

Thursday Gardener Walk with Casey W- August 6, 2015

By Marilyn

These notes have not been reviewed by Garden staff

Casey has been working in the Sino-Himalayan Garden since April and is very excited about expanding his knowledge of Asian-origin plants, especially rhodos.

While we were gathering on the Plaza, Casey noted that the large red flowers in the planters are *Hisbiscus moscheutos*, a tender perennial. The slender red-stalked flowers are *Lobelia cardinalis*. This plant can sometimes winter over here if it is not too wet.

On the way to his area, Casey pointed out the butterfly pavilion on the Perennial Garden lawn that will feature butterflies grown by a local teenager, and visitors will be able to enter it to interact with the insects. If any of the butterflies escape, it will not be a problem, as these are native species. Casey mentioned that the Garden has also wanted to introduce native frogs, but groups raising them have been reluctant because of predators (i.e. turtles and carp). However, a group recently released tree frogs near the Ed Centre and in the marshy area of the Eastern North American Garden; these frogs should be able to survive since they are tree-dwellers.

Casey also lamented the lack of water for the Garden this year and fears that drought will be a recurring problem in the future. Trying to keep his six-acre area watered has been a challenge and has interfered with other projects. Casey has heard some talk about returning to the reservoir storage project but nothing firm. He also pointed out that the Garden would be a good place to demonstrate proper sprinkling techniques.

Our tour starting point was the entrance to the Sino-Himalayan Garden at the end of the path through the Great Lawn. Casey said that the tree and rhodo canopy in his new area is well developed, so he is focusing attention on developing the understory. In fact, the trees are too well developed in some areas. Roy's original idea was that the trees he planted would protect the rhodos and then be removed once the rhodos were established, but that never happened. Some of the common trees like *Cedrus deodora* (deodar cedar) and *Cunninghamia lanceolata* (China fir), which are well represented in the Garden, should be removed to help improve the health of this area.

The large stones in the entrance bed came from another part of the garden as part of the fire ant eradication project. Casey moved the graceful *Stewartia sinensis* here to show it off and planted a young evergreen, *Cathaya argyrophylla*, that had become potbound in the nursery (hence the yellow needles). It is on the endangered plant list, with fewer than 1,000 trees left in its native Chinese habitat. This specimen probably lost its leader, which is why it is so bushy. It grows to 30 feet in the wild, but Casey doesn't think our plant will grow that high. Behind is a big stand of *Rheum palmatum* var. *tanguticum* (ornamental rhubarb) that didn't bloom this year because he moved it in the spring.

We headed toward the Meconopsis Dell trail but first stopped at the *Taiwania cryptomerioides* (coffin tree). UBC has several specimens and offered us one a few years ago; Doug Justice recently said that ours was the best of the bunch. Casey needs to redefine the leader to get it to grow upward; it could grow as tall as the pine next to it. Across from the path from the *Taiwania*, the *Juglans catheyensis* (Chinese walnut) behind the weeping ginkgo is very lopsided because the magnolia next to it is blocking light from the west. It could eventually topple over from too much weight on one side.

We then started up the Meconopsis Dell trail. Casey pointed out some drought-stressed rhodos with curled-under leaves. He is not sure how much drought they can tolerate and knows there will be some loss. He says the effects of lack of water and heat for an extended period have the same effect as a bad winter storm. He finds the Dell a challenge and perhaps misnamed, as many of the poppies have not survived. The dry, powdery soil is a problem.

He has started working on the understory here by planting several unusual plants. On the south side of the trail, *Paris quadrifolia* is related to trillium and will get to 14 inches. It has little blue berries and is very poisonous. *Chrysosplenium macrophyllum* is similar to bergenia and has beautiful pink flowers. He hopes to add a yellow-flowered variety. *Beesia deltophylla* has starry white flowers and beautiful heart-shaped leaves. *Impatiens omeiana* can take a lot of shade but needs moisture. On the tree front, Casey has also planted *Acer ceriferum*, which is very rare; *Corylus fargesii*, which has peeling bark; and *Acer morifolium*, which has rounded leaves and whose striped 'snakebark' will become more pronounced with age. On the north side of the trail is *Trachystemon orientalis*, with beautiful blue flowers (it is in the borage family). This will spread. *Schima argentea* is a small tree similar to a camellia or a stewartia, and its new growth is purple-red. Labels for this area have been ordered, but the accession rods are already in place to help with identification.

Aristolochia manshuriensis (Dutchman's pipe) is growing over a robinia just to the west of this area, and Casey is afraid it will cause the tree to topple over. We could also see a flowering *Campsis grandiflora* climbing up the ginkgo on the waterfall path. Casey said it is difficult for vines and trees to co-exist; usually the vine wins.

We then walked down to the main north-south road just north of the path from the Great Lawn to see where two trees came down in the July rainstorm. One was *Tetradium daniellii* (bee tree). It had been fully leafed out and covered with flowers, and the weight of the rainwater on its leaves was too much for it. The stump has a dark spot in the middle, which Casey thinks is rot. The tree had three leaders and a bark inclusion (an area where the bark of a trunk comes into direct contact with bark from another trunk) that collected water and dirt, encouraging rot. One leader must have split off due to the excess weight, then the other two followed and probably knocked out the *Aesculus turbinata* (Japanese horse chestnut) next to it. He would like to replace the bee tree but has been unable to find any nursery stock. He thinks he can get one from UBC, however, and he took some cuttings from the fallen tree just in case.

Casey is starting to develop an *Arisaema* path leading away from the fallen trees. He has planted 15 flats of seedlings he found in the greenhouse. Also in this area, a *Prunus serrula* was removed, and he can already see the rhodos reacting well to the increase in light.

On the west side of the main road, the rhodos are not very happy about the lack of water, but the beautiful golden-leafed *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* 'Gold Rush' is doing well, and Casey would like to plant more. The *Acer sieboldianum* is half dead, probably from verticillium wilt (which is also affecting the Japanese Maple Bed).

As we walked south, we saw the new plantings of *Trachycarpus fortunei* (windmill palm) that were donated to the Garden. Casey is thinking of planting some *Aralia* here and giving this area a more tropical look to help the palms blend in. The *Cunninghamia lanceolata* on the other side of the path drops whole branches rather than individual leaves.

We walked into the Korean Garden to see the *Schiodopitys verticillata* (Japanese umbrella pine) that has nut-like cones. The 'needles' are actually 'cladodes', which are flattened leaf-like stems (asparagus, prickly pears and *Ruscus* also have cladodes). Casey says this is the best Japanese umbrella pin in the Garden; the specimen near the zigzag bridge is not in good shape.

We then walked up to Bed 126D to see the *Albizia julibrissin* (silk tree) in full bloom. Casey said the flower colour is more intense when the trees receive less water, although in general our damp climate makes this tree grow too fast. The tree is fragrant and has a peapod fruit. Nearby is *Helwingia chinensis*, a suckering shrub that is hard to prune. He has gotten rid of its deadwood and is selectively pruning branches. Casey wants to add more *Meconopsis* to this area, which was treated for fire ants last summer. Pyrethrum seems to be the best solution for eradicating the

ants. The *Morus alba* (Chinese white mulberry) on the corner is a fast grower, and he has to do a lot of pruning to keep it from blocking the path.

We did not visit the Fern Dell, but Casey noted that two *Rhododendron rex* were moved there this spring from the Rhododendron Walk. He wants to add more tree ferns and make the Dell area more exotic.

Our last stop was back in the Korean Garden to view the camellias and the hibiscus. The camellias flowered really well this year, and some varieties already have apple-like fruit. They are setting flowers now, which means we will have another good display early next year. These shrubs should be pruned after flowering; if they are pruned now, there will be no flowers. However, the hibiscus need pruning early in the year since they flower in late summer. These hibiscuses were donated by the Korean consulate and provide a nice touch of colour at this time of the year.

Casey said to feel free to chat with him any time; he loves to hear comments and answer questions, and this kind of dialogue often makes him look at things differently. We are lucky to have such an enthusiastic and knowledgeable gardener!