2005 Summer
www.dartshill.ca

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

GUIDES IN THE GARDEN

By: Lily-Ann Nassey

Let me quote Marjorie Harris from her book "In the Garden": For many, the garden is a source of solace and renewal, a place to feast the eyes, stretch the body and renew the soul." The Guides feel that Darts Hill Garden Park is just such a garden.

I have been the Guide liaison this past year and I would like to share some of our guiding activities with you.

Most of our tours are in May and June. They are as varied as the keen and knowledgeable Van Dusen Master Gardeners and the ladies of the "Red Hat Society", who were just there for a pleasant afternoon outing. They also come from garden clubs, seniors' groups and ESL classes. We enjoy them all, and we are hoping to have school groups as well this year.

The Guides are also in the garden on Members' Days and the twice-yearly Public Open Days. Please feel free to ask us questions or for a tour. We are there because we love being there. Francisca Darts has developed a garden that is known world wide for its collection of rare and unusual plants, and we feel privileged to be a part of it. So please, when you are in the garden and see someone wearing a white and green nametag, stop and say "Hello".

If you would like information on joining the Guides, please contact Mary Dunn at 604-536-7966.

And remember – "He who plants a garden plants happiness". (Chinese proverb)

Guides of Darts Hill Garden - 2004

CHANGES TO THE ORACLE

To keep printing costs to a minimum, colour versions of this newsletter are available at: www.dartshill.ca. Questions can also be directed to the Society through the website.

Robinia hispida

Darts Hill Garden Society – Board of Directors 2005

Chair:	Susan Murray	604-530-9679
Vice Chair	John Smith	604-594-5271
Secretary	Kathy Piccott	604-594-8507
Treasurer	James Good	604-536-2199
Membership Coordinator		
	Christine Deagle	604-538-4972
Directors:		
	Charlie Sale	604-929-5706
	Douglas Justice	604-822-4779
	Owen Croy	604-501-5062
	Mary Dunn	604-536-7966
	(one vacancy)	

Interested in a Board position? Please contact Susan Murray for more information.

We are currently recruiting volunteers for various committees including:

- Membership - To increase and maintain Society membership
- Publicity/Public Relations- To increase garden profile to the horticultural community

UPCOMING MEMBER DAYS:
Make sure you have the following dates on your calendar: The garden is open to members and their guests from 11:00 – 3:00 pm

Sunday June 19
Sunday July 17
The garden is closed in August
Sunday September 18

Unusual and Rare Trees of Darts Hill Garden Park

By Susan M. Murray © 2003. - Final segment

Robinia hispida
Rose Acacia, Bristly Locust or Moss Locust
Garden Beds 13 & 18

More shrub-like than tree-like unless grafted onto a *Robinia pseudoacacia* understock, Rose Acacia is noted for its bristly nature. Branches, leaf and flower stalks and the pods of this small tree are covered in stiff wiry red bristles. The leaves are pinnately compound with nine to fifteen blue green oval leaflets. The flowers are produced in late spring in stubby pendulous chains and are pink to light purple. The fruit, which is rarely produced, is a typical pea-pod shape. Native to the dry woodlands of Virginia and Kentucky to Georgia and Alabama, Rose Acacia is rarely found in the South Fraser Region.

Main Entry: ***pin nate*** *Pronunciation: 'pi-"nAt Function: adjective Etymology: New Latin pinnatus, from Latin, feathered, from pinna feather, wing, fin* ***:*** *resembling a feather especially in having similar parts arranged on opposite sides of an axis like the barbs on the rachis of a feather <pinnate leaf>*

Sorbus aria 'Lutescens'
Syn. *Sorbus aria* 'Sulphurea'
Yellow Whitebeam
Garden Beds C1 & 12
Reaching as mature height of ten metres with a spread of eight metres, Yellow Whitebeam is compact and pyramidal in youth becoming upright oval at maturity. The dense branches are held at a 45-degree angle to the trunk. The 10 cm long leaves are yellowish above becoming silver green as they age. The white fuzzy undersurface provides a striking contrast to top of the thick leaves. The scarlet fruit is highly favored by birds.

Sorbus esserteauana **'Flava'**
Yellow-fruited Chinese Ash
Magnolia Walk & Pasture

Native to western China, Yellow-fruited Chinese Ash grows eight to fifteen metres high. It has a round form with an open habit. The bright green leathery leaves are pinnately compound with eleven to thirteen leaflets. The bottom surface of the leaflet is very hairy. The fall colour is red. Produced in May, the five-petalled white flowers are held in dense clusters. The round orange-yellow fruits ripen in the early fall and hang in flattened clusters. Hairy red buds help identify Yellow-fruited Chinese Ash in the winter.

Ulmus parvifolia
Chinese Elm, Lacebark Elm or Chinese Paperbark Elm
Magnolia Walk & Pasture
Native to China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan, Chinese Elm grows twelve to fifteen metres high. The tiny buds are the smallest of any elm. The dark green leaves are typical, with unequal leaf bases and a toothed leaf margin. The leaves turn yellow to reddish purple in the fall. The flowers, which are hidden by the foliage, and the winged seeds appear at the same time in August to September. The bark is the most striking feature of Chinese Elm. It flakes away in a jigsaw puzzle pattern, with blotches of green, orange, grey and tan revealed beneath the outermost layers of bark.

Plants at Darts Hill - Styrax

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

Photo by: Daniel Mosquin, UBC Botanical Garden

Darts Hill boasts a number of individuals of *Styrax japonicus* (Japanese snowbell), which are now coming into flower. The species is generally considered among the finest of small trees, as it not only bears huge numbers of sweetly scented white flowers along the undersides of leafy horizontal branches, but produces them at a young age. Of course, the best snowbells are large enough to be seen from below, where the viewer can take in the flower display in its entirety. Lucky for us, those that Francisca planted some years ago have reached such a size. Following pollination, *S. japonicus* also produces little fruits (usually composed of one or two woody seeds) that hang on wire like pedicels below the branches, but there is little doubt that its finest feature is its flowers. There is also a weeping cultivar ('Carillon') and two pink-flowered ones ('Rosea' and 'Pink Chimes') in the garden.

A similar species from China growing in the garden is *Styrax dasyanthus*—the name means "hairy flower" and the flower buds and pedicels are indeed fuzzy. That species is somewhat less well adapted to our climate and always looks a bit yellowed on the leaf-tips, especially if located on a cold site, but the flowers are pretty and the tree is potentially elegant.

Another snowbell, *S. obassia* (from Japan, Korea and northeast China), often confusingly called fragrant styrax, or big-leaf styrax, has huge, sparsely serrated leaves and an irregular branching habit. Its flowers are borne in larger racemes than *S. japonicus*, but there are usually fewer individual flowers.

In spite of its coarse texture, there is a definite charm about this species. Like all *Styrax*, it prefers some shade and moist, well-drained soil

The other *Styrax* species visitors are likely to run across at Darts Hill is *S. americanus*, a smaller, shrubbier species from eastern North America. Planted in bed 33 (near the large open meadow), this styrax has for company two Chinese plants that belong to the same family (Styracaceae), *Rehderodendron macrocarpum* and *Sinojackia rehderiana*.

In bed 34 directly to the south, another American styrax relative *Halesia carolina*, is noted for its large inverted-goblet shaped flowers. Each of these species has recognizably styrax-like flowers (those of *Sinojackia* are delightfully tiny), but their more elongated, multi-seeded, woody, ribbed fruits set them apart from true *Styrax*. *Rehderodendron* (ray-der-o-**den**-dron) *macrocarpum* is poorly known, but with its large, deliciously fragrant flowers, ribbed, sausage-like fruit and open, sinuous branching habit, it is arguably the most spectacular species in the family.

Unfortunately, its flowering period is now well past (it peaked around Mother's Day), but most other *Styrax* species and their relatives wait at least until the end of May to bloom. And brighten Darts Hill Garden, they do.

Autumn Open House

October 22, 2005
10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Thank you to all our volunteers who helped at the Spring Open House, we saw 706 visitors in the garden on April 24. If you would like to help out in any capacity at the October's open day, contact Kathy at 604-501-5067.

Growing Gooseberries (Ribes) in B.C.

By Dr. John Smith, Vice Chair of the Darts Hill Garden Society and Liaison to the South Surrey Garden Club

Gooseberries are a traditional English delicacy, which lend themselves to display in a horticultural exhibition in the expectation of a prize. I have been told that over one hundred different varieties are grown in England by devotees, mainly in the cooler north of the country and exhibited at fairs; and the Royal Horticultural Society has displays of different gooseberries pruned in a variety of patterns designed to suit the growth of the variety.

The fruit used to be available in B.C. One farm I believe used the damp ground below Sullivan Station for fruit production but something happened about 1945 and since that date gooseberries have proved difficult to grow commercially and the taste for the fruit has been lost by the consumer. This is unfortunate because a ripe dessert gooseberry is delicious.

I have tried to grow them since arriving in Surrey in 1970 and until last year was defeated by three gooseberry pests; the sawfly, the currant fly and American gooseberry mildew. I believe I have now conquered each.

Sawfly produces the green yellow and black flashy caterpillars, which start eating the leaves in late April. It can be controlled by picking them off and squashing them beneath your foot but an application of a suitable insecticide with a pressure sprayer is much easier and lasts much longer, and is totally effective.

The currant fly is a much more serious problem; the fly lays its eggs on the fruit and the larva hatch, bore into the fruit and eat the seeds, developing into a white grub about 5 millimetres long by harvest. The grub adds protein to the gooseberry pie but unfortunately it excretes its feces into the berry, a grey black sawdust of unappetising appearance and unpleasant flavour. There is nothing worse than finding every berry damaged by the grub when you are topping and tailing 3 or 4 pounds (2 kgs) of gooseberries. I have tried to control it with several insecticides, woven plastic cloth below the plants and energetic cultivation and poisoning of the ground where the grub pupates and for thirty years I have lost the battle – but no longer!

I discovered a systemic insecticide, which is absorbed into the sap and thence into the berry and kills the baby grub. My sprayer, a Clean and Seal Deck sprayer, delivers a fan of spray instead of a cone and this makes spraying much more economical and ecofriendly. The 3.8 litres is sufficient for 40 plants. Last year, in about 6 pounds of berries, not a single grub!

The last problem is American mildew. This is a much more aggressive and virulent fungus than the one found in England and it has predilection for English gooseberry varieties, hardly damaging American ones. Some years it is worse than others, probably depending on the weather. Overnight the berries are covered in grey mould and if not treated at once, they are destroyed. Many English varieties are shy of sulphur which burns the leaves. So last year I treated the fungus with Fixed copper, 2 level tablespoonfuls to 3.8L (I think). It worked immediately but the fungus sticks to the berry and has to be washed off before cooking. Copper however is fairly harmless, possibly less so than the fungus!

In 2004, I sprayed at sawfly season, 3 weeks later and 3 weeks later again, only the last spray containing copper. This year I will spray with copper earlier and probably less frequently. The last spray was about 3 weeks before harvest.

Varieties:
The biggest disadvantage of gooseberries is the process of topping and tailing – removing the stalk and the eye although I don't know which is which. Obviously the larger the berries in your crop, the less T&T is required, so go for big-berried varieties!

- The latest and possibly the best variety in Canada is CAPTIVATOR – great big juicy green berries, resistant to mildew.
- The next best is INVICTA, green and juicy and resistant to mildew It is also fairly free of thorns which makes picking easier.
- The best English green is LEVELLER, susceptible to mildew but a delicious flavour.
- The best English red gooseberry is said to be WHINHAM'S INDUSTRY – I had one plant last year, delicious fruit – I now have 8.
- OREGON CHAMPION, green, American heavy cropper, good flavour, not dessert – might be improved by thinning HINNOMAKI RED – very heavy crop of rather small berries which start green when they should be picked, and turn red when they become inedible.
- HINNOMAKI YELLOW-bought this year, cropping well, but yet to prove its value
- PIXWELL – small fruit, light cropper, very disappointing – no longer grown.
- POORMAN- an American variety which I would like to try if I could find one.