

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

FALL GREETINGS

from Susan M. Murray, Chair of the Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society

By the time you receive this newsletter, fall routines will be well underway; the children back at school, traffic volumes resuming their normal flow and the plants in Darts Hill will begin their transformation of color and form. I encourage you to visit the garden this fall on one of the member open days. Bring a friend, encourage them to join and enjoy!

As the newly elected chair of Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society I would like to thank outgoing chair Douglas Justice for his hard work. Doug has, with other members of the Board, worked tirelessly on behalf of the garden for a number of years now. Douglas remains on the board in his role as an educational representative of UBC. Please take a look at his delightful article on the inside pages of the *Oracle*.

In June, the Board of Directors of the garden met several times to begin a strategic planning process to identify goals and objectives for the garden.

One of the top items is to achieve a greater awareness of the garden within the horticultural community. The Board explored a number of ways to do this and hopefully in the coming months these initiatives will bear fruit.

I'm sure the droughty, then wet summer, with its intense heat early on, will produce exceptional fall display over our entire region so do take the time to enjoy the spectacle.



C. Deagle & W. Fidgeon look on as Francisca celebrates her birthday.

AUTUMN OPEN HOUSE

**October 2, 2004
11:00 am – 3:00 pm**

The City of Surrey and the Darts Hill Garden Society work together to hold an Open House to the general public twice annually.

Autumn is a wonderful time to visit the garden, with a huge variety of trees and shrubs ablaze with spectacular fall colours. Many of these are unusual and some quite rare. Don't forget to ask questions about the many exotic fruit that can be found at this time of year.

No Pets please. Limited Wheelchair Access For more info call 604-501-5067.

Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower" – Albert Camus

GARDEN UPDATE

By Graham Laine: Francisca's Assistant at the Garden

With another very warm and dry summer almost over, and thankful for the late August rains, I can put away the hoses and sprinklers that are used for watering dry pockets that the main irrigation system does not reach. The three new irrigation lines that were installed in the spring were a great help and saved a lot of hand watering and dragging hoses in the south west garden.

The catch 22 of regular irrigation in warm weather is of course the weeds, which thrived so well that it was a challenge to keep on top of this garden chore with many days spent on hands and knees. As with other years, the volunteer weeders from the South Surrey Garden Club have been a great help, and with the additional time and help put in this year by Surrey Parks staff, the weeding and other garden jobs are being managed; including deep mulching of some beds to cut down on weed seed germination next year.

The group of *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* (Lawson Cypress) below the house has finally succumbed to the most likely cause -Phytophthora (root rot)- and will be taken down this fall. Some thought is now being given to a suitable replacement tree which would thrive on the site adjacent to the orchard and complement the surrounding trees; a Zelkova, an early flowering cherry -*Prunus whitcombi*, and a large Filbert clump.

The cold snap last winter killed the branches of our Callistemon shrubs and were subsequently pruned hard to the ground. The roots were left alone and to our surprise all three are now a mass of new branch shoots which hopefully will produce their bright red 'Bottle Brush' flowers next year or the following.

All the hardy Fuchsias were also cut to the ground last winter but recovered and are flowering well. If the frosts hold off we will enjoy them late into the Fall.

A few interesting plants to look for in the garden are as follows: in Bed #33 is the very attractive small tree *Sassafras albidum*, and close by a few large fruits of *Rehderodendron macrocarpum* hang close to the grass path.

Further to the west in the new Perennial Bed #44 the huge flower/seed heads of the Globe Artichoke -*Cynara scolymus* 'Violet Globe' are not to be missed. Directly to the north at the top of the orchard the large shrub *Vitex agnus-castus* should still be showy (on September members day) with its masses of blue flower panicles set against dark green palmate leaves. Close by *Cercis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy' is finally looking better this year after resenting being transplanted a few years ago.

Unusual and Rare Trees of Darts Hill Garden Park

By Susan M. Murray © 2003.

Part 5 of 7

Cornus florida 'Cherokee Chief'

Cherokee Chief Flowering Dogwood – Garden Bed C1

Cherokee Chief Flowering Dogwood differs from the species, *Cornus florida*, by its deep rose red floral bracts. Each bract is slightly twisted or cupped. Young leaves are reddish in colour, turning dark green, then red in the fall.

Cornus florida f. *pluribracteata*

Double Flowered Dogwood – Garden Bed 4

Double Flowered Dogwood is very rarely found in the South Fraser Region. It is a truly double form of the species with six to eight large floral bracts and smaller bracts in the centre of each inflorescence, giving the inflorescence a frilly look. The leaves are lustrous dark green and turn reddish purple in the autumn. This form produces no fruit.

Corylus colurna

Turkish Hazel or Filbert, Constantinople Hazel, Tree Hazel

Magnolia Walk and Pasture

Rarely grown in the South Fraser Region, Turkish Hazel grows to a mature height of fifteen to twenty metres with a strongly pyramidal form in youth. Native to southeast Europe and western Asia, it has large irregularly edged dark green leaves that colour yellow in the fall. The long clustered brown male catkins are attractive in March. The nuts are also clustered into groups of three or more. Each nut is enclosed within a distinctive husk that resembles the tentacles of an octopus. Nuts ripen in September to October. The bark, with its small scaly flaking plates is distinctive.



Graham Laine, Francisca Darts & Gus - 2004

Plants of Darts Hill

Big-leaf dogwood (*Cornus macrophylla*)

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

The majority of local gardening people know that Darts Hill Garden is filled with treasures. They should. While not everyone has had the pleasure of a visit, Mrs. Darts has been showing terrific plants from the garden in her regular garden club show-and-tells for years. And while the cognoscenti try to impress one another with who has the frilliest bearded iris or most difficult to grow miniature *Hepatica* (what? they're not small enough already!?), she brings out the good stuff; plants that have stood the test of time and made a favourable impression on the toughest critic of them all—Francisca Darts. I've never seen Francisca speak on the subject of *Cornus macrophylla*, but she has two outstanding specimens, so I'm assuming she probably thinks they're ok. I think it's a particularly fine tree and I think she'd agree that it seldom gets the admiration it deserves.



Cornus macrophylla

Perhaps because we're awash in dogwoods here in the Vancouver area, garden writers and commentators never quite get around to *Cornus macrophylla*. Native plant aficionados have every right to wax poetic about our own *C. nuttallii* (Pacific dogwood), blooming now for a second time this year (hot summers normally bring this on). Easterners crow about *C. florida* (eastern dogwood) with good reason: the purity of its white or pink elegantly twisted bracts, borne like thousands of alighting butterflies on the tree's naked branches is compelling. Unfortunately, the bracted dogwoods, save *C. kousa* (Korean or Chinese dogwood), are horribly prone to the disfiguring leaf disease, anthracnose (*Discula destructiva*). There isn't any question that Korean dogwood is exceptionally handsome. It has clean leaves, white bracts that eventually turn pink on most specimens, followed by raspberry-like fruit, good autumn colour and flaking multi-hued bark on older specimens. Every home should have one; however, its horizontal branching (another exceptional feature) is very space consuming.

The Asian table or giant dogwood, *Cornus controversa*, is another excellent tree. Unlike those previously described, it has no showy, pollinator-attracting bracts surrounding its flowers. Both it and *C. macrophylla* produce small 4-petalled flowers arranged in broad, flattened corymbs, much like those of the shrub dogwoods, such as the common native *C. sericea* (red osier). In this case, pollinator attraction is facilitated by sheer numbers of flowers, rather than showy sterile signaling devices. There is much indeed to write about the statuesque *C. controversa*, with its magnificent flower-frosted tiers of branches. However, it, too, is rather larger than most residential lots can accommodate. To be accurate, it will happily grow almost anywhere, as long as it can ascend, but the vertical space between the tiers is often considerable and the upper sides of the branches (where the flowers and fruit are borne) are best seen from above. A related species, the North American *C. alternifolia* (pagoda dogwood), is like table dogwood, smaller in all of its parts and somewhat less impressive. A strongly white-variegated form, *C. alternifolia* 'Argentea' is much sought after.

On the other hand, *Cornus macrophylla* is a spreading, often multi-trunked tree whose smooth stems angle upward, and produce ample flower clusters on lower branches in June and July. Both trees reliably produce flattened clusters of elder-like, shiny black fruits in autumn at Darts Hill, although solitary plants may produce them, as well. The leaves of this species are large, shining deep green above and glaucous beneath. In the sun or especially in drier weather, they tend to fold upwards, exposing this waxy surface. Typical for a dogwood, the leaf veins are deeply impressed and widely spaced, and they roughly parallel the margin, which is usually somewhat wavy. In autumn, they fall yellow, red or orange and expose the sparse, up-curved twigs. At Darts Hill, you can find both trees on the east side of the tractor road, about halfway from the pond to the bottom path. In the clean, clear air of South Surrey, these trees attract lichen growth, which beautifully complements the smooth bark with subtle grey and white starburst patterns. Next time you visit Darts Hill, be sure to look for these rarely grown, but superb, small trees.

ENKIANTHUS PERULATUS

By Christine Deagle, DHG Society Board member and Guide

Many of the Guides have favourite shrubs or trees at Darts Hill Garden that they like to point out to visitors, and it appears that several of my favourite plants are popular with quite a few of the other Guides as well.

One of these is native to open woodland in Japan, and a member of the Ericaceae family. *Enkianthus perulatus* (also known as White Enkianthus) is a little deciduous shrub suitable for a smaller garden since its ultimate size is about 6 ft. x 6 ft.. There are quite a few of its larger cousin, *E. campulatus* in the garden, but in Bed 6, on the north and east side of the Tractor Road, is the only *E. perulatus*. Mrs. Darts is unable to remember when she planted it, but I can remember seeing it there for at least ten years. Still only about 3 ft. in height and about 2 ½ feet in diameter it can be deemed to be slow growing.

The attractive and slightly twisted elliptic to obovate, slightly toothed leaves of *E. perulatus* are clustered at the ends of the shoots, to 2 in. in length. Colour is mid-green, although the undersides are shiny, and appear a little lighter in colour. I love its red new twiggy shoots and that from mid-summer its leaves start to turn reddish on the edges before the bright red autumn colouring. *E. perulatus* has nodding urn-shaped white flowers in mid-spring, also clustered at the ends of the shoots.

These shrubs, as might be thought from their native conditions, prefer a location in full sun or part shade in acidic to neutral soil. They also like the humus-rich, moist but well-drained soils preferred by many members of their family. Hardy in Zones 6 to 8, the *E. perulatus* at Darts Hill Garden has weathered at least a couple of difficult winters in the garden.

The next time you are at the Garden, and maybe particularly in Autumn, have a look for this little shrub, or ask one of the Guides to point it out to you. In the Spring the flowers may appear to be rather insignificant when contrasted with the magnificent Rhododendrons and Magnolias blooming in the garden, but I believe they have their own quiet beauty.



Enkianthus perulatus

TOURS

Leisure and guided garden tours are still available for groups of 5 or more – call 604-501-5050 for tour dates and times.

Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society – Board of Directors - 2004

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If you have any questions please call Kathy at 604-501-5067 or visit our website at www.dartshill.ca.



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



DARTS HILL
• Garden Park •