

WEEKLY UPDATE - JULY 17 - JULY 23, 2015

“Hot July brings cooling showers,  
Apricots and gillyflowers...”

Sara Coleridge (1802-1852), *Pretty Lessons in Verse  
For Good Children*

That Other July Flower – the Water Lily - *Nymphaea*

The water lily, part of the Nymphaeaceae family of aquatic flowering plants, is the “other” July flower. When used in a bridal bouquet, it signifies purity and majesty. The white water lily, a symbol of love and life, is the national flower of Bangladesh. The seeds of water lilies can survive and be planted for up to 2000 years. Many varieties of mostly hardy water lilies can be found in the ponds and lakes of VanDusen Garden. Imagine Claude Monet in the garden! Where the path leading along Livingstone Lake meets both the path leading up through the Black Garden and the path up through the Grotto to the Heather Garden, Monet, sitting at his easel, would be looking towards Heron Lake and painting the water lilies, the weeping willow and the gentle undulating patterns of trees, grass and water.

Plant Highlight – *Crocosmia*

Ancient, asthmatic and arthritic Mocha still retains a streak of defiant independence. Last week he went “walkabout” and after a few hours of being AWOL, Animal Control retrieved him two blocks away, lounging in a kiddies’ swimming pool, trying unsuccessfully to disguise himself under a clump of brilliant red *Crocosmia*.

Also known as ‘montbretia’ in the UK and ‘coppertips’ and ‘falling star’ (such beautiful names) in the USA, *Crocosmia*, from the Iridaceae family and cousin to the Gladiola (the August flower), is an evergreen or deciduous perennial, native to the grasslands of southern and eastern Africa.

Its inflorescences consist of 4 to 20 vivid red and orange subopposite flowers. They are pollinated by insects, birds, or wind and attract butterflies and hummingbirds. *Crocosmia*’s reproduction is vegetative from underground corms and long, creeping rhizomes. Because of this, it has a tendency to take hold and threaten native vegetation. One particular hybrid, *C. x crocosmiiflora*, has been classified as an invasive species in the UK, New Zealand, the Pacific Northwest and elsewhere. That said, one well-known and ubiquitous cultivar (among others), *Crocosmia x curtonus* ‘Lucifer’ has received the Royal Horticultural Society Award of Garden Merit. This hardy, striking plant is visible in commercial garden beds, traffic-calming gardens, roundabouts and in your neighbours’ gardens. In VanDusen Garden, look for it in beds 58A and 58B at the entry to the Southern Hemisphere Garden.

## A Beautiful Tree (and a Sad Story)

Last Thursday, on his Gardener's Walk, Miguel Molina drew our attention to the lovely *x Chitalpa Tashkentensis*, a remarkable intergeneric hybrid cross between a desert willow (*Chilopsis linearis*) and a southern catalpa (*Catalpa bignonioides*). It is a deciduous tree with a dense, spreading oval crown and large, trumpet-shaped flowers. The two specimens in bed 132T in VanDusen Garden by the Stone Garden are 'Pink Dawn', notable for their beautiful pink bell-shaped and catalpa-like flowers. Professor F. N. Rusanov, a horticulturalist and botanist from the Uzbek Academy of Sciences Botanical Garden in Uzbekistan, was responsible for this hybridization in 1964. In 1977, an expedition from NYC's Carey Arboretum brought cuttings back to the US.

Besides being the visionary behind the establishment of the Botanical Garden on its present site in 1943, Professor Rusanov also worked on the hybridization of yucca and cold-hardy hibiscus. Information is difficult to find but according to a series of 2013 postings on the PalmsNorthern forum, his son, Dr. Nikolai Rusanov, also a botanist, was still alive at that time, but living in poverty and poor health. He said that his father's collection doesn't exist anymore. After Uzbekistan won its independence from the USSR in 1991, the mature plants were stolen to landscape the villas of the president and the oligarchs. Apparently, Dr. Rusanov, Jr. sold or passed along the rights to Monrovia Nursery but no more work on the hybridization of yucca was being carried on in Tashkent. If anyone has visited this botanical garden or has additional information about it and/or the Drs. Rusanov, please pass it along.

Your feedback is always welcome. Please send it to [pkbuchanan@shaw.ca](mailto:pkbuchanan@shaw.ca)

"If you saw a heat wave, would you wave back?"

Steven Wright, comedian and actor (1955 - present)