 7-point-something acres and 8-point-something acres and we kept 13-1/2 acres ourself, on this piece right here, which we figured was pretty good.

Early living conditions

P1 13:54 - 14:27 { :33 }

We bought it in '43. We started cleaning out the land and burning & blasting it in '44 & '45, oh '46. We moved in, I would say, at the end of '47 because the house wasn't finished yet - but in those days, you didn't ask permission, you just came in. We lived in the basement. It had a fireplace, and ship-lap on the stairs; no railing - no anything. We didn't mind.

Blasting Stumps

P1 14:40 - 15:29 { :49 }

There were huge stumps, of course. You've seen pictures of them, I'm sure. And he would dig a tunnel, should we say, underneath it, so that he could crawl in there and then I would hand him the sticks of powder, and then he would come out with the line, and you'd light it. And then you'd start hollering "Fire!" and you'd hear that all over the neighbourhood because we weren't the only ones that were clearing land. We were not the only ones that had stumps. But what used to scare me was when he'd say "Oh, I think I need another five sticks" and I'd say "I hope you know what you're doing". Because this was new to me and he didn't know much about blasting either, for that matter.

Developing the Orchard

P1 15:58 - 16:35 { :37 }

We did research of what we wanted - and we wanted Italian prunes and we got 300 of them. And then we decided we'd go to all these lectures in town about fruit, and this and that, that the Government had. We had Gravenstein apples. We had 50 apple trees, anyway. We had pear trees, we had cherry trees, we had apricot trees, we had peach trees. You name it, we had it.

Selling the fruit & time commitment

M1 2:51 - 3:11 {20}

"We sold the fruits to the neighbourhood and put a little ad in the paper. Now this you must remember with having an accountant as a husband - he'd go to work - and this was during the war too - and I'd go to work ... and then this was supposed to be our spare time."

Start of the Garden

M1 4:06 - 4:42 {36}

"In the meantime I don't forget gardening you know - a little bit here, a little bit there. The funny part of it was - I was just thinking of this the other day - that this new area all where the garden is now was planted by shovel, by me! Absolutely! because it wasn't flat all of a sudden. You know this part we didn't use for an orchard. It was left to grow as is and the trees grew bigger. If there's one thing Ed liked - he liked to saw, chop trees, clear the area and so on and so forth.

Planning the garden paths

M1 4:45 - 5:21 {36}

"Then it was left up to me to take a parcel and dig it over and plan it and so on and the paths as you see are out - I have to smile at myself - because I would measure them out and stake them with long pegs and leave them that way on both sides, leave them that way for a month - sometimes longer..... Did I really like that curve? Did I really like the straight line? How was it in my eye - and you can't do that overnight.

Ed's retirement & Ed & Francesca's roles

M1 5:39 - 5:51 {12}

"As far as I was concerned it turned better when Ed retired and the 2 of us were doing the same thing - you see. Although I was more of the planter, the plantsman. He liked his fruit orchard and that kind of part of it (and I planned the rest)."

The Alpine Gardening Club & gaining knowledge

P1 18:05 - 19:07 {1:02}

The Alpine Gardening Club of British Columbia is the most knowledgeable club in British Columbia. They've got Rhododendron Societies and this, that, and the other thing. When they talk plants, they talk latin. And you learn. And I knew nothing about horticulture. Oh, you know how to plant annuals and stuff like that - everybody had those - or geraniums, or what have you. But that's where I learned what horticulture was all about. Because there

were a lot of the old-timers there. They were knowledgeable about plants - of whatever variety - about trees, about shrubs, about you-name-it. But they were intensely interested in the alpiners. And that is what started me on knowing about all these plants that you can GROW! It opens your eyes.

Judging & gaining knowledge

P1 20:02 - 20:17 { :15 }

I said "I want to know about plants. I don't care about judging them". He said "But, you'd learn alot". So, finally he convinced me. Well, he was right. I still judge plants at all the shows. I've judged at the P.N.E., I've judged all over.

Royal Horticultural Society and free seeds

P2 5:42 - 6:23 { :41 }

...one of them is course is the Royal Horticultural Society, which in those days, you had to get a sponsor to join. And that's where my little gardening Englishman came in, because he was a member, and he took a great fancy to me, fortunately. He sponsored me as a member of the Royal Horticultural Society. And in those days, they send you a seed list at the end of the year, and you were able to get 80 packages of seed - free. And it was wonderful. It's like a gift out of heaven.

Alpine Garden Club & world-wide membership

P2 6:26 - 6:42 { :16 }

In those days, also, the Alpine Garden Club got into the 'seed business', shall we say, and that is why they have a membership that is world-wide. They members in New Zealand, in France, you name it.

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P2 7:39 - 7:55 { :16 }

We had Russian members, we had Czeckoslovakian members, we had East German members and you wouldn't believe the wonderful seed we got out of those people without asking. In gratitude, they sent us seed for the exchange, which then goes out all over the world.

Latin & Learning

M1 19:03 - 19:25 { :22 }

"Also I advise them because when you get seeds from those kind of people, those kind of catalogues - they're in latin! and you've got to get a horticultural book. Whether it's perennials you're interested in or trees read about them in these particular books - which spout latin!"

Ed's P.N.E. fruit display

P2 2:03 - 2:11 { :08 }

Whatever fruit he had - and he had a 15 foot display all made up - beautifully laid out, and that was done the night before.

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P2 2:25 - 2:29 { :04 }

We left very early so we could watch them judging, you see.

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P2 2:36 - 3:18 { :42 }

We watched them for a while, and they were in front of this display - there were three judges and the stewards and everything. And they were waving their arms and talking. And I said "Ed, we've done something wrong. We must have got away from the schedule". You're supposed to go according to this schedule.

However, there was nothing we could do about it. And Ed had to go to work, so he went to work. So later on, after work we went to see what had finally happened, and there he had a gold medal. The only one the P.N.E. had ever given out.

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P2 3:34 - 3:36 { :02 }

He was very proud of that, and he should be, too

Rhododendron Society

P2 8:24 - 8:35 { :11 }

Then...there was the Rhododendron Society - and we have a great many rhododendrons on the grounds - and that began because I wasn't interested in rhododendrons - period.

Love of Rhododendrons

P2 9:04 - 9:52 { :48 }

...and there I fell in love with rhododendrons. Not because of their 'show', but the U.B.C. Botanical Gardens had put in a display of species rhododendrons, and there I saw the leaves - these gorgeous indumentum at the back, narrow leaves, curly leaves - you name it. I loved every one of them. You'd think I was nuts when I'm talking about leaves with such enthusiasm. You know, you have a flower for how long? - you've got the rest of the bush for the rest of the time. Why not have something that interests both? So then I joined the rhododendrons Society and found out they weren't interested in species - they were only interested in hybridizing. But you know - one thing leads to the other.

Dartshill as a "home" garden

P2 10:53 - 11:07 {:14}

My garden is a home garden - enlarged. I think when they come to see my garden, they feel more at home, because they look at it and say "Gee, I could grow that" or "I could do that"

Decision to Give the Garden to the City

9:16 - 10:04 (:18)

Ed was not well anymore. He said "What are we going to do with this place?" because he knew he was dying. I couldn't handle it by myself. He said let's give it to the Municipality - which it was at that time, it's a City, now. I thought that was a great idea so we talked it over throughly and he called the Mayor and the Mayor came over. They discussed it and so on. The discussions went on - for 2 years as a matter of fact - until all the things got thrashed out. Before this time - before it was finished - Ed had died. But his plan was progressing nicely!

ETC ETC ETC

Love of Trees

M1 23:27 - 23:42 {:15}

"I've always loved trees - special trees you know - but I've always loved perennials too, and I'm afraid the trees and bushes, or shrubs - all them - are winning out"

Watching plants grow

M1 8:22 - 8:27 {:05}

"They want grandeur I suppose - at the drop of a hat! No - No - No I like to see them grow." (not very punchy)

Doing it yourself

M1 17:33 - 17:58 {:25}

"Well - do it yourself! So many people want advice about what will I plant - what colours go together - you know blue/green - you name it. I go ahead and do it. Sometimes I'm right and sometimes I'm wrong - but just remember - always when you do something wrong you learn more from that then when you do it right."

Life with purpose

P2 19:09 - 19:51 {:42}

People said "All that work!" And we never considered it work at all. I mean we killed ourselves sometimes, but we were doing what we wanted to do. And you know, that way you live in the future. My dad died when he was 96. He died in the Baptist rest home here. And I'd visit him and there'd be all these old people sitting there, doing nothing. They were all living in the past. Because they had no future. Now why didn't they have a future? I mean you've got to have an interest in your life.

Ahhccc!

23:45 - 23:49 (:04)

"Ahhccc! They do things to me - just as simple as that!"