

Trees in the Sino-Himalayan Garden
Gardener Walk, October 13, 2021 with Gardener Erin D.

Notes, photos, pdf files found at
<https://www.ericanotebook.com/updates/gardener-walk-october-2021>

We met Gardener Erin D for a tour of some of her favourite trees in her area, the Sino-Himalayan Garden. This was the first Gardener Walk for Erin. Erin studied biological sciences at UBC, then worked for a private gardening company starting in 2003. In 2006 she went to work for Parks and did her apprenticeship from 2010 to 2014. She worked at several downtown parks, Sunset, and Jericho before coming to VanDusen three years ago. Her area includes the Sino-Himalayan Garden and some just to the east of the road, including the evergreen azalea/Himalayan birch bed, the Korean bed, and the camellia collection. For this walk, Erin pulled together an extensive amount of information about a number of plants. These notes will provide a brief introduction to each plant, along with an attachment that includes a number of interesting aspects of the plant and some fascinating stories that will enliven our tours.

We started off in the Fern Dell at the beautiful paper mulberry tree, *Broussonetia papyrifera*. It is a deciduous tree native to Asia and was used for millennia for paper- and cloth-making all over Asia. It is considered the most widely transported fibre crop in history and has been found from Madagascar to Taiwan. The leaves are different shapes. Check out the pdf file for more information about this tree.

Across the path just east of the Fern Dell, we visited another tree with a long history, *Morus alba* 'Unryu', the white mulberry or the contorted mulberry. This cultivar is contorted and has glossier leaves than the species. It also often has darker mulberries. *M. alba* is very important for silk production, and, ironically, it is planted across from the 'silk tree' (*Albizia julibrissin*). *M. alba* is known for the fastest movement of any plant; its pollen is catapulted at half the speed of sound. Check out the pdf file for more information about this tree.

As we turned around, we noticed that the blue-tinged *Cunninghamia lanceolata* 'Glaucua' down the hill at the entrance to the Fern Dell had lots of dead branches. Erin said this is normal shedding, not summer heat. She often uses a rake to remove dead material but hasn't done so for a while. Erin noted that while this area was well watered this summer, she tries to harden off plants by reducing watering in late summer. However, this year's recent rain storms are making that difficult.

Back on the west side of the Fern Dell path, our attention was caught by the incredible fall colour of *Stewartia pseudocamellia*. PDF file about it and some of the other stewartias in our Garden.

Next stop was at the foot of the Waterfall steps where the **living fence (aka the 'fedge')** will be removed, and a natural wood railing will replace it. (The Meconopsis Dell steps railing will be replaced at the same time.) Currently, the fedge does not get enough light along the shadier, steeper sections to provide a sturdy railing, and it obstructs the view of the Waterfall from the steps. A new fedge will be grown in the Sunflower Garden using branches from the same willow (*Salix alba* var. *vitellina*). To make a living fence, willow branches are stuck in the ground in fall or spring and woven together in the desired pattern, perhaps using staking and tying to train it into shape. Willow branches root easily and are supple enough to bend and weave. Young willow leaf tips contain large concentrations of natural rooting hormone, so young willow branches root easily. When willow stems and branches are soaked in water, they produce 'willow water' which contains a rooting hormone (indolebutyric acid). This willow water is a traditional way to help plant cuttings root.

As we walked past the bottom of the **Waterfall**, Erin noticed that it had slowed to a trickle because the drain was clogged. She quickly turned the pump off, cleared the drain, et voilà it started flowing normally again. The water is recirculated.

We next walked over to the **Meconopsis Dell** where two new areas have been added to highlight lots of new Himalayan poppies that are being planted. This is a result of our seed exchange with the Meconopsis Group in Edinburgh. PDF file about the new poppies that we will be seeing next spring. One of the new poppies that has been planted out is *M. paniculata* (Golden Himalayan Poppy) where you can already see the felted golden leaves.

We went back to the main road to see the grove of *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemantii* (Himalayan birch) planted along the far end of the Great Lawn. These beautiful trees are suffering from a bronze birch borer infestation; our warmer winters are not helping the situation. Their crowns are thinning out, and they may have to be removed at some point. This birch's bark was used for millennia to write manuscripts. PDF file about the Himalayan birch.

We turned back south down the main path and along the left side and stopped to admire *Stewartia sinensis* which is now starting to turn red. PDF file about *Stewartia*.

Near the *S. sinensis* was a large, dead-looking rhododendron. Erin said that a quick coupler in the irrigation system broke, and she was trying to dry out the area. She is hoping the rhodo will come back. When we crossed the path from the Great Lawn, we saw a large *Rhododendron calophytum* in bad shape, with green foliage on one side but dead branches on the other. Erin thinks this is because dirt was piled on the soil when the path was recently renovated. She will level the soil out and see if that helps.

Across the path on the west side is *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* 'Gold Rush' (also called 'Ogon'). It was planted in 2010 and is growing rapidly. It is a deciduous conifer whose leaves are chartreuse-yellow in spring and rusty orange in autumn. Erin says that when the morning light hits it in spring, it reflects an incredible golden light on the path. PDF file about this tree and the Metasequoia species.

As we headed towards 37th we saw lots of deciduous beautyberry shrubs with glossy violet fruits in fall. One widely planted cultivar is *Callicarpa bodinieri* var. *giraldii* 'Profusion'. This shrub is a member of Lamiaceae, the mint family. It is native to Sichuan, Hubei and Shaanxi provinces in Central and Western China. It is best grown in full sun.

Final stop was at the 'ruins' of the Korean Pavilion. Staff are working with an outside group on a plan to resolve this situation. It was crushed by a falling *Robinia pseudoacacia* on March 28, 2021. A couple visiting the garden that day had admired it; when they passed by again several minutes later, it had fallen. In recent months, however, this tree has sent up shoots inside the barrier - hope springs eternal! PDF about this tree and the Korean Pavilion.

