

WEEKLY UPDATE – MAY 7 – MAY 14, 2016

**“A lily of the day
Is fairer far in May,
Although it fall and die that night;
It was the plant and flower of light.
In small proportions we just beauties see
And in short measure, life may perfect be.”
Ben Jonson (1572-1637), “It is not Growing Like a Tree”**

“Sweetest May” is here. A reminder that the lily of the valley is the May flower. In Ireland, it is sometimes referred to as “fairy ladders” as it was thought that “little people” climbed them. It is also known as the ladder to heaven and Jacob’s ladder. It was believed that the nightingale was lured into the woods to choose its mate by the sweet, delicate scent of these “white choral bells”. You can read more about lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*) in last year’s May 1-7 “Weekly Update”. There is nothing to report, really.

- 1. Seen in the garden – roses are in bloom in both the Formal Rose Garden and in the Heritage Rose Garden.**
 - a hummingbird’s nest in the dwarf Coast redwood in the former Children’s Garden.**
 - the unlabeled rhododendron without any stamens in the Loderi section.**
 - the sterile purple rhododendron whose stamens are flowers along the rhododendron Path.**
 - the beautiful wisteria at the Lathehouse.**

Guide Goings On

- 1. Thursday, May 12 – Douglas Justice from UBC Botanical Garden will speak on “How trees can help make Vancouver the greenest city in the world”.
Floral Hall – 10:00am**

Congratulations are extended to the following guides who received special recognition at the VBGA AGM held on April 25, 2016.

**Liese G., Thursday guide, received an Award of Recognition.
Lynn I., Tuesday guide, Susan M., Thursday guide, and Jaki d., former Thursday guide, received the Award of Distinction.
Brian C., Saturday guide, was honoured with the Award for Exemplary Service.
Midge O., Tuesday guide, received the Volunteer of the Year Award.
If I have overlooked anyone please let me know.**

Today we enjoyed an excellent Gardener’s Walk with Dean M. who led us through the Oak Knoll, the Loderi Rhododendrons, along the Rhododendron

Path, back down through the heavenly scented Azalea Path and then back up to the Japanese Garden. Dean noted that his area of responsibility has expanded this year from Gate 3 all the way to Oak Street although this is not expected to be permanent. Right now, there are six full-time gardeners, one acting gardener, one operator, one apprentice until June and then seven summer staff will be added for three months. Look for a more detailed account of this informative walk in the next issue of the *Gazette*.

Garden Goings On

1. **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 -6:00
Free for members
2. **Chinese Penjing Society of Canada Show and Sale**
Saturday, May 14 and Sunday, May 15 - 10:00am-4:30pm
Floral Hall
FREE
3. **All British Field Meet ABFM 2016 - 31st Anniversary**
Saturday, May 21 - 10:00am-4:30pm
Great Lawn
See the VDG website for ticket prices

Beautiful Flowering Trees: Laburnums, the May trees and Judas trees

“Bring orchis, bring the foxglove spire,
The little speedwell's darling blue,
Deep tulips dash'd with fiery dew,
Laburnums, dropping wells of fire.”
Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892), “In Memoriam, LXXXIII”

The Laburnum Walk, one of garden's showcase areas, is in full bloom right now. I wrote about it in 2015 in the last week of May when it was at its peak, at least two weeks earlier than this year. At the rate at which the blooming season is advancing, its “wells of fire” period will be very shortlived. It was Tree of the Month for May/June 2011. And just a reminder that all parts of the laburnum tree are poisonous.

Look for the graft chimaera laburnums (+*Laburnocytisus* ‘Adamii’) with their pink and yellow flower chains on the same tree; one, which can be viewed by cart visitors, sits along the low stone wall bordering the southern side of the Perennial Garden. Another stands behind it on the Great Lawn.

The hawthorns (*Crataegus monogyna*) in the Rosaceae family are also at their peak. They are known as the May-tree but, with this year's early flowering in our warming climate, may have to be renamed the April tree. The Glastonbury Thorn (*Crataegus monogyna* 'Biflora') in bed 35B in the grasses has flowered twice this year, at Christmas and Easter, and, near it, there is a beautiful specimen of the Toba Hawthorn (*Crataegus X mordenensis* 'Toba'). The lovely rosy pink English hawthorn (*Crataegus laevigata* 'Rosea') in the Heritage Vegetable Garden is stunning right now. More detail about the folklore around the hawthorn plant is available in last year's May 8-13, "Weekly Update".

The Chinese hawthorn (*Crataegus pinnatifida*) is also in bed 35B near the entrance to the Black Garden. In northern Chinese cuisine, its bright red fruits, which resemble little crabapples, are used to make desserts, candy, candied fruit slices, jam, jelly and wine. They are also used in traditional Chinese medicine as a digestive aid, for the treatment of nausea as well as for the treatment of high blood pressure.

Another beautiful flowering tree is the Judas tree (*Cercis siliquastrum*), a member of the Fabaceae family as is the Laburnum. It is a small deciduous tree with deep pink flowers in the spring. The flowers are edible. It also produces long flat pods which hang vertically. It was described by Linnaeus who used 'siliqua' meaning 'pod' in its name.

Native to southern Europe and western Asia, it is said that it acquired its name because Judas Iscariot hanged himself from a similar tree after his betrayal of Christ. Further to this idea, the hanging flowers and pods reflect the act of hanging. But it is also possible that the name is a corruption of "l'arbre de Judee" or tree of Judea.

It is a protected plant in Israel and it has received the RHS Award of Garden Merit.

See it quickly because its flowering period will be brief in our warm weather.

Erica's Notebook Website

The good news is that traffic is up on this wonderful site! Even better news would be that more of us are accessing it for information. It is a terrific on-line resource for research purposes and to find out what is happening in the plant world, not only locally in our garden and neighbourhoods, but globally as well. We are grateful to Erica Dunn, Guide emeritus, for making her guiding notebooks available as the foundation of the website. Links have been added in nearly all of the menu headings. A long list in an entirely separate section identifies a variety of areas of interest and topics. Many of these have been provided by Marina Prinz, our librarian, and the selection enables "one stop

shopping” to find information, to enable research and to satisfy general reading interests.

New features this year include “Tree of the Month”, the monthly Gardener’s walks, self-guided tours and the “Weekly Update”.

Many thanks to Marilyn Goebel, the site’s webmistress, for managing it and keeping it updated. Also thanks to Marilyn for sending pictures of the Judas trees in bloom in Paris.

Make sure you pay www.ericanotebook.com a visit soon! You won’t be disappointed!

As always, you can leave comments, questions, suggestions and observations on the designated page(s) in the Information Binder or send them directly to pkbuchanan@shaw.ca. Your contributions are most appreciated.

“When there’s new growth bursting out all over, everything fresh, green, and flourishing, the plants are like little rockets of success going off every time you look at them.”

Jacqueline Heriteau, American cookbook and garden writer

HAPPY MOTHER’S DAY AND HAVE A WONDERFUL WEEK IN THE GARDEN!!