

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.

Comments from the Chair - Linda Stanley Wilson, Ph.D.

As I sit here on yet another rainy summer day, I look to my many tomatoes that probably never will be, but see my recently relocated *Sciadopitys verticillata* (thanks again, Graham!) happy with more than enough to drink through even the “hottest” month of the year. I have also had more than a little time to think about my goals for Darts Hill during my tenure.

I feel that the first order of business for me has been to review the current committees to see where we can streamline our operations as well as complete some unfinished tasks. In the very near future, the Board will be holding a day-long strategic planning session to review the progress of our long-term goals and make decisions on the next steps for action. In the next issue, you can look forward to a report detailing the highlights of our conversations!

Over the summer, Board members have been busy moving forward with our Marketing plans--you will see evidence of this very soon; researching more efficient and effective Membership database systems; reviewing the Propagation Committee goals and procedures; and thinking about how to expand our Education program. We have also been giving considerable thought to how to improve the Membership benefits and welcome your input.

Finally, we would also like to make more opportunities available to you to take an active role in the garden, if you are so inclined. If you have thought that you might like to get more involved with Darts Hill, you may want to speak with one of the Board members during your next visit to the garden. Are you interested in or have expertise that you are willing to share in the areas of propagation? weeding? or perhaps fund-raising?



Francisca and Gus enjoying a rest on the rustic seat (thanks Bill G.) in the newly renovated bed number 47. The trumpet vine '*Campsis grandiflora*' is being encouraged to climb and cling to the dead trunks in the centre of the bed.

Would you like to become a guide, but just not sure about the level of commitment or knowledge required. Perhaps you are a Master Gardener willing to share your time on our Member or Open House days. Please let us know how we can facilitate your participation. We love to see our members active and fully enjoying the Garden.

I look forward to seeing you on our next Member's Day, September 16th. The Propagation Committee is busy readying plants for sale for members (you will get first pick!) and for the Open House on the following weekend. Please be sure to share your thoughts and ideas with me on how we can enhance your experience as a member—stop me when you see me in the Garden or feel free to drop an e-mail to me anytime at lindasw@shaw.ca.

See in September!

Linda

Membership Page

We have exciting new plans to enhance the membership benefits in the coming year. I would be pleased to hear from you if there are any ways we could serve our members better. You can contact me at 604-591-8695 or by email www.dartshill.ca/contact.asp.

Your membership can be renewed by downloading a membership form from our website at www.dartshill.ca or it can be renewed at the garden on Members days – the 3rd Sunday of each Month (except August and December). As you know memberships cost: Individual \$20, Couple \$25, Family \$35. The official mailing address of our Society is: The Darts Hill Society, c/o 909 – 164A Street, Surrey, B.C. V4A 8N1

Upcoming members' days: Explore the garden to find our mystery plant for your chance to win a plant from Darts Hill Garden Park.

- September 16 (plant sale),
- October 21,
- November 18

Fall public open houses:

- Saturday, September 22 (plant sale),
- Sunday, October 14 from 10 am to 4 pm.

You may also wish to share the joys of this outstanding garden with a friend or family member by purchasing a gift membership (Christmas is coming!).

Your membership helps to ensure the continued preservation of this wonderful garden by contributing to its ongoing upkeep and enhancement. We appreciate your support and look forward to seeing you in the garden.

Sincerely, Lorri Espeseth,
Membership Coordinator

Weeding

The season for weeding includes:

March – June,
July (Wednesdays only) and
September – November.

The garden is open for volunteer weeders on Wednesday and Saturday mornings from 9am to 1pm. If you can spare an hour or two within that time we would appreciate your help.

Fauna corner



This baby possum was up by the house and was trusting enough to let me pick him up and return it to the bush to relative safety – Graham Laine

When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant. ~Author Unknown

Garden Operations

Rosa sericea subsp. omeiensis f. pteracantha
(Winged thorn rose) (Maltese cross rose)



The red translucent thorns on the new growth can be seen from different aspects through the summer. The area was turf on wet heavy clay and is now an extension of beds #21 & 23. It is a work in progress with a rock retaining wall to raise the soil level with mulches and topsoils to provide an improved growing area. This rose has now been moved to a site 50' east of its original location – in an open area where it will get more light



X Chitalpa tashkentensis 'Pink Dawn'

This very attractive late-summer flowering small tree is well situated below the house in bed #27 with full sun and moderately drained deep soil; and although fully exposed has come through the past hard winter with no damage.



Magnolia grandiflora - The bees are very active around this tree with its pleasant scent. I counted eight in one blossom frantically rummaging around in the fallen stamens in the petal cups.



Magnolia grandiflora - Many flowers this year on the lower branches. Could this be the result of several top branches being broken down with snow load during the past winter?

Here is a brief update on the activities of the Parks Staff in the garden over the summer. A new little Kubota Utility Vehicle "RTV" was purchased and has helped with hauling plant material. And, did you know that Parks staff are now responsible for mowing all the grass in the garden and park.

- Garden Bed Maintenance included weeding, dead-heading of perennials, addition of composted bark mulch--4-inch plus--to several beds, seasonal pruning for 3-D's on shrubs and trees and the removal of the landscape fabric in beds 32, 34 and 29
- Gravel Paths Maintenance included weed control, re-grading of gravel paths and an addition of new gravel layer onto worn out path
- Parking Lot Beds and Surfaces were maintained to provide a clean appearance
- Green Waste Removal/Recycle - all green waste is taken to the works yard for recycling (an average of 6 to 8 cubic yards weekly)

Committees Page

Propagation Committee

After a very success spring sale, the committee, headed by Sanne Dryborough, have been busy preparing more plant material for sale. Members will get an opportunity to buy plants on September 16th. This is the best time to plant bulbs, groundcovers, perennials, shrubs, trees, and vines. Plants will also be sold at the Open House on September 22.

Photo: Nancy Armstrong (seated), James Good, Monique Kroeger, Sanne Dryborough



Guide Committee

The Guides continue to be educated in the garden by guest visitors. If you are interested in helping on this committee, even as the contact for phoning guides, please contact Nancy Oike at 604-535-6245.

Note, the Guides provided tours to Grade 3 students last spring – tours that were very successful (schools: Hall's Prairie and Morgan Creek) and we hope to continue this program with other elementary schools.

Education – Fall Tours

The following tours are being offered to the public.

Late Summer at Darts Hill - See the late-flowering perennials, grasses, trees, and shrubs in the company of an experienced guide.

1 session \$5 Pre-register by calling 604-501-5050

Thursday, September 13 10:00-12:00

Saturday, September 15 10:00-12:00

Darts Hill Fall Foliage - Throughout October, Darts Hill Garden slowly turns to shades of red and gold. See the spectacular fall colours of this garden with its stunning collection of shrubs and trees.

1 session \$5 Pre-register by calling 604-501-5050

Thursday, October 25 10:00-12:00

Saturday, October 27 10:00-12:00

Plants of Darts Hill – Late Summer Flowers – Douglas Justice, Curator of Collections and Research Scientist, UBC Botanical Gardens; Director, Darts Hill Garden Society.

August is sometimes referred to as the “dog days,” although the way the weather’s been this summer, your dog may not have even started shedding. Lucky for us, there are quite a few plants that actually prefer cooler weather and regular summer moisture. I’m not talking about the moisture loving *Gunnera tinctoria* (giant gunnera), which reaches its full, spikily magnificent potential in exactly this kind of weather. No, my taste runs to the somewhat less bizarre. For me, the best summer value is in lacecap and species hydrangeas, viburnums and *Sorbus* species (with showy berries now) and the admittedly unusual *Kirengeshoma* (wax bells), but more on that later.

High on my list is a group of related but little known deciduous shrubs in the spice bush family. These include *Sinocalycanthus chinensis* (Chinese spice bush), California spice bush (*Calycanthus occidentalis*) and Carolina allspice (*C. floridus*). Plants can be found in bed 33, bed 18 and bed 20, respectively. Flowering even in deep shade with large, white and yellow camellia-like blooms (see photo), *S. chinensis* has broad, shiny dark green deciduous leaves and an open, vigorous habit. The common name is a bit of a misnomer as the fragrance of the flowers is slight, but the plants themselves and the seed capsules in particular, do have a spicy aroma when handled. When plants are in full sun they are more compact, but can still grow large (six by six feet after ten years), and they produce more pink-tinged flowers with exposure. *Calycanthus* differ from *Sinocalycanthus* primarily on the basis of the size and colour of flower parts (and the fact that the two genera are found on separate continents—although many botanists now lump all species under *Calycanthus*). In *Calycanthus* the strap-like tepals are reddish and definitely more aromatic than those of their Chinese cousin. *Calycanthus occidentalis* is a California native, flowering there in May or June, but carrying on with its compact, mahogany red flowers well into summer at Darts Hill. Carolina allspice is common throughout the Appalachian region of eastern North America and is similar to California spice bush, except that it tends to be a smaller shrub (6 feet versus 10 feet tall for the western species) and is earlier to flower. Look for the clean, pest free leaves and aromatic top-shaped seed capsules of all three species once they’ve completed flowering.

Continued on next page



Hydrangea macrophylla



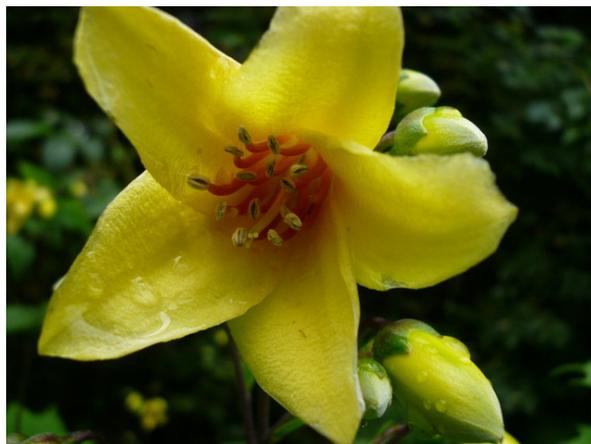
Sinocalycanthus chinensis

Plants of Darts Hill – Late Summer Flowers – continued.

Wax bells (*Kirengeshoma palmata*) is a hardy herbaceous perennial valued for its late summer displays of long lasting butter-yellow flowers and broad, palmate, somewhat asymmetric leaves. The flowers, which droop markedly, particularly before opening, are like little waxy shuttlecocks. They float on dark wiry stems in loose pyramids above the uppermost pair of leaves, the individual flowers opening over two months or more. After flowering, *Kirengeshoma* produce spherical, green, eventually burnished brown seed capsules, the persistent styles looking like weird green whiskers. *Kirengeshoma* is a hydrangea relative, though most people would be hard pressed to see the similarity, especially in the flowers. But the species does prefer the same kind of conditions as benefit hydrangeas generally, and you'll see it perform best in a moist, semi-shaded position in the garden, growing to 5 feet or so in a wet year. Like the *Calycanthus* tribe, the leaves of wax bells don't appear to be bothered much by pests, so plants are often given a prominent position in the border where their virtues can be admired well into October.



Kirengeshoma capsules



Kirengeshoma flower

THE ORACLE is now being emailed to the membership

To help us reduce the production and mailing costs of the Oracle and give you the opportunity to see the newsletter in color we have started to send it by email. If you would prefer to continue receiving the newsletter by mail please contact us at www.dartshill.ca/contact.asp or by phoning Lorri Espeseth at 604-591-8695.



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

