

# THE ORACLE

A Newsletter from the Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society

## LET'S RAISE THE ROOF!



Let's raise the roof on the Darts Hill Garden Park Welcoming Centre! The Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society is raising funds to help build a new entry building in Darts Hill, in partnership with the City of Surrey.

Join the Great Canadian Giving Challenge! **Help the DHGCT Society WIN \$20,000!** From June 1st – 30th, every \$1 donated to the Society through CanadaHelps gives the Society a chance to win \$20,000! Make your donation today!

[https:// dartshill.ca/support-the-garden/](https://dartshill.ca/support-the-garden/)

Thanks, the DHGCTS Fundraising Team

The Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society is incorporated under the BC Societies Act and is a registered charity. Charitable No. 86285 7935 RR0001.

## IN THIS ISSUE

- Board of Directors recruit for one vacancy
- *Magnolias of Darts Hill Garden* book available for members to read
- The DHGCTS now has Charitable Status
- From the Archives - The Plants in Bed 50 including Alleyne Cook Rhododendrons
- Panoply – Arts & Culture Programs, including Artist in Residence and Artist Talks
- Learn about the Native Loop Trail
- Collection Committee Spring update
- *R. orbiculare* and *R. kesangiae* -S. Burdack
- City Operations, improvements to Old Works Shed
- A few of N. Senn's Favourite Small Rhododendron Species

# The Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society is looking for a volunteer to join the Board of Directors.

Do you have the skills or background in marketing and publicity?

As the garden, and the Society, continues to grow, especially with our newly acquired Charitable Status, we need to promote this beautiful place. Our current marketing team include volunteers who post on Facebook, Instagram and communicate to the membership through Mailchimp. We have a webmaster and a team providing information for the web.

But we need a Coordinator. We need someone to help publicize the garden and to lead this incredible team. If you or someone you know is this person, please contact us at [info@dartshill.ca](mailto:info@dartshill.ca).

Thank you so much  
Sharon Lawson  
Director at Large DHGCTS



Susan Murray's 2022 AiR project, *Magnolias of Darts Hill Garden Park*, includes a full colour book featuring the magnolia collection in the garden. Francisca Darts began planting magnolias in Darts Hill garden in the 1960's. Today, there are over 70 different species, varieties and cultivars of these trees in the garden. Fifty-five magnolias are pictured in the project portfolio. Photographs are arranged by month of bloom (March, April, May or June) and alphabetically each month.

The book is available for viewing in Darts house and will become part of the permanent non-circulating library. The project took approximately 100 hours to complete and brings together images of Magnolia buds, flowers, leaves and fruit collected in the garden from 2017 to the present day.



Susan Murray's (pink hat) tour of magnolias May 15, 2022, Photo: K. Piccott

Hello Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society members:

The garden is bursting with blossoms. A great time to visit the garden with magnolias and rhododendrons showing many different colours of flowers! The garden is open to the public again on Friday, Saturday, and Sundays. The hours have been extended this year from 11-3 pm to 10-4 pm. No reservations are required. Darts Hill Garden Park has been very busy this spring. There has been well over 2,000 visitors on the 'Stroll Days' since opening in April.

There are a numerous workshops, programs, work parties, and storytelling sessions for both members and the public. Check out <https://dartshill.ca/events>.

There are two fabulous art events happening in the garden this year:

We have another temporary art installation entitled 'Panoply' by the Z. Inc Art Collective. The word panoply means 'a complete or impressive collection of things.' This exhibition runs from **Friday May 6** to Sunday **July 31, 2022** on garden stroll days. Featured artists are Rosemary Burden, Elizabeth Carefoot, Amy Chang, Ying-Yeuh Chuang, Willa Downing, Lesley Garratt, Polly Gibbons, Pierre Leichner, Cora Li-Leger, Claire Moore, Helma Sawatzky, Tracie Stewart/Teresa Klein, Debbie Westergaard Tuepah, Kira Wu/Christine Moulson. Pick up a map and list of artists and their projects at the Welcome table when you visit the garden.

The Artist in Residence (Air) Program will host five artists. Check the events calendar for the dates these local artists will be creating art in the garden. Come by on stroll days and chat with them. They are eager to talk about their work and how the garden inspired their art projects. Scarlet Black has been photographing fawn lilies (Erythronium species) in the garden. She will be putting together a photo book. Bob Gunning will be doing acrylic painting June 1-June 31. Willa Downing will be doing ceramic works May 15-June 15. Marion Ann Wilkins will be working with mirrors and painting June 15-July 15 .

And you don't want to miss the *Artist Talks* **Sunday, June 12**, 2-3 pm in the Meet and Greet area. Hosted by Willa Downing, Pierre Leichner and Cora Li-Leger.

The next Members' event will be on **June 21**, a 'Summer Solstice' evening from 5-9 pm. Come experience the garden in a different light. Great for photographs! And there will be music for you to enjoy. Members should take advantage of visiting the garden over the next few months. As Francisca Darts used to say about the plants in her garden, and this also applies to the art in the garden, 'I highly recommend it'.

Members, upon showing their membership card at select garden centres, receive a discount (usually 10%) on purchases. These are:

99 Nursery & Florist Inc. 9376 King George Boulevard

Art Knapp's. 4391 King George Highway

Clearview Garden Shop. 26350 56 Ave.

Port Kells Nurseries. 8739 88 Ave.

Potters. 19158 48 Ave.

The 2022 AGM was held on via ZOOM. With the financial statements approved, the Darts Hill Conservancy Trust Society now has charitable status. Check out how to donate. [Support the Garden - Make a Donation - Darts Hill Garden.](#)

See you in the garden soon.

Sharon Lawson, Director at Large

Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society



*Fritillaria pyrenaica*



Rhododendron 'Mission Bells', Bed 29  
Photo: Scarlet Black

## MEMBERSHIP CORNER

Joanne Senetza, Hospitality

## UPCOMING SCHEDULE

### GARDEN STROLLS

FRIDAYS, SATURDAYS & SUNDAYS

APRIL 1<sup>ST</sup> to JULY 31<sup>ST</sup>

10 am – 4 pm

### PLANT SALE

May 28-29, 11 am – 3 pm

### MEMBERS' SUMMER SOLSTICE EVENING

TUESDAY, June 21, 5-9 pm

### MEMBERS' DAY

SUNDAY, August 14, 11 am – 3 pm

Did you know we have over 290 members to the Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society?

Hello Darts Hill Garden Society friends and newcomers!

My name is Joanne Senetza, and I've been a DHGCTS member for about four years now. I am excited (and a bit nervous) to be stepping up to take on the Hospitality Committee this spring. I'd like to offer a huge thank you to the outgoing Hospitality Chair, Jane Robinson, for her mentorship and steadfast dedication to Hospitality over the past term. I know I still have a lot to learn and big shoes to fill! I hope you can all be patient with me as I grow into this.

It is always a delight to make time for a stroll at Darts Hill and with every visit there is something new to appreciate. The magnolias and rhododendrons are magnificent right now! It's also wonderful to have the resourceful and knowledgeable Propagation Team volunteers on hand at the Plant Sales, willing to help you find the perfect addition for your own garden, whatever you might be looking for. If you missed the opportunity in April, our next Plant Sale will be held on May 28th and 29th from 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

I hope you are all enjoying some time outdoors now that the weather has warmed up a bit. I look forward to greeting you at the Welcome Table on Members' Days this year, beginning with the Summer Solstice Evening on June 21st.

## NEW MEMBERSHIP FEES

After 20 years without an increase in membership fees, each category has risen by \$5.00. New fees are:

- Individual: \$25.00
- Dual: 2 personalized cards/one address: \$30
- Family: 2 adults and their children 12-17 (children under 12 are free): \$40
- Student: proof of enrollment at accredited post-secondary school required : \$10

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

# THE PLANTS IN BED 50 INCLUDING TWO OF ALLEYNE COOKE'S RHODODENDRONS

Provided by Nancy Armstrong

To celebrate Francisca's birthday in 2006, Graham Laine, the only gardener Francisca ever had before the garden was gifted to Surrey, suggested that they design a new bed. **Bed 50** was to be the last bed in the garden which the two of them would design together. Francisca decided the major plants would include three of her favorite trees: Prunus 'Tai Haku', a second unidentified Prunus and a *Malus sargentii*. The Prunus 'Tai Haku' (meaning in Japanese 'Big White', has its English common name 'Great White Cherry') was extinct in Japan and revived from a single specimen found in a Sussex, England garden. The *Malus sargentii* is a dwarf crabapple excellent for smaller gardens or as a specimen plant, with a long season of interest (all the way from mid to late spring through to fall, and winter). Francisca had grown it from seed. Also, to be included were the two rhododendrons Alleyne Cooke had hybridized and registered with the Royal Horticultural Society to honor both Francisca and her husband, Edwin.

In **The Oracle Winter 2006** members of Darts Hill Society were provided with a form that invited them to make suggestions for other plants to be added to the bed. In the same issue, there are several more photos of **Bed 50** development: three are of the newly created bed with only the 2 Prunus and the Malus planted, Francisca and Graham moving the *Malus sargentii* from the Crabapple lane, and park staff transplanting Rhododendron 'Francisca' from **Bed 35 East**.

**Bed 50** is a bit west and north of **Bed 35 East** which ends at the bottom of the Tractor Road and the gates which open out to 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue. This bed has 10 more rhododendrons hybridized by Alleyne Cooke, including a second Rhododendron 'Ed Darts.' Alleyne, known as the guru of rhododendrons, and his wife Barbara became good friends of Francisca and Ed. Alleyne was born in New Zealand in 1924. Working in Britain, he planted the rhododendrons and azaleas at Castle Howard, which is the setting for the TV series *Brideshead Revisited*. When Ted and Mary Grieg decided to donate what was considered by many to be the best rhododendron collection in North America to Vancouver, they said they would donate them only if the Vancouver Parks Board hired Alleyne.



Bed 50, when first created.

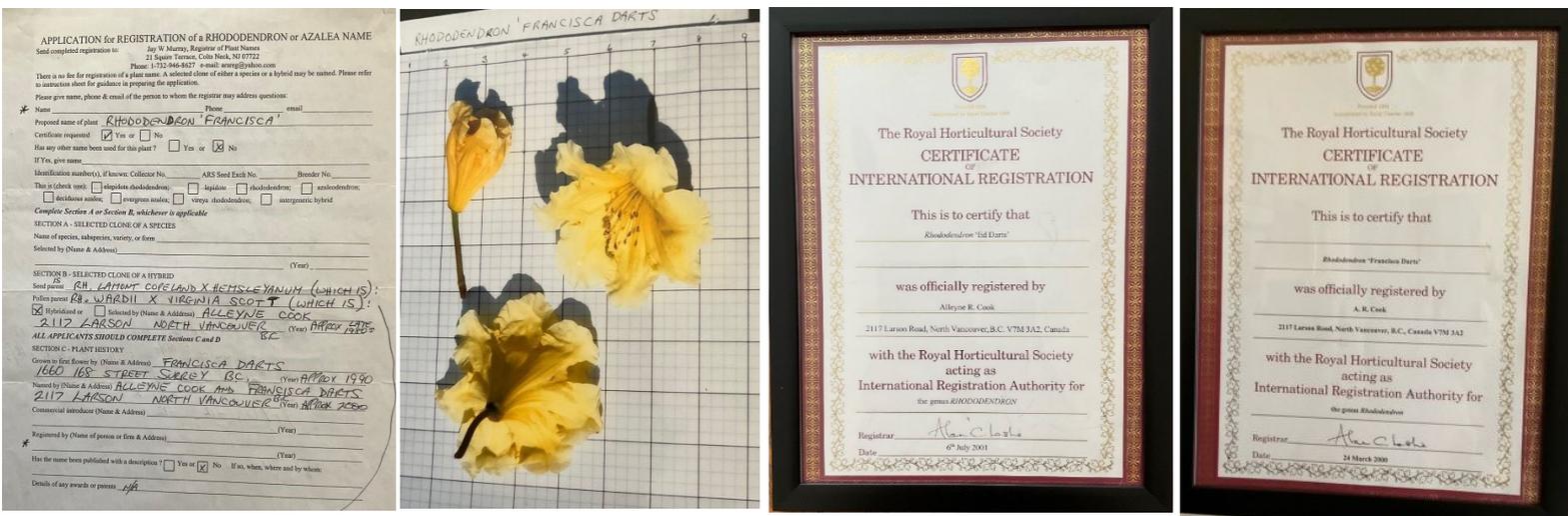


Francisca Darts sitting in front of *Malus sargentii*

He came to Vancouver in 1954 to work and continued to work there for 23 years until he retired in 1977. While working for the city, he also installed the first rhododendron at VanDusen Botanical Garden. He was the major designer for the Rhododendron Garden in Stanley Park, which Steve Whysall said, "is possibly the best formal-designed and laid-out planted garden in the park."

Alleyne received a Gold Medal from the American Rhododendron Society, which said Cooke had essentially created three of the four heritage rhododendron collections in British Columbia and contributed significantly to the fourth. "You are a mentor, a guru even, to many serious gardeners."

I found when doing the research for this article that there is a Hosta 'Alleyne Cooke', Of course you can not name a plant for yourself, but someone else can. I did not try to find who hybridized the Hosta named for Alleyne. Registering a new plant is a demanding and somewhat complicated process, Each plant will have specific requirements that must be submitted. Fortunately, in the information I was able to research, we have all the photographs and paperwork that was ultimately presented to the Royal Horticultural Society by Alleyne for Rhododendron 'Francisca' and Rhododendron 'Ed Darts'. We have included photos of some of the extensive and precise requirements for submission of a Rhododendron.



And aren't all of us who love Darts Hill Garden Park fortunate to have so many Alleyne Cook hybrids, including those for Francisca and Edwin? If you want a close look at the Royal Horticultural Society documents and the photo of Alleyne and Francisca standing in front of Rhododendron 'Francisca Darts' when it was still in **Bed 35 East** they are displayed in the museum in the Darts' house bedroom.

Photos from Scarlet Black's book: *Rhododendrons of Darts Hill Garden, 2021*



Rhododendron 'Francisca Darts'



Rhododendron 'Ed Darts'



Gus, Francisca Darts and Graham Laine moving *Malus sargentii* to its new bed #50



Alleyne Cook and Francisca Darts in front of *Rhododendron 'Francisca Darts'* in Bed 35E

# ARTIST in RESIDENCE PROGRAM - 2022

Provided by Susan Murray and Willa Downing

The Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society received a \$10,000 grant from the City of Surrey Cultural Grants program in support of two art programs in the garden in 2022. These are the Society's Artist in Residence program and the Society's Temporary Art Installation program (Panoply, in partnership with Z.inc Art Collective). <https://zincartcollective.ca>. Z.inc Artist Collective is a contemporary artist collective working out of South Surrey, B.C.

Five artists applied for and received an art residency in Darts Hill this year. The first, Scarlet Black captured the elusive nature of the Erythroniums (fawn lily, avalanche lily) in the garden using a variety of media during lilies' bloom time in April. Susan Murray completed her Magnolia Project May 15. Three more artists are slated to work in the garden this month and in the coming months:

- Willa Downing May 15- June 15;
- Bob Gunning June 1-30;
- Marion Ann Wilkins June 15- July 15.

Look for them next time you are visiting Darts Hill Garden Park.

Take the opportunity to chat with these artists as they work in the garden. Look for the maps at the Welcome Table identifying the artist and the times they are in the garden. The Society's' calendar includes information about each artist. Feel free to ask questions as public engagement is part of the AiR program. Discover how Darts Hill Garden inspires artists and the creation of their art!

[For more information about becoming an Artist in Residence at Darts Hill Garden Park please click here.](#)

In 2021 five artists participated in the Society's Artist in Residence program in Darts Hill Garden Park. Sylvia Grace Borda captured the apple blossoms with a special photogram process while Scarlet Black collected images of the garden's Rhododendrons for a photobook. [To take a look at the wonderful images Scarlet collected and published click here.](#)

## ARTIST TALKS IN THE GARDEN

Z.inc Artist Collective & Friends will be speaking about their works in the outdoor exhibition "Panoply":

**Saturday, May 14 – Amy Chang, Ying-Yueh Chuang, Polly Gibbons, Claire Moore**

**Sunday, June 12 – Willa Downing, Pierre Leichner, Cora Li-Leger**

**Saturday, June 25 – Tracie Stewart, Teresa Klein**

Artist Talks is a series of Talks, in the garden this year instead of on Zoom like we did last year. These talks will take place in the Meet and Greet area, 2-3pm. Come and learn more about these unique installations inspired by the spectacular environment at Darts Hill Garden.

Additional artists may be added to the list. Check <https://dartshill.ca/events/> for updates.

# ARTS AND CULTURE IN THE GARDEN

10am - 4pm • Friday • Saturday • Sunday  
May 6 - July 31, 2022



DARTS HILL  
• Garden Park •

*present*



*(a Splendid display)*

Z.inc Artist Collective & Friends

[www.zincartcollective.ca](http://www.zincartcollective.ca)

Rosemary Burden, Elizabeth Carefoot, Amy Chang,  
Ying-Yueh Chuang, Willa Downing, Lesley Garratt, Polly Gibbons,  
Teresa Klein, Pierre Leichner, Cora Li-Leger, Claire Moore,  
Christine Moulson-Hill, Helma Sawatzky, Tracie Stewart,  
Debbie Westergaard Tuepah, Kira Wu

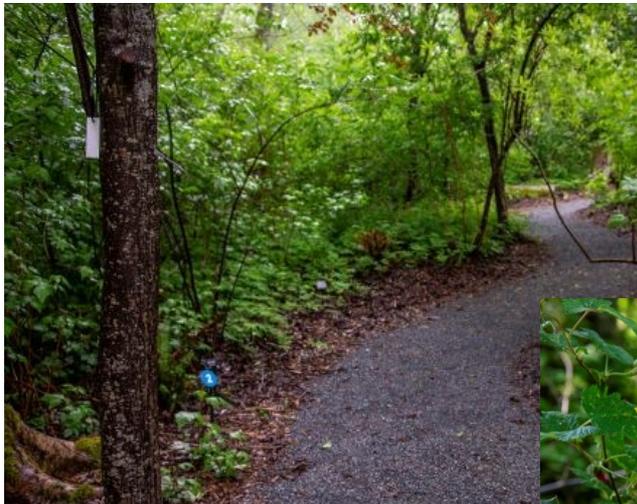
EXPERIENCE ART INSTALLATIONS IN THE GARDEN  
Darts Hill Garden Park, 16th Ave. and 170th St. Surrey, BC  
[dartshill.ca/visit-the-garden](http://dartshill.ca/visit-the-garden) | ph. 604-501-5100

# LEARN ABOUT NATIVE PLANTS ON THE NATIVE LOOP TRAIL

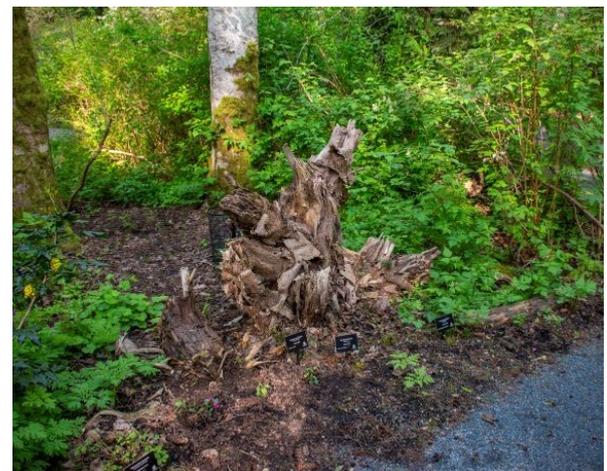
By Nancy Oike with Photos by Scarlet Black

May and early June are the best times to visit the Native Loop Trail with its fresh new growth and emerging flowers. To get the most out of your visit, go to the welcome table first and pick up a self-guided tour and the brochure, "Get to Know Native Plants in our Coastal Douglas-fir Ecosystem." The colourful brochure is full of interesting plant facts, including their use by First Nations people. Then walk through ten designated areas described in the self-guided tour, following numbered signs along the path.

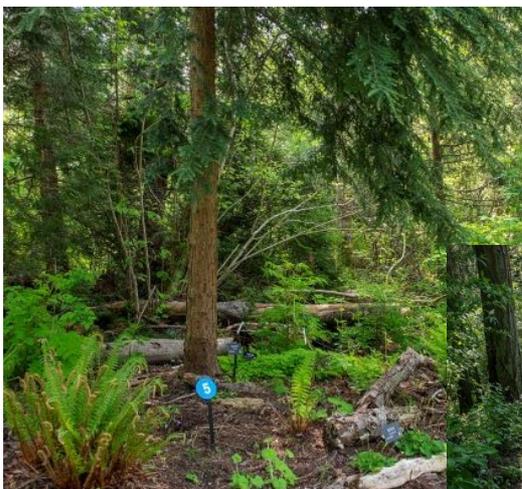
Start your tour at the Deer Garden (**Area #1**) where our young native dogwood is now in bloom, surrounded by a carpet of delicate pink bleeding hearts.



Then stroll uphill along the garden's new winding gravel path (**Area #2**) lined with a variety of native trees, shrubs, ferns, and perennials. Along the way, you'll pass a tall Oregon grape with attractive shiny leaves as well as a charming gnarled stump – a host to licorice ferns and huckleberries.



As you reach the top of the hill (**Area #3**), you'll see a moss-covered log surrounded by red columbines, trilliums, and rattlesnake plantain. Just before the pathway starts to wind downhill, observe the characteristic greenish furrowed bark of a large Douglas fir.



Wander downhill (**Area #4**) enjoying the white-flowered miner's lettuce along the path. You'll soon reach the Hemlock Dell (**Area #5**), an area shaded by a Western Hemlock with an understory of shade-loving plants.



Across the path is the Sun Garden (**Area #6**), one of the few sunny areas along the native loop. The star of the show, at this time, is *plectritis congesta*, a rampantly seeding annual which will continue to spread throughout the sunny parts of the garden.

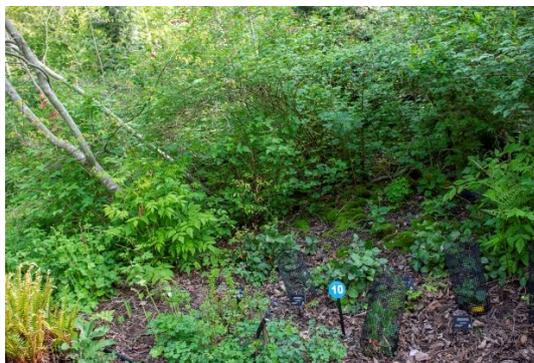


The Garry oak meadow (**Area #7**), which occupies the south-eastern part of the native area, is just getting established with six Garry oaks, three arbutus, and a meadow of wildflowers – all typical of a Garry Oak Ecosystem.



Along the lower path (**Area #8**) the red-flowering currants are just finishing their bloom, while the stately fringe cups are just beginning to bloom along the pathways and spread wherever they please.

The lower pathway will take you to the Fern and Rhododendron area (**Area #9**), which also showcases a variety of lovely perennials such as the trillium, bunchberry, and *Scouler's corydalis* shown in this photo. Also watch for a profusion of vibrant colour as the rich blue camas and red-flowering columbine come into bloom.



Finally, end your native loop visit at Area #10, where vine maples provide lovely dappled shade for red columbine, Henderson's checker mallow, showy Jacob's ladder, salal, and more.

The native loop is constantly changing as many plants go dormant and disappear, while others take on late flowers, colourful fruit, and vibrant autumn leaves. Make a point of saving even a few minutes to wander through the area on every trip to Darts Hill Garden.

The [native plant loop self-guided tour](#) is available to download on our website.





## GROUP UPDATES, provided by Sharon Lawson

The PROPAGATION AND PLANT SALES GROUP already had one plant sale weekend on which they were extremely busy. There will be another one coming up on Saturday **May 28** and Sunday **May 29** from 11-3 pm. Head up to the propagation area by the house and pick out some plants from the amazing and unusual selection. Enjoy listening to music in the garden while shopping.

Photos: C. Nesbitt



The LABELING GROUP continues to add labels to the plants in the garden. The label shows the Latin name as well as the common name and where in the world the plant naturally grows.

There is a NATIVE PLANT GROUP who install new plants in the native loop as well as weeding and watering to get them established. Check out the [Native Loop self guided tour](#).

The COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE recently purchased about 100 new plants and planted them into several beds in the garden. This supplemented the plantings that were done last summer and fall. Watch for a number of species of bulbs that were planted last fall as they flower throughout the garden.

## THE BC COUNCIL OF GARDEN CLUBS

As a member of the BC Council of Garden Clubs the members of the DHGCTS are entitled to keep up to date on their activities. Please click on this link to their May 2022 newsletter.

[MAY 2022 BCCGC NEWSLETTER](#)

## GUIDES UPDATE,

Provided by Sharon Lawson and K. Piccott

With the changes to the Provincial Health guidelines, we have been able to open Darts Hill Garden Park to guided tours. Garden Clubs and individuals are taking advantage and tours are being booked. We have a limited amount of guides who are leading tours, but we do have a program for training volunteers to help guide.

Also available for volunteer opportunities is Guide Ambassadors, who will learn by shadowing current guided tours and be available to provide direction and a bit of history about the garden. In May, these Guide Ambassadors will be in the garden. Look for the fuchsia pink tent in the pasture! Guides can be identified with a pink hat or pink pashmina.

If you would like to [book a tour](#), please read the information on our webpage or email [info@dartshill.ca](mailto:info@dartshill.ca).

# Collections Committee 2022 Spring Update

Submitted By Susan M. Murray, Chair, DHGPCC

The DHGP Collections Committee has been busy this spring. A significant donation of eleven mature Rhododendrons and azaleas arrived in early March. Here is how they came to be donated to garden.

In May 2021, local Surrey residents Herbert and Eileen Bezdeck (16488 20th Avenue) contacted the DHGP Collections Committee via [info@dartshill.ca](mailto:info@dartshill.ca). The Bezdeck's have lived on their one acre property near DHGP for more than fifty years. Over the years they planted rare species of Rhododendrons and azaleas. They wanted to find a home for their collection of over fifty mature Rhododendrons as, unfortunately, their property would eventually be bulldozed to make way for a new development.

Herb Bezdeck kept journals for many years which listed the scientific names and the dates when the rhododendrons were planted in their garden. He also had a small map showing the rhodos in their front garden. Committee Chairperson Susan Murray met with the Bezdecks at their home and took a look the mature plants on site. Of the fifty plus species and cultivars, many were already in the DHGP Rhododendron and azalea collection but eleven were of interest to the Collections Committee.

Timing was good as the Bezdeck's were slated to move in April 2022. In addition, these very large plants were accessible to the big digging equipment needed to move them. Maria Fish and Rick Hamilton (Landscape Coordinator in Parks Development Services) determined that the City of Surrey's Landscape Division would be able to dig and move many of the rhodos but some would have to be dug and moved by a contractor.

As the City of Surrey is currently working on the southern extension of the Glades Rhododendron Garden, Maria Fish was interested in many of the Bezdeck's mature rhodos to augment the collection there. As The Glades continues to develop mature specimens are a great asset.

Here is the list of Rhododendrons that were selected for Darts Hill Garden Park. They arrived in early March. Each one was heeled into a sawdust holding bed, tagged with bright pink or yellow ribbon.

The Collection Committee met on March 29 and walked around the garden and installed stakes where each of the eleven rhododendrons were to be planted. Ken Warren and Alia Gardener planted the rhododendrons in late April and early May.

Here are the planting locations of the eleven Bezdeck Rhododendrons in the garden. The # indicates the plastic tagging, which will remain in place until permanent labels are made.

- #37 (*R. albrechtii*) Bed 9e.
- #8 (*R. 'Blue Tit'*) Bed 95.
- #7 (*R. calendulaceum*) Bed 43.
- #16 (*R. 'Christopher Wren'*) Bed 95.
- #32 (*R. 'Dexter Pink'*) Bed 8w.
- #2 (*R. 'Dr. Don Moreland'*) Bed 25.
- #40 (*R. 'Hinomayo'*) Bed 29.
- #39 (*R. mucronatum*) Bed 9e.
- #34 (*R. polylepsis*) Bed 95.
- #26 (*R. rex*) Bed 60w, east of entrance gate.
- #25 (unknown) Bed 74w, east of *Cornus nuttallii* 'Colrigo Giant'. Selected for its leaf indumentum.



Rhododendron 'Rex'

The DHGP Collections Committee would like to thank Herbert and Eileen Bezdeck for their generous donation to Darts Hill Garden Park.

These mature Rhododendrons and azaleas are a wonderful addition to the garden. Their blossoms, foliage textures and colors will be enjoyed by visitors for years to come.



Rhododendron 'Rex'

In late April and early May, the Collections Committee also planted an extensive list of herbaceous perennials purchased from Free Spirit Nurseries in Langley. Watch out for new plants sprouting up in Beds 8, 11, 20, 29, 32, 33 and 34. The plants were covered with two layers of wire baskets to ward off the voracious deer and rabbits that have eaten newly planted herbaceous material in the past. Slugs continue to be a problem but as slugs are active in slightly warmer weather, this year the extended cold period allowed tender plant leaves to grow up and above the winter leaf layer and that has minimized slug damage. More than 25 different genus and species (3 plants each), were added to the garden beds this spring.

From: **Eileen Bezdeck** Date: Wed, May 4, 2022

Subject: Rhododendrons

To: Susan Murray

Thank you for the wonderfully, detailed update. The whole process went smoothly at our end as well. We appreciated the opportunity to find a new home for some rare and beautiful rhododendrons and where many people can appreciate their beauty. We are not surprised that you only needed a few to fill out your lovely collection. We got all our rhododendrons from our neighbours Brigitte and Carl Wrase. Their place was called Woodland Gardens and the rhododendrons flourished there,. They were great friends with the Darts and exchanged many rhododendron favorites. I am sure they had many in common. Our rhododendrons might have gone back to where they originally came from. It wasn't an uncommon sight to see someone pushing a wheelbarrow with a rhodo in one direction or the other. Brigitte Wrase passed away two years ago at 95 years old. She had a full page in the Peace Arch News in 1992 highlighting her unique abilities. I passed a copy onto Maria Fish. Thank you again for giving us this amazing opportunity to share.

Sincerely,

Herb and Eileen Bezdeck

# Rhododendrons of Darts Hill Garden Park

Provided by Susan Burdak

The plant feature highlighted in this issue of the newsletter is interesting leaves on rhododendron species that bloom in April-May. The two rhododendrons that are featured are *Rhododendron kesangiae*, a big leaf rhododendron and *Rhododendron orbiculare*, a round leafed species. If you are on a hunt for these plants in Darts Hill Garden look for the first in beds 1 and 4W, and the second one in bed 3S.

*Rhododendron kesangiae*, the most winter hardy of the big leafed rhododendrons is perfect for a sheltered woodland setting showing off its elliptic shaped, 8-10 inch (25.4cm) leaves, with prominent lateral veins and white indumentum. The flowers are usually pink or purple, fading to a lighter shade later in the bloom time with dark purple nectar pouches. The racemes contain 16-30 campanulate, 1/3 inch (0.85cm) blossoms. Truly stunning. At maturity it reaches a height of 7 feet (2.13m). It is the National Rhododendron of Bhutan and is the cultural symbol of purity and beauty.

The Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden in Washington state, with the largest collection of rhododendrons in the world, has an entire section featuring big leaf rhododendrons.

*Rhododendron orbiculare*, another species with distinctive leaves often described as round or heart shaped is native to Sichuan and Yunnan, China. Note the distinctive shape in the photograph. The rose to pink blossoms which take a longer time to appear on the plant are campanulate but in much looser racemes of 7-10 blossoms.

This bushy evergreen rhododendron with 5 inch (12.7cm), mid green-coloured leaves prefers a sunny location and will reach a height of 3 feet (0.91m) in 10 years and continue to a mature height of 6-10 feet (3.05m). Suitable for borders, beds, banks and slopes. Interesting facts: this rhododendron is naturalized in Oregon and exhibits leaf rolling in response to cold temperatures.

## References:

American Rhododendron Society, [www.rhododendron.org](http://www.rhododendron.org).

Millais Nurseries, [www.rhododendrons.co.uk](http://www.rhododendrons.co.uk)

Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, <http://rhodygarden.org>

Oregon State University, <http://landscapeplants.oregonstate.edu>

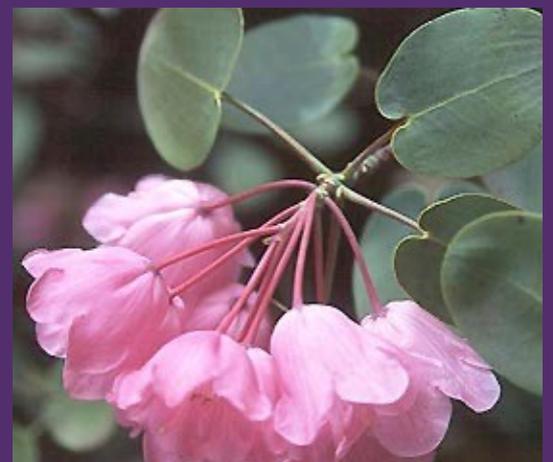
Shoot, [www.shootgardening.co.uk](http://www.shootgardening.co.uk)



*Rhododendron kesangiae* – Bed 1  
Photo: M. Fish



*Rhododendron kesangiae*



*Rhododendron orbiculare* – Bed 3s

# CITY OPERATIONS

Provided by Maria Fish

Park Operations Coordinator – Feature Gardens

We had a false start to spring, and the late frosts hit some of the plants in the garden quite hard. We seem to be turning the corner though and we're consistently getting warmer temperatures. Even with the staggered starts, the Magnolias have been impressive this year.

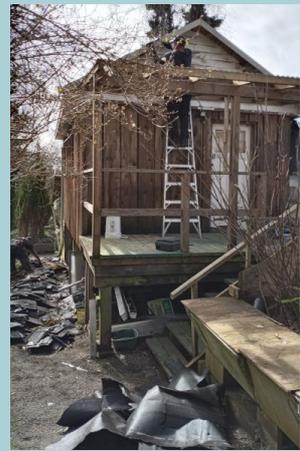
## Visiting the Garden

Since opening in April we've had about 2000 visitors on our stroll days. Our record day was on the 23rd of April, when we celebrated Get Growing, with 500 visitors. The public was curious about the Turf Alternative Trials and many will be returning to see how things progress. The propagation group was run off their feet by the end of the weekend. Thank you to all the members who were a part of making this such a successful day. We're looking forward to another big weekend with Mother's Day and the opening of the Panopoly exhibition put on by the Z.Inc. Artist's Collective. If you haven't had a chance to see the exhibition, I recommend having a stroll through the garden. The installations are quite thought-provoking and innovative. It will be interesting to see how they evolve over the season as the garden grows around them.

## Improvements to the Shack and area around the new Crevice Troughs

We now have a new roof and gutters on the shack. With the installation of new soffits, we uncovered a treasure trove of walnuts tucked away by the squirrels.

We've covered over any potential areas that they could get in. Painting will proceed when the weather improves. In addition, we'll be replacing the door as it is always stuck on the bottom of the frame and the window was accidentally broken because of it sticking at the bottom. We're getting quotes for different kinds of doors.

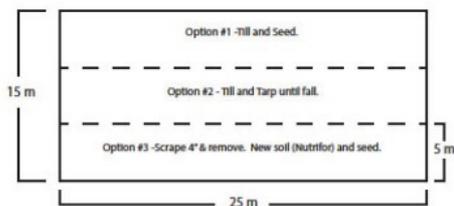


Photos: Colleen Nesbitt

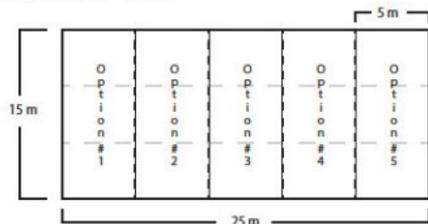
## Maple Meadows

Proposed Layout for Turf Alternative Solutions.  
22.04.22 ed.

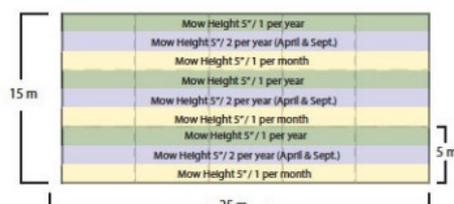
Layout for 3 tilling and mowing options -N.T.S



Layout for 5 seeding options -N.T.S



Layout for 3 mowing options -N.T.S



Work has carried on with improvements to Maple Meadows. Of note is the recent expansion of beds 95 and 94, the removal of the meadow (as it was getting too weedy to maintain) and the installation of the Turf Alternative Trials.

Work will be ongoing with the Trials as we were only able to seed Options 1 and 3 of the different tilling methodologies. Option 2 will be seeded this fall (at Get Gathering) once the soil has cooked under the black tarp over the summer. This should kill a large amount of potential weed seeds that are in the soil.

## Improvements to the Old Works Shed

The old shed has been painted and Dutch doors were recently installed on the shed. Visitors are already using the picnic table for their lunches as they first come into the garden. The installation of the doors will mean that hosts can stay warm and dry during opening hours. This area will be made available to hosts on Members' Days. There will be a service counter installed on one of the doors so that visitors will have a place to rest their handbags while interacting with the hosts.



## Irrigation

We have secured quotes for beds 26 and 24 N. We will be proceeding with this work over the next two months. Further work will be done later in the year on beds 34 and 48 E. We will be getting a diagnostic done on the well system to ensure that we can run it without concern should we need to, given the new watering restrictions.

Please note, we will only be putting in drip irrigation moving forward.

## Elevated Entrance Walk

We will be developing the detailed design plans this month so that it can be sent to tender (if needed), in preparation of development in August. Our Park Development Services (PDS) will be managing the project.

The proposed path for the elevated walk at the entrance of the garden has been surveyed and an arborist report has been done for the trees in and around the area. City staff reviewed the arborist report and found that one tree which was recommended to be "wildlifed" was too close to the existing main path into the garden. As such, it was recommended that the proposed height of the wildlife tree be reduced to not pose a hazard.

Otherwise, the recommendations in the arborist report were for crown cleaning. All work was carried out prior to the commencement of the bird nesting window, March 1st.

Next steps will be to notify the BC Government of our intentions, showing any potential impacts to the stream.

## Signage

In reviewing our proposal for new informational signage in the garden, the City's Marketing Department recommended that a comprehensive signage plan be developed for the garden.

A request for proposal regarding the Signage and Wayfinding Strategy has been sent to a preferred specialist in the field. We are awaiting their proposal. Should it be accepted, we will need assistance with the development of the Strategy.

As with the Welcoming Centre, we would like to form a subcommittee specific to the project. Susan Murray has volunteered as a representative of the Society.

Would there be others who are interested in volunteering? We expect that it would be about 4 meetings, one or two being on site and the others being virtual. This subcommittee would be disbanded upon completion of the Strategy.



# A Few of Norma Senn's Favourite Small Rhododendron Species

Provided by Susan Murray

*There are 179 different rhododendron species in the garden. Seven of the species are described here. Twenty-five more articles could be written, just like this one, before all 179 species in the garden are described!*

In my last article, I wrote about some of my favourite small hybrid Rhododendrons. This time, I'm giving you my take on a few of my favourite small species. While they are well-suited to small gardens and containers, most are native to areas with summer rains and drier winters. So in the Victoria area, summer watering is needed as well as providing plants with good drainage. Many are native to high elevations and are perfectly winter hardy as far as low temperatures are concerned. Some can be used in rockeries, and even more are good additions to woodland gardens or "edge of the woods" types of locations. As a general rule, the smaller the leaf, the more sun the plant can tolerate while larger leafed species may need protection from intense noon-day sun. The only other concern is fertilization as many are native to infertile soils. I fertilize my container plants with a very weak solution of a rhododendron fertilizer once in early spring and again in early summer. I know that some of our good local rhododendron growers top dress their containers with fish fertilizer in the spring and their plants always look good to me. I don't fertilize plants in the ground other than adding some leaf mulch in the fall.

The Rhododendron genus has hundreds of species, and there are good references dedicated to their attributes. In this article, I'm giving you my take on just a few of the smaller ones I grow or have grown. Hopefully, this will whet your appetite to include a few in your garden. But sadly it seems species rhododendrons are not currently in vogue, and the garden centres don't carry many. Places to look for plants are your local rhododendron society plant sales and, if you get hooked join the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden in Federal Way, Washington. The Species Foundation has a show/test garden that's a joy to visit, and they will ship plants to Canada, or you can order seed and propagate your own plants.

The Greig Rhododendron Species Garden, part of Milner Garden and Woodland Gardens in Qualicum Beach is a new species garden, one that is developing quickly. I haven't been there since pre-COVID days, so I don't know if they are doing much propagation, but it would be worth visiting if you are in the area.

The very first rhododendron I ever bought was sweet little *R. impeditum*, (**BED 50**) I fell in love with the deep purple flowers and tiny, grayish-blue leaves. This is a true dwarf, reaching about 30 cm in height in 10 years. With summer watering, it tolerates hot, sunny locations well, so makes a nice plant for the rock garden. Its small stature also makes it a good candidate for bonsai and it is very much at home in a container. This is a favourite plant for many people and is readily available.

As I wrote in my last article, I am fond of little yellow rhodies and one of my all-time favourites is the Japanese species, *R. keiskei*, (**BED 14**). I especially like the selected form 'Yaku Fairy'. The species is considered semi-dwarf, reaching a height of about 60 cm in 10 years. It has a nice mounded habit. The selected form, 'Yaku Fairy', is much shorter, reaching about 30 cm, but it spreads easily and self-roots as it grows. I was growing a 'Yaku Fairy' in a container along with a couple of dwarf conifers and last summer, I decided it was time to do some re-potting. The 'Yaku Fairy' had spread around the edges of the pot, and when I finally managed to get it out, it stretched out to about 50 cm. The container was located where it got good morning sun but partial shade in the afternoon and the plants were all very happy there. *R. keiskei* (**BED 14**) has small funnel-shaped flowers of pale yellow that appear in late April to early May.

As with many yellow-flowered rhododendrons, it needs reasonably good light for flowers. The plant has been completely hardy for me. I'm not the only one who really likes 'Yaku Fairy', its attributes have been appreciated by many hybridizers and is the parent of many good small hybrids.



Rhododendron 'Shamrock' in Bed 15S Photo: K. Piccott

Some other lovely, small species with yellow flowers are *R. valentinanum*, *R. megeratum* (**BED 15s**) and *R. lepidostylum*, all native to high elevations in Yunnan. *R. lepidostylum* and *R. megeratum* are reliably hardy in Victoria but while it will tolerate some frost, I shelter my *R. valentinianum* when the temperature drops more than 2 or 3 degrees below freezing. All three species have good foliage but of the three, to my eye, *R. lepidostylum's* foliage is the nicest. Young leaves are a lovely soft, bluish-green and I grow the plant for the leaves rather than for the flowers. The foliage is slightly aromatic. The flowers, borne in mid to late May, often get hidden by new foliage, but when you see them, they are soft yellow and tubular in shape. It needs excellent drainage and does best with some shade from afternoon sun. Its nice mounded habit makes it a good choice for a rock garden where some summer moisture is available. *R. lepidostylum* can reach over a meter in height, but is often shorter.

*R. megeratum* (**BED 15s**) is definitely in the dwarf category, reaching only 25 to 30 cm in height in 10 years. Like *R. lepidostylum*, this species has attractive foliage, but here, the upper leaf surfaces are glaucous and the undersides are definitely scaly. This species has attractive peeling bark, reddish to purple in colour.

The plant is a bit shy to flower, but when it does, it has bell-shaped flowers. Colour can range from a soft cream to bright yellow. My plant has good bright yellow flowers which appear in late April. In the wild, *R. megeratum* (**BED 15s**) is largely epiphytic, so while it needs regular watering, good drainage is essential.

The flowers of *R. valentinanum* are showier than either of the above. They are up to 3 cm across and the trusses are borne terminally. There can be up to 6 flowers per truss, but 2 or 3 is more common. The flower colour is bright yellow with dark brown stamens that make an attractive contrast to the petals. Flowers appear in mid-April. The leaves are attractive, oval shaped and slightly hairy, but I find my plant suffers a bit from mildew, so good aeration is important. This is another species with peeling bark that adds interest to the plant as it ages.

There are many other good yellow flowered species, but let's consider a couple of plants grown for foliage. *Rhododendron proteoides* is justly famous for its thick, dense foliage. The top of the small leaves are dark green and the undersides have good cinnamon-red indumentum. It likes full sun and good drainage. I've found it to be fully hardy in my Victoria garden, but winter moth larvae love the new foliage. I've learned to my cost to keep a close eye on my plant in spring as the caterpillars can ruin several years of growth overnight and once damaged, it takes several more years for new growth to overcome the damage. *R. proteoides* stays small, just up to 25 to 30 cm in height. I've never seen one in bloom as it takes years for the plant to reach reproductive maturity. Flowers are described as bell-shaped, pink in the bud, fading to white and spotted with crimson. Sounds nice, but with foliage like this who cares what the flowers look like.

Another plant I've been enjoying for foliage is *R. pseudochrysanthum nanum*. (**BED 15s**) This grows as a perfect globe, with very dense foliage. It's an easy grower for me: good bright light with protection from full sun at noon and regular summer watering. I've been told that it is a sport of the species and is a non-flowering form. The dense thicket of slender branches makes me wonder if it originated as a witch's broom. Because it doesn't flower, this form seems to have disappeared from the regular market, so you'd need to find a specialty grower for this.

*Rhododendron williamsianum* (BEDS 10, 30, 32 and 46w) is an easy plant to identify because the leaf bases are rounded, the upper leaf surface is smooth and bright green and undersides are a blue-green colour. New growth is bronze and very attractive. The bell-shaped flowers appear in mid to late April, they open deep pink in the bud and gradually fade to a lighter pink. The plant is very well-behaved as it stays low but spreads in width to create a neat and tidy mound. While it's an easy grower, new growth comes early and may be subject to late frosts. It's much loved by hybridizers and has been used as a parent in many crosses.



*Rhododendron williamsianum* (BEDS 10, 30, 32 and 46w)

Another pink flowering species is *R. tsariense*, a native to Bhutan and Tibet. Lovely, very dark green foliage and reddish-brown indumentum makes this a choice small plant. While the vegetative growth on my plant has been hardy for me, on occasion the flower buds are damaged by late frosts since this is an early bloomer (late March to early April). Flowers are lovely when they appear and my plant's flowers are a good deep pink with some red freckles. Flower colour within the species may range from deep pink to cream. It does need some shade from hot summer sun.

*Rhododendron pemakoense* (BEDS 4w, 19, 36, and 50) is another early bloomer, flowering anytime from late March to early April. When in bloom, the plant can cover itself in so many flowers, the foliage is completely hidden. Flowers are pale pink and funnel-shaped. The plant itself is reliably hardy here, but it does like some shade during the summer. It is another true dwarf, reaching about 25 cm or so in 10 years, but if happy, it will spread in width. With good drainage, and protection from too much sun, I've found it to be a good container plant.

For those of you who like red flowers, consider growing *R. forrestii* subsp. *forrestii* Repens group. (BEDS 1 and 18) Patience is needed though as this is a slow-growing plant. It is prostrate, reaching a height of about 15 cm, but it will crawl along in time. My *R. forrestii* subsp. *forrestii* Repens group is planted at the edge of a garden bed where it has crept over some "edging" rocks. The rocks are a bit of a nuisance, but they do protect my plant from the weed eater. The bright red, tubular flowers open in late April, and they stand out well against the dark green foliage. My plant gets good morning light and while slow-growing, it is spreading out nicely.

I could go on and on about other small species, and for those of you who grow species rhodies, you may wonder why I didn't write about so many others. There are just so many to choose from and I hope you'll try a few as there is at least one small species out there for every taste. A good reference is [The Smaller Rhododendrons](#) by Peter Cox and for general care, take a look at Kenneth Cox's book, [Rhododendrons – A Care Manual](#).



Norma Senn, with her donated *Mespilus germanica*, (Medlar) in the Upper Orchard.



Darts Hill's heritage sign in front of *Rhododendron augustinii*, May 2022

The following link was sent by one of our members to the Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society email address. It is being provided as a matter of interest only.

Rita Gerlach sent this link to an article on a millipede that was found on one of the plants at the garden sale. She has read that it can spray cyanide. It is very prevalent in the pacific northwest so thought she should send a link to the article with more information so individuals working in the garden are aware. She handled the critter and did not get sprayed. It rolled into a ball and tried to get away.

<https://salishmagazine.org/yellow-spotted-millipede/>

The Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society (DHGCTS) is incorporated under the BC Societies Act and is a registered charity. Charitable No. 86285 7935 RR0001.

Please consider making a [donation](#).

Thanks to all contributors and proofreaders:  
J. Good, S. Murray, N. Armstrong

**CONTACT:**  
[info@dartshill.ca](mailto:info@dartshill.ca)

Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society is an organization working in partnership with the City of Surrey to ensure the preservation of Darts Hill Garden Park.

