

WEEKLY UPDATE – JUNE 25 – JULY 2, 2017

“Has queen-like June cast jewels on the earth,
And turned them into flowers and brilliant birds?
Of whence have come these gem-like charms whose birth
Brings eloquence and joy too grand for words?”
Ernest Warburton Shurtleff (1862-1917), “June”

The heat is on, for the time being anyway. There is very little to report.

1. The improvement in the weather has brought an increase in the number of visitors to the garden including a member of the Sauvignon (as in the grape) family who enjoyed a wonderful tour on Wednesday and left with a very positive impression of all that the garden has to offer.
2. The giant Kiftsgate rose across from the Korean Pavilion is climbing way, way up and its scent is glorious!
3. The White Garden is worth a little visit right now as the scented hybrid mock orange *Philadelphus purpureomaculata* ‘Belle Etoile’ is blooming.
4. Now would also be a good time to experience the mulched bark path that runs between the Black Garden and Livingston Lake paths where the old roses are in magnificent bloom. Sit, breathe in the perfume of the roses and enjoy a quiet respite from the heat.
5. A visitor asked what the garden is doing to celebrate Canada Day. Does anyone know?

Guide Goings On

1. Thursday, July 6 – Gardener’s Walk with Miguel Molina through the Canadian Heritage, Vegetable and Alma VanDusen Gardens.
Meet on the Plaza at 10:00am

Garden Goings On

1. ZimCarvings with Patrick Sephani and visiting artist Peter Kanaji
June 16 – September 30
Discovery Room and in the Garden
2. UP-CLOSE presented by the Vancouver en-plein-air Group
Until June 27 in the Library – your last chance to see it!
3. **CORRECTION – Judy Aird’s Retirement Party**
Thursday, June 29 – 3:00pm-5:00pm
Floral Hall

Garden Clippings

1. In the “Weekly Update” archives for 2015
July 3 – 9 - Smokebush

In the “Weekly Update” archives for 2016
July 2 – 9 – *Clethra*

2. On June 29, Monty Don’s “The Secret History of the English Garden” explores the impact of the 19th century in Kew Gardens.

And, beginning on July 13, a new 10 part series hosted by Monty Don, “Around the World in 80 Gardens” will take viewers on a tour of the world’s most inspiring gardens. It looks very interesting.

3. Watching hummingbirds zip around from flower to flower and stop at feeders provides not only entertainment but wonder as well and provokes the question, “How do hummingbirds avoid collisions?” Research in the Department of Zoology at UBC suggests that these little creatures, which can fly at more than 50mph, “process visual information differently from other animals, perhaps to handle the demands of their extreme aerial acrobatics.”

It would appear that they rely on the size of objects to determine distance and that they use image velocity to assess their altitude.

More information can be found in the article from the Winter edition of UBC’s *Trek Magazine*; I’ve placed it in the front pocket of the Information Binder.

One Last Book for Your Summer Reading Collection

The Plant Messiah: Adventures in Search of the Rarest Species – Carlos Magdalena

As lovers of plants and gardens, we all seem to enjoy reading about and recounting the adventures of some of the best-known plant hunters: Joseph Banks, Archibald Menzies, David Douglas, Augustin Henry, Ernest Wilson and Frank Kingdon-Ward, to name just a few. In his new book, Carlos Magdalena, a botanical horticulturalist at Kew Gardens in London, writes of his efforts to track down long-lost, endangered and exotic species and revive them through extensive breeding programs in the Tropical Nursery at Kew.

A passionate and committed conservationist as well as a water lily expert, his travels have taken him to far-flung and sometimes dangerous places in the world to save and bring back from the brink of extinction some of the world’s rarest plants.

While he might be somewhat uncomfortable with the term ‘messiah’, he doesn’t step away from it; furthermore, he is preaching a gospel of sorts: that we need to understand the miracle of the thousands of the world’s plants that sustain humanity by clothing, feeding, healing and inspiring us. He is a man on a mission and his book is a call to action to make the world a better and greener place.

See an interview with Carlos Magdalena on www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04qhpm1

Creepy Crawly Creature Condos

At this year's Chelsea Flower Show, the RHS Greening Grey Britain Garden was constructed to showcase ways to illustrate the growing importance of gardens in our urban landscapes. It "addresses key challenges of urban development and climate change in a time when plants and nature have never been needed more, showcasing water sensitive design biodiversity and habitat features, and pollution-soaking plants."

One of the seemingly whimsical, but very practical, features of this innovative garden was the presence of two bug hotel towers. Bug hotels, insect condos, wildlife stacks and, my favourite, wild bienenhaus - they go by a variety of names - are very well- know and popular in Europe, especially in the UK, Germany and the Netherlands where they can be extremely elaborate, complex and artistic structures. My first encounter with one was a somewhat crude design in the Hortus Botanicus in Amsterdam, consisting merely of a pile of discarded logs and branches from garden pruning.

What is an insect hotel? It is a manmade structure made from natural materials that provides shelter, a safe refuge and nesting facilities for all manner of beneficial insects, including solitary wasps and bees, dragonflies, beetles, butterflies and moths, spiders and ladybugs; amphibians such as newts and frogs; and even hedgehogs! The mason bee condos with which we are familiar would be a good example on a very small scale of an insect hotel.

Insect hotels are very popular with organic farmers and their placement in fruit and vegetable gardens, berry fields and orchards encourages the presence of pollinators who are so necessary for securing our food supply and making the world a greener and better place.

Building an insect hotel would make a wonderful kids' project. For more information and terrific pictures, I recommend visiting www.niftyhomestead.com

The RHS Greening Grey Britain pamphlet, with its detailed plant list, is in the front pocket of the Information Binder.

The Summertime Blues - A 'Bluetiful' Blooming Border

Vandusen's beloved Blue Border in front of the Formal Rose Garden is blooming beautifully in many shades of blue at the moment and is a haven for bees and butterflies. From afar, there is little differentiation in the shades of blue; however, up close, the colours separate out and are enhanced by pastel hues of yarrow (*Achillea* - summer pastels group) and the deep purple of *Allium hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation' and the Siberian iris (*Iris sibirica*).

In the north bed, cranesbill (*Geranium* 'Johnson'sBlue') with its cup-shaped deep blue flowers provides a beautiful border. In both beds, mountain bluet (*Centaurea montana*), also known as perennial cornflower or bachelor buttons, features star-shaped blue-purple blooms. These very pretty plants are also extremely invasive. The romantic-looking rich violet-blue flowers of the milky bellflower (*Campanula lactiflora*) hang delicately on long stems.

Woven branch cages protect and keep the bushy mounds of blue false indigo (*Baptisia australis*) from falling over. A member of the Fabaceae family, the pea-like flowers in shades of purple-blue attract both bees and butterflies and, indeed, the Blue Border was full of bees when I visited, attracted also by the false nettle. The name of blue false indigo comes from its use as a substitute for the dye-producing plant (*Indigofera tinctoria*).

The loose spikes of the catmint's (*Nepeta*) purple-blue flowers also attract pollinators, including bees and hummingbirds. It is related to aromatic catnip and we are familiar with the euphoric behavior it stimulates in cats. Catmint is also used as the border plant for the corner triangular parterres in the Formal Rose Garden.

At the back of both beds, the blue spikes of echium-like plants on their long stalks separate the Blue Border from the Formal Rose garden. Are these echiums? I did not have the opportunity to check the signage for these showy blooms. There is so much more to see here besides the plants I've mentioned so take a few moments to explore this little treasure trove in plain sight.

With the deep red Rosa (Dublin Bay) = 'Mcdub' behind and the apricot Rosa 'Ghislaine de Feligonde' climbing over the iron arch at the entrance to the Formal Rose Garden, the Blue Border provides a gentle and subtle lead in to the drama of the roses.

Please send comments, suggestions, questions etc. to pkbuchanan@shaw.ca or write them down on the pages provided in the Information Binder. And check out the Library and www.ericanotebook.com for useful information and ideas to enrich your understanding and enhance your guiding practice.

During our mini heat wave, remember to wear a hat, apply your sunscreen and drink lots of water. Have a great week of guiding!

HAPPY CANADA DAY!

“First, **April**, she with mellow showers
Opens the way for early flowers;
Then after her comes smiling **May**,
In a more rich and sweet array;
Next enters **June** and brings us more
Gems than those two who went before;
Then, lastly, **July** comes, and she
More wealth brings in than all these three.”

Robert Herrick (1591-1633), “The Succession of the Four
Sweet Months”