

## WEEKLY UPDATE – APRIL 30 – MAY 7, 2016

**“I am amazed at this spring, this conflagration  
Of green fires lit on the soul of the earth, this blaze  
Of growing, and sparks that puff in wild gyration,  
Faces of people streaming across my gaze...”**

**D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930), “The Enkindled Spring”**

The magnolias and dogwoods are giving way to the May trees, lilacs and laburnums. The pink *Clematis montana* “Rubens” froths across fences and along guy wires, wisteria winds its way over pergolas and around telephone poles and drapes over tree branches. And the weedy plants! Buttercup and dandelions, mountain bluet and bindweed are flourishing. Yes, “this blaze of growing” is certainly evident this week. There is very little to report.

1. Seen in the garden – the yellow tree peonies on the path leading up to the Waterfall are in bloom as are the light purple panicles of the Princess trees.  
- the Judas tree is in magnificent bloom in the Mediterranean Garden.

### Guide Goings On

1. Thursday, May 5 – the monthly Gardener’s Walk will be led by Dean M. through the Oak Knoll and along the Rhododendron Path.
2. Thursday, May 12 – Douglas Justice from the UBC Botanical Garden will speak on “How trees can help make Vancouver the greenest city in the world”.

Congratulations to Angela W., Friday guide, who commences her two-year term on the VanDusen Garden Board of Governors.

And thank you to Jean H., Thursday guide, for her twelve and a half years of service on the Board.

Michael M., Thursday guide, commences the second year of his term.

The names of guides who received special recognition at this year’s VBGA AGM will be published next week!

### Garden Goings On

1. Vancouver African Violet and Gesneriad Society – Violet Royalty  
Saturday, May 7 – 1:00pm-4:00pm  
Floral Hall  
Free or by donation

- 2. Vancouver Bird Week Bird Walk**  
**Saturday, May 7 – 9:00am-11:00am (2 one hour sessions)**  
**Meet in the Visitor Center Atrium**  
**Free for members**
  
- 3. MOTHER’S DAY!!**  
**Sunday, May 8 – lots of activities including Jazz in the garden, a pop-up Café, photo booth and the Artisan Jewelry Show and Sale in the BMO Great Hall from 10:00am-6:00pm**  
**Free for members**
  
- 4. Chinese Penjing Society of Canada Show and Sale**  
**Saturday, May 14 and Sunday, May 15 – 10:00am-4:30pm**  
**Floral Hall**  
**Free**

**Penjing translates as “tray painting”. It is the ancient Chinese art of realistically depicting artistically formed trees, other plants and landscapes in miniature.**

### **Special Days in May**

**Sunday, May 1 is May Day. This traditional spring holiday was originally pagan, associated with the Floralia, the festival of Flora, the Roman goddess of flowers. However, through the influence of Christianity (ironically), it became a popular secular celebration of springtime fertility.**

**Sunday, May 1 is also Chestnut Sunday, the Sunday before Ascension Day which this year falls on May 5. Chestnut Sunday was established by the Victorians who were always eager to find reasons to visit and celebrate gardens. The horse chestnuts in bloom in Kew and Bushey became favourite destinations.**

**A reminder that the May flower is the lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*). A more detailed exploration of these “white choral bells” and their cultural significance can be found in the May 1-7, 2015 “Weekly Update” along with information about Solomon’s Seal which is in the same family.**

### **Candles and Candelabra**

**No, it’s not the lid of Liberace’s flashy grand piano! But have you noticed how many of our favourite trees and plants are candle-like or even have “candelabra” as part of their name? For example, the horse chestnut is also known as the candle tree and when the flower panicles are in full bloom, the tree resembles a giant candelabra.**

The flower buds of the common or English laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) open in erect racemes that look like little candles.

Have a look at the pine trees in the garden or in your neighbourhood. The new, erect spring shoots are sometimes called “candles”; covered with brownish or creamy white bud scales, they point upwards like little glowing candles. Later in the season, they turn green and then spread outward. These “candles” offer foresters a means to evaluate soil fertility and vigour of pine trees.

And the candelabra primula are coming into bloom all over the garden. A few *Primula bulleyana* are in flower on the path leading up from the Waterfall, although *P. bulleyana* “Ceperley Hybrid” down by Heron Lake in the Japanese maples area have not yet bloomed. Another variety, *Primula japonica* “Miller’s Crimson,” can be found in bed 26A.

Have you noticed any other plants in the garden that remind you of candles? Do you know of any plants that have a “candle” reference or association? If so, please send them to the “Weekly Update”.

### Spring Showstopper – the Dove tree (*Davidia involocrata*)

“To my mind, the Dove tree is at once the most interesting and beautiful of all trees in the north-temperate flora ... The flowers and their attendant bracts are pendulous on fairly long stalks, and when stirred by the slightest breeze they resemble huge Butterflies among the trees.”

E. H. “Chinese” Wilson

The Dove tree was Tree of the Month in May, 2012 and it seems an appropriate time to revisit this lovely plant, especially as the three specimens in the garden are in beautiful bloom.

A member of the same family as dogwoods, Cornaceae, the Dove tree is also known as the ghost tree or the handkerchief tree because of the pairs of approximately seven inch long asymmetrical white bracts which hang in layers from the branches. These modified leaves surround a round flower head; fossilized examples from the Cretaceous period have been found in Dinosaur Provincial Park near Drumheller, Alberta.

The genus contains only one species, named after Pere Armand David, a French missionary and plant explorer. A keen naturalist who lived in China, he described it in 1869. Botanist Dr. Augustine Henry sent cuttings from a tree he had found to Kew in 1891, but it wasn’t until 1899 that nurseryman Harry James Veitch sent Ernest Henry Wilson to China to find the tree and bring back seeds. After many disappointments and adventures, the young Wilson found specimens of the trees and seeds were ultimately sent back to England in 1901.

The Dove tree was introduced from China into Europe and North America in 1904 where it is a popular ornamental tree in parks and gardens. It has earned the RHS Award of Garden Merit.

**The garden has three specimens of the Dove tree but the most beautiful and most classically shaped example is at the bottom of the Rhododendron Path.**

**Your contributions to the “Weekly Update” are most welcome and valued. Please send comments, suggestions, questions, observations, things seen and heard in the garden, anything you think might be of interest to your fellow guides to [pkbuchanan@shaw.ca](mailto:pkbuchanan@shaw.ca). And you can look up back “issues” of the “Weekly Update on [www.ericanotebook.com](http://www.ericanotebook.com)**

**“The man who worries morning and night about the dandelions  
in the lawn will find great relief in loving the dandelions.”  
Liberty Hyde Bailey, American horticulturalist, *Manual of Gardening*, 1910**

**HAVE A WONDERFUL DAY IN THE GARDEN!!**