

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.

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Plants of Darts Hill – Part IV

By Doug Justice: Chair of Darts Hill Garden Society, Curator of Collections & Research Scientist, UBC Botanical Garden

Wandering through Darts Hill the last member's day—when sensible people were finding dry, indoor projects to busy themselves with—I wondered if I could still find plants in flower. As the garden had already experienced a series of frosts, I was doubtful that there would be much to catalogue. Nevertheless, being somewhat familiar with the site, I was optimistic I would find something. One of the first plants I saw was

It was *Waldsteinia ternata*, one of the so-called barren strawberries; its 1cm cheery yellow blooms normally appearing in spring and summer against its small evergreen leaves. Actually, I missed it the first time, having taken a different route into the garden, but a visiting member asked if I knew its name, so I went back to find it. Next up (this time inside the garden halfway down the main tractor road), I found the strange, ultra-spiny South American shrub, *Colletia hystrix*. This plant is totally leafless, but green, and made up of cylindrical, photosynthetic stems, the tips of which are wickedly sharp. Small, white flowers are borne in the axils of these branches. These could very well be fragrant, but it seemed much too dangerous a proposition to get close enough to test-sniff.

Sometimes, wandering through the tighter pathways at Darts Hill, one runs across a plant that truly surprises and delights. Such was my meeting with *Elaeagnus × ebbingei* 'Gilt Edge'; its tiny, dull white tubular flowers showing well against the shiny (actually, dripping wet) variegated leaves. These flowers are sweetly fragrant, something between gardenia and orange blossom, and their scent travels on occasional breezes, leaving the garden visitor to wonder what and where such a lovely fragrance

could be from. While I admit to not preferring variegated leaves, Mrs. Darts has always used them sparingly, and in this case, I think the overall effect is superb.

A plant everyone agrees has pleasing foliage is *Disanthus cercidifolius*. This witch hazel relative has redbud- (*Cercis*-) like leaves on impossibly long, thin, horizontal branches. The leaves colour beautifully (burgundy and red) and this is usually what people are interested in, but *Disanthus* also blooms at this time. The flowers, like tiny, iridescent purple stars, are difficult to see when the plants are still in leaf, but your nose can usually detect them. Although horribly fetid up close, they are only faintly unpleasant at a distance, and evidently quite attractive to flies (the pollinators).

I was up to four plants, but one has to make hard decisions, even when confronted with the opportunity to discover more. I was getting soaked, and cold, and the sound of snapping branches on the hillside above the garden was somewhat disconcerting, so I took my leave. There's one thing I know about Darts Hill: I've never once been disappointed with a visit.

Visit www.dartshill.ca to ask questions of the Chair!

WINTER IN THE GARDEN

By Graham Laine: *Francisca's Assistant at the Garden*

Well, there we were looking forward to an extended fall after a long hot summer, and four or five nights of hard frost just about sent us into an early winter. While many trees and shrubs had already started getting their fall colours, others had their leaves freeze-dried to a dull brown and it took a few strong winds to bring them down. All the hardy Fuschias which were in full flower were not hardy enough to withstand the cold snap but will be back next year after some winter pruning.

All that being said, it's been an enjoyable season in the garden with not too much rain, making perennial cleanup easier and the opportunity to get on with some landscape projects.

The last really severe winter that I recall was back around 1990. At that time the large Eucalyptus on the driveway - grown from seed and planted by Francisca in the early 1970's - was frozen to the ground by extreme cold and icy winds. After being cut down, the tree sprouted and grew rapidly from the surviving roots and is now an impressive specimen of about 40 feet..



With a garden as large and diverse as Darts Hill there are always many plants that carry on and flower through difficult times. A couple of these are as follows: Mahonia 'Charity' forming a dense upright non-suckering shrub with masses of golden-yellow flower spikes which continue through late autumn into winter, and Grevillea 'Victoriae', an evergreen shrub more suited to zone 9 with long-lasting spidery red flowers which survived through the frosts in a very sheltered position.

There are many berried shrubs and trees in the garden that add interest in the winter, including varieties of Sorbus, Cotoneaster, the Callicarpa, and Pernettya.

Many of the grasses are very attractive in their dried state at this time of year. The Stewartias must have benefited from the cold snap with their showy late fall colours, as did the Parrotia persica, the Disanthus cercidifolius, and the Liquidambar styraciflua.

There has been a few additions in the garden this fall. Bed #35 along 16th avenue fence line has been widened to an irregular curved shape with improved drainage beneath. Also in the southwest corner a new bed, #45, has been made. The tree circles on the Magnolia walk are being made larger to provide more compost soil area in place of turf. New irrigation lines are being installed to help with the watering in the southwest garden.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**March 2nd 2004, Semiahmoo Library, 1815 – 152nd Street:
7:00 pm**

The Board are calling for nominations for two Director positions, Vice Chair and Director at Large. Nominations must be submitted to: Gerry Gibbens: 604-986-4017 or by email: gibbens@axion.net no later than February 1st, 2004.



MEMBERSHIP CORNER

By Marlene Gurvich: Membership Co-ordinator, Darts Hill Garden Society; Garden Time – Shaw TV

A very fast year has past and it's now time to re-affirm your commitment to Darts Hill by renewing your Darts Hill Society membership.

Through our membership we have been able to embrace the spirit and the passion presented by the garden's creator, Francisca Darts. With its bounty of trees, shrubs and every manner of plants the opportunity to learn is omnipresent. It is an absolutely lovely space to visit and we encourage you to come on all our open Member Days.

Let's talk about upcoming winter visits. Our first 2004 open day is Sunday January 18th. We offer a special tour to our member's only. Join UBC's Doug Justice and Kwantlen's Susan Murray for a special tour. Discussion will be on "Common and Unusual Conifers". (We also have a door prize to give away – a book on conifers). Bring your questions and curiosity – we meet at the garden reception area at noon.

In the next months watch for the larger scale of interest. For instance - deciduous trees, back-dropped by the winter light, are classic in form. Francisca's *Paulownia tomentosa* is as special on a clear winter day as it is in full lilac flower.



Paulownia tomentosa

The bark of trees is a great place to train your eyes..... Eucalyptus, Arbutus, Betula (Birch), and, of course, the *Acer griseum* (Paper-bark Maple).

Another winter staple berries! You will find many berrying shrubs like Viburnum, Skimmia, Cotoneaster and Ilex (holly). Looking for offbeat berry colour? Try the *Callicarpa bodinieri* 'profusion' (beauty berry bush) with its display of violet berries. Very Striking! An interesting companion at Darts Hill is a good-sized red berry laden Cotoneaster. The red and purple berries contrast beautifully.



Mahonia 'Charity'

Looking for a sunny sight on a gloomy winter's day? Check out Francisca's lovely *Mahonia x media* 'Charity' (at the



Helleborus orientalis

The favourite of winter perennials has to be the many forms of Helleborus. Whether it is the classic *Helleborus orientalis* or the attention grabbing *Helleborus argutifolius* or *Helleborus foetidus* - these specimens create excitement in the winter garden. Paired with early blooming Trillium it makes for a truly west coast gardening experience.



Helleborus argutifolius

The garden will be open to members and guests only for the winter/spring months as follows:

Sunday January 18th, 11am to 3pm
 Sunday February 15th, 11am to 3pm
 Sunday March 21, 11am to 3pm
 Sunday April 18th, 11am to 3pm
 Sunday May 16, 11am to 3pm

Please take the time to complete your renewal form as we'd like to see you roaming the garden paths this next year. The first 15 renewals will receive a *Paeonia delavayi* seedling from the garden, graciously being donated by Mrs. Darts.

One more thing - are you interested in volunteering some time for the garden? We would appreciate members willing to help with garden reception, tours, and marketing. If you can spare some time please call Marlene Gurvich at 604.535.1302 or Kathy Piccott at 604.501.5062.

Please renew your membership asap! And please continue to share the garden with family and friends.

The best of the season to you and yours - Marlene



Helleborus foetidus

WILDLIFE IN THE GARDEN

By Ray Gurr, Gardener with the City of Surrey

Winter can be a great time to view wildlife in Darts Hill garden. Leaves have fallen, improving visibility through dense vegetation. Animals are somewhat bolder or desperate in their search for food. Fruit, nuts and seeds are more available at this time of year. Evergreen shrubs and trees offer shelter from wind, rain, snow and predators. And different species of animals are present in winter. This is particularly true of wildlife that migrates from colder climates. With a little luck and by following a few simple rules you should be able to see several animals in garden. To improve your chances of seeing wildlife you should be quiet, move slowly, stop often, listen and look up. There is often something above you!

The largest of the wildlife species that you will see are the deer. These are often seen near the parking lot early in the morning or late in the afternoon. Look for their tracks in the mud around the small pond south of the washroom. Occasionally a coyote wanders through this area attracted by the presence of small animals such as mice, moles and rabbits. Grey squirrels are common everywhere. But you may be lucky enough to see the smaller native Douglas squirrel in the wooded area east of the garden.

Birds are generally more visible than mammals. They can be seen or heard from anywhere on the property. Everything from Bald eagles and Red-tailed hawks soaring overhead to tiny Golden crowned kinglets and winter wrens in the shrubs below can be seen. Scratching through the fallen leaves there maybe a spotted towhee or a fox sparrow. Crows and Steller's jay may be seen cracking open walnuts by dropping them on blacktop driveways.

Often there are flocks of small birds like kinglets, black-capped chickadees, pine siskens and bushtits moving through the trees above. Dark-eyed juncos and song sparrows are found in the lower branches. Before you leave be sure to walk the loop trail through the wooded area north of the parking lot. You might see a downy woodpecker or the much larger pileated woodpecker. And while you are walking here or anywhere else in the park don't ignore that gang of crows causing a great ruckus. They may be telling you there is a Great horned owl here!



Photo by Graham Laine

Unusual and Rare Trees of Darts Hill Garden Park

By Susan M. Murray © 2003.

Part 2 of 7

Acer palmatum 'Garnet' Garnet Japanese Maple - Garden Bed 8

Reaching three metres in height, Garnet Japanese Maple is very airy and delicate in its growth habit. The small finely dissected leaves hold their colour all summer, turning scarlet in the autumn. The tree is quite slow growing with a strongly weeping habit.

Acer pseudoplatanus 'Worley' – Golden Sycamore (Maple) - Garden Bed 35

A rare tree in the South Fraser Region, Golden Sycamore has soft yellow-green foliage, which turns golden, yellow, and then orange. The mature foliage is light green with reddish petioles. It grows eleven to twelve metres in height.

Acer saccharum ssp. *Grandidentatum* – Canyon Maple or Big Tooth Maple Magnolia Walk and Pasture

This maple native in Montana to Northern Mexico grows to ten metres high and easily as wide. The lobes of the leaves of this rare maple are very blunt. The glossy, midgreen leaves of Canyon Maple turn brilliant scarlet, orange or yellow in the fall.

Acer sieboldianum – Siebold Maple
Magnolia Walk and Pasture

Native to Japan, this small maple grows to six to seven metres high and the same wide. It bears small, pendulous corymbs of tiny yellow flowers. The midgreen leaves of Siebold Maple, which have seven to eleven lobes, turn orange-yellow to red in the autumn.

Special thanks to the authors, to James Good for his editing and to Kathy Piccott for their help in putting this newsletter together.



Sudden Oak Death
by Ken Knechtel

Sudden Oak Death (SOD) is the latest fungus to attack our garden plants. First seen in Germany and Holland in 1993 and in Mill Valley (San Francisco), California in 1995, it is now establishing itself up and down the West Coast. With the discovery of SOD in Richmond, British Columbia, there can be no doubt gardeners have a real nasty fungus to deal with should it escape containment.

Sudden Oak Death - *Phytophthora ramorum* is the scientific name - is a newly discovered species in the family of fungus, which includes the famous potato fungus that caused the Irish potato famine. The symptoms for identification of SOD are similar to a multitude of other plant problems. Blotched leaves on all plants are the first sign of infections. Then quickly or slowly (or never at all) the branch dies and then the plant dies. There can also be bleeding cankers on the trunks of infected tree species.

Sudden Oak Death spreads like any other fungus, on the wind, in the water and by infected wood coming in contact with new hosts. This last method of spreading is a major problem to a gardener purchasing plants as over 50% of the material in a pot is shredded bark. Countless volumes of bark are shredded annually to be used as potting material for nurseries. If bark from infected trees is used in the potting mix, it's very easy to see the potential for rapid movement of the fungus spores as we move plants all over the continent.

As the name states, it kills oaks. Most gardeners are thinking that this will have very little impact on their gardens as oak trees tend to be used more in parks and as street trees. Regrettably SOD damages and kills more than oaks. Here is an incomplete listing of plants which may be susceptible to the fungus: *Acer* spp., *Aesculus californica*, *Arbutus menziesii*, *Arbutus unedo*, *Arctostaphylos* spp., *Aesculus* spp., *Alnus* spp., *Aucuba japonica*, *Camellia* spp., *Corylus cornuta*, *Cistus salvifolius*, *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*, *Clematis montana*, *Fagus sylvatica*, *Fuchsia* spp., *Gleditsia triacanthos*, *Heteromeles arbutifolia*, *Kalmia latifolia*, *Leucothoe fontanesiana*, *Lithocarpus densiflorus*, *Lonicera hispidula*, *Oxydendrum arboreum*,

Prunus laurocerasus, *Pieris* spp., *Pittosporum undulatum*, *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, *Quercus* spp., *Rhamnus californica*, *Rhododendron* spp., *Rhus diversiloba*, *Rubus spectabilis*, *Sambucus* spp., *Sequoia sempervivens*, *Symphoricarpos albus*, *Syringa* spp., *Trientalis latifolia*, *Umbellularia californica*, *Vaccinium* spp., *Viburnum* spp. Considering this is a partial list of plants that may be susceptible to the fungus, as gardeners we recognize so many of them as our usual plant companions. *Camellia* spp., *Clematis Montana*, *Fuchsia* spp., *Kalmia*, *Pieris* spp., *Rhododendron* spp., *Vaccinium* spp. and *Viburnum* spp. certainly have special places in our gardens. Our gardens will have to change should this fungus become commonplace.

As gardeners we are often faced with a problem in the garden: too many slugs, not enough sun (or too much) or poor soil. These are small problems compared to the problem of SOD in forestry and agriculture. If you looked closely at the list above maybe you noticed two important plants, which mean more to British Columbia than some of the others. *Pseudotsuga menziesii* is more commonly known as the Douglas fir. Suddenly this fungus has the potential to damage our forests (recently Oregon issued a Forestry Alert about SOD). The other group is *Vaccinium* spp. This group has in it the blueberries, huckleberries and cranberries. Not only is there a large industry tied to these tasty berries, just imagine going for a short hike up your local mountain and the *Vaccinium* are not there as they are today.

What can we do as gardeners when dealing with this problem? Visit www.suddenoakdeath.org and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency site www.inspection.gc.ca/english/plaveg/for/pestrava/sodm_scfage.shtml. Try to remain informed as to what is happening and support efforts to contain SOD. Information about this fairly new fungus is constantly being updated as scientists, nursery people and gardeners learn more about this potentially fatal disease for many plant species.

From The BC Council of Garden Clubs Bulletin

