

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.

June Magnolias, by Nancy Oike

Chair of Guides Committee

At Darts Hill, the exuberant flush of early spring magnolias, with precocious blooms covering bare branches, provides a breathtaking display of soft colour. Later blooms must compete with emergent leaves to receive the recognition they deserve. A showery June 1st proved to be a very good time to observe the exquisite detail of individual flowers, their beauty enhanced by diffused grey light and water droplets.

Some of the young trees on the Magnolia Walk are providing the visitor a close-up view of their outstanding blooms. Just south of the perennial bed (44), *Magnolia liliiflora* 'O'Neill' displays a single bloom, its soft lilac pink tepals darkening to deep purple at the centre. The blossoms are set off by shiny dark green leaves. This magnolia has larger and darker flowers than its relative *M. liliiflora* 'Nigra', located in Beds 9 and 13.



Magnolia liliiflora 'O'Neill'

Magnolia ashei, at the southeast corner of the Magnolia Walk, is showing pointed white buds, set off by huge tropical looking leaves - not surprising, as it is a subspecies of the Bigleaf *M. macrophylla*. These buds will soon mature to 20 to 25 cm saucer-shaped flowers, tinged with maroon at the base of each tepal.

Around the corner, a few steps further, is *Magnolia* x *brooklynensis* 'Woodsman', outstanding in its colour variations - creamy white on the inside, deep lilac pink with chartreuse on the outside. This highly-regarded magnolia is derived from a cross of *M. acuminata* with *M. liliiflora*.



Magnolia 'Yellow Bird'

Up the tractor road bloom more mature specimens - the white-flowering *Magnolia tripetala* and its relative, *Magnolia thompsonianum*, with larger, more pleasantly fragrant creamy white flowers. (Bed 15)

On the eastern edge of Bed 32, the last flowers of *M.* 'Yellow Bird' merit a close-up look deep into the pure yellow flowers, where contrasting deep red stamens can be seen.

Coming across these blooms among their lush foliage is like finding buried treasure; they are truly gems in the garden. (turn the page for more photos...)



Magnolia 'Woodsman'



Magnolia ashei



Magnolia thompsonianum



Magnolia tripetala

Photos provided by Nancy Oike

Darts Hill Garden Society – Board of Directors 2006

Chair: Susan Murray	604-530-9679	Director:	Sanne Dryborough	604-536-4506
Vice Chair: John Smith	604-594-5271	SSGC Liaison:	Barry Roberts	604-531-0388
Secretary: Kathy Piccott	604-594-8507	Guide Liaison:	Nancy Oike	604-535-6245
Treasurer: James Good	604-536-2199	Education Liaison:	Douglas Justice	604-822-4779
Membership Coordinator:		City Liaison:	Owen Croy	604-501-5062
Christine Deagle	604-538-4972			

I know that if odour were visible, as colour is, I'd see the summer garden in rainbow clouds.
~Robert Bridges, "Testament of Beauty"

Wisteria – by Dr. John Smith

You will remember the classical Merchant Ivory Wisteria on the front of Howard's End, a blue mist without a trace of green on a red-brick English Manor house. I used to wonder why our own Wisteria never looked like that and now I know : there are two species of Wisteria commonly offered for sale, and I had the wrong one!

The "blue mist "is *W. sinensis*, the Chinese wisteria which grows at the west end of Francisca's house at Darts Hill. This one grows towards you spiraling in an counter-clockwise direction, or else rather straight and stiff. The blooms develop before the leaves, hence the blue mist appearance. The blooms are rather smaller but gain by being strongly scented. *W. sinensis* comes in both blue and white - the blue is fairly common but the best white I have grown is Texas white. *W. sinensis* has rather stiff shoots so it may be grown as a standard tree or bush as well as a conventional climber.

The other Wisteria is *W. floribunda*, the Japanese wisteria, which climbs towards you in a clockwise fashion; this difference is easy to identify in a nursery and helps to confirm the purchase. The blooms on *W. floribunda* come out at the same time as the leaves, but they are much longer than *W. sinensis* and may hang down between 18 and 30 inches(var. *macrobotrys*). They are not scented and may be blue or white. The shoots are thinner than those of *W. sinensis* and this species will not form a self supporting standard.

At present I grow two vines of each species, one blue and one white along the eaves of the house and another as a standard bush. Wisterias require pruning, particularly to prevent them invading the soffits. I do a first pruning in July, shortening all new growths to about 6 buds which are further shortened to 4 buds in October. In February the dead shoots are eliminated and the flowering spurs thinned to reduce overcrowding. The standard bush is thinned in November because wisteria wood is very brittle and may break under the weight of wet snow.

Wisterias are propagated by grafting the desirable variety, the scion, unto the top of an ordinary wisteria rootstock. The intention is that the rootstock will keep the scion alive until it has developed its own roots.

This implies that the grafting point is buried at least 6 inches and the planting hole may need to be very deep. If the grafting point is above ground there is a chance the scion will die or the stock will send up suckers which will need to be removed regularly.

As I write this on May 1st the wisterias are still in bud whereas in 2005 they had been in bloom for 2 weeks and were ending their display.



In the centre of this photo is a very mature wisteria, in bloom, that is growing just east of Mrs. Darts house.

On May 20, I had pleasure of touring four visiting American park professionals through the gardens. With the gardens near their peak of perfection, these four ladies were dazzled! They were intrigued by the story of how Francesca and Ed came to provide this unique and generous gift to the City, and commented repeatedly that many of the tree specimens were the largest of their kind that they had ever seen. Further, they remarked that the kind of partnership that the Society has developed with the City is something that they should strive for in managing some of their own unique city gardens and parks. We all know what a treasure we have in Darts Hill Gardens; however, it is nevertheless gratifying to receive external validation that the gardens are such a very special place.

Owen Croy
Manager of Parks





Cardiocrinum giganteum

This giant Himalayan lily, takes up to seven years to produce its huge, trumpet-shaped flowers on stems that can grow to 4m (15 feet) in height.

Cardiocrinums are bulbous plants in the Liliaceae - distinguished from *Lilium* by their heart-shaped leaves and hapaxanthic life history (bulbs die after flowering, but produce new bulbous offsets, which root and grow independently). The sweetly scented flowers are enormous (to 35 cm or 14 inches long) and appear at the end of June. Large seedpods follow, splitting open in **October**, exposing the papery seeds to the wind. Seeds germinate readily, but seedlings are vulnerable to slugs (*taken from UBC Botanical Garden Plant Research*)

Photo to the right: Nancy Armstrong and James Good, in front of the Darts Hill Garden Society display, at Surrey's Partners in Parks event on April 6, 2006



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 18

Sunday July 16

The garden is closed in August

Sunday September 17



*For a coloured version of this newsletter,
please visit 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 •