

Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society

Director's AGM Report

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When we last met it was just the beginning of the pandemic, we were still able to meet in person and we had great expectations to have the most visitors ever in 2020. Unfortunately, in the early spring, we found ourselves quickly adapting to new social protocols and essentially a new way of life. The decision to not open the garden was a disappointment to all of us. The Surrey Parks Division appreciated the membership's support and understanding while COVID protocols were implemented to allow limited openings of the garden.

Interestingly, because of the closure due to the pandemic, we were able to carry out garden renovations in the spring. We moved forward with turf maintenance and drainage works in the pasture area. These kinds of projects often look much worse before they look better and are not something we would do during major openings. The result has been more stable ground in the lower orchard through the winter. As well, the work has reduced potential trip hazards in the pasture.

Once the initial drainage work was completed, we planted the Nut Orchard. Unfortunately, we were not able to source the *Gevuina avellana* (Chilean hazelnut) and the seeds that we ordered have yet to sprout. As such, we were able to source some disease resistant hazelnuts ("Jefferson" and "Yam Hill") as place holders. It is wonderful to see the nut trees in place after all the planning that went into this project.

In addition, it was wonderful to see the Garden's Masterplan start to unfold. Staff were able to complete the new entrance path into the garden prior to the opening of the garden to the public. It was beneficial to have a secondary entrance given the Covid Protocols we needed to follow.

In the fall, we retained the services of Public Architecture and Communication Inc. (Public) for the development of a schematic design for the future Entrance Pavilion. We would like to thank Society Members, Susan Murray, Sharon Lawson, Jane Robinson and Joanne Senetza for donating their time to the Steering Committee. The insight they provided was integral to the project's thoughtful design. Public will be presenting the final design report at this year's virtual AGM.

This year, we plan to continue to work on the first stage of the Garden Masterplan. We will be developing the elevated entrance walk and cultural improvements to the oldest beds. The development of the elevated entrance walk will visually tie the garden to the Story of its development, with Francisca and Edwin Darts working the land from second growth forest to estate garden. Improvements to the oldest beds will be carried out in gradual stages as weather permits. The first step is to improve the drainage and assess the health of the current plant stock in this area.

Other capital improvements planned for 2021 include carry over projects from 2020, such as, irrigation improvements, supports for the Hybrid Walnut (now in production), and widening of Gunnera Walk. New plans, aside from those already mentioned, include additional signage, renovation of the sign bed at 16th and 168th, and replacement of the wall by the propagation area.

Subject to BC Health Authority protocols and approval from the City of Surrey's Emergency Operations Committee, we anticipate opening the garden at the beginning of April. Based on those protocols, we look forward to opening the garden and augmenting our past programming to provide an enjoyable and safe

experience for Garden visitors. In addition, the Society has been working on developing some interesting classes available for small groups. We look forward to seeing you and your social bubbles in the Garden this year and as always thank you for your continued support, patience, and understanding during these unique times.