

WEEKLY UPDATE – SEPTEMBER 10 – SEPTEMBER 17, 2016

“Well, the sun’s not so hot in the sky today
And you know, I can see summertime
Slipping on away...”

James Taylor (1948-present), “September Grass”

But it looks like summer is going to hang on for a little bit longer, at least as far as comfortable daytime temperatures are concerned. However, the edge in the air and earlier sunsets remind us that the Autumnal Equinox is not far away. There is very little to report.

1. Cart drivers are asked to be extra diligent about checking that the charging cable is securely plugged in to the cart socket and that the charger dial swings to the right. At the beginning of the driving shift, please make sure that the cart is fully charged; if it is low, do not drive it.

Guide Goings on

1. Thursday, October 6 – Gardener’s Walk with Cynthia S., Curator of Collections at the garden with a focus on collection-related issues.
2. Thursday, October 13 – Guide Education/Business Meeting
The speaker will be Lyn Grants, a teacher of History and Natural History and a UBC FOG. Her topic, with its intriguing title, will be
“Where is New Holland? And who was Ferdinand Bauer?”

Garden Goings On

1. Zimcarvings – Patrick Sephanie’s show will be held in the Glasshouse and the Formal Rose Garden from September 2 to September 30.
He will be sculpting, exhibiting and selling his work. Check it out!
2. The Nature of Art
September 2 – 28
The Discovery Room during garden hours
3. Luxury and Supercar Weekend
Saturday, September 10 and Sunday, September 11
11:00am-5:00pm on the Great Lawn
Some paths may be congested or closed.
4. Alpine Garden Club of BC Fall Sale
Saturday, September 17 – 12:00pm-4:00pm
Floral Hall
FREE

5. Medicine Wheel Ceremony
 Sunday, September 18 – 12:00pm-3:00pm
 Canadian Heritage Garden
 A celebration of the Autumnal Equinox

6. Annual Compost and Soil Sale
 Saturday, September 24 – 10:00am-3:00pm
 West end of the main parking lot

7. Dried Flower Arranger's Show and Sale
 Friday, September 23 -1:00pm-3:00pm
 Saturday, September 24 and Sunday, September 25 – 10:00pm-4:00pm
 HSBC Arrival Hall at the Visitor Center

Garden Clippings

1. On Saturday, September 3, the *Vancouver Sun's* "This Week in History" segment featured an article on the official opening of VanDusen Garden on August 30, 1975. It is entitled 'From Golf Green to Park' and it is quite interesting although the author fails to note that the Swedish Fountain has been moved from the southeast corner and now surrounds one of the European ashes.

It's the Berries!! The Mountain Ashes

Gathering starlings
 Cry as they
 Sprinkle berries
 From the autumn tree
 Shiki (1867-1902)

Once upon a time, starlings used to reel and stagger on our lawn and make feeble attempts to fly; they not only sprinkled berries from our glorious, albeit messy, mountain ash, but they also got drunk on the fermenting fruits. Now the poor old tree, a hollowed out shadow of itself, can only provide support, who knows for how long, for a magnificent Kiftsgate rose. When the tree finally gives way, this giant climber will fall too.

In the garden, there are plenty of lovely examples of generously berried trees in the genus *Sorbus*, a member of the Rosaceae family. It is a highly variable and complex genus with a number of sub-genera, 100 to 200 species and as many or more cultivars. Although there may be some similarity to leaf shape, this genus is unrelated to the true ashes in the *Fraxinus* genus. The June 18-25, 2016 "Weekly Update" has a brief item on the European ash, *Fraxinus excelsior*.

The *Sorbus* group includes rowan, as it is known in the UK, mountain ash and whitebeam. The term *Sorbus* means 'service tree'.

The most common North American mountain ash, *Sorbus aucuparia*, is a member of the sub-genus *Sorbus s. sorbus*. 'Aucuparia' is derived from 'avis' or 'bird' and 'capere' for 'catching'. It is a deciduous tree with alternately pinnate leaves and it blossoms from May to June; the flowers are pollinated by bees and flies and the pomes, small orangey-red berries that look like miniature apples, ripen from August to October. Birds love them and they provide a ready food source for migratory birds. Animals, especially those with cloven hooves, eat the smooth bark.

Both fruit and foliage have been used by humans to make food and beverages. The berries are very tart and acidic but debittering them by freezing, cooking or drying renders them sufficiently palatable to be processed into jams, jellies, syrups and juice. In Finland, they were used to produce a fortified fruit wine.

An aromatic, reddish-coloured honey has been produced from the nectar of *S. aucuparia* flowers.

In folk medicine, the bark was used for the treatment of diarrhea, while jams, jellies and juice were used as a laxative, in the treatment of rheumatism and kidney disease and gargled to ease sore throat and hoarseness.

Because it grows relatively quickly and requires little care, *S. aucuparia* is regarded as a "pioneer" plant used to reclaim disturbed landscapes. It has also been used to stabilize zones where landslides and avalanches are a threat.

The wood has been used for dowsing rods and for woodcarving.

In Norse mythology, the rowan is known as 'Thor's Protection' because he used a rowan branch to save himself from drowning. And in English folklore, especially that of the Victorian era, rowan or mountain ash twigs were viewed as another way to ward off evil spirits and witches.

Some German municipalities have the mountain ash tree incorporated into their coats of arms.

The *Vancouver Tree Book* notes that an oakleaf mountain ash, *S. x thuringiaca* 'Fastigiata' stands at the center of the Traditional Medicine Wheel Healing Garden in Oppenheimer Park. Look for a similar tree in bed 56 in the Heather Garden.

Also look for the beautiful *S. hupehensis* 'Pink Pagoda' with its delicate pink berries in bed 105 in the *Sorbus* collection; in bed 117 in the Canadian Heritage Garden; and in bed 35A in the ornamental grasses.

Please send comments, questions, suggestions and corrections to pkbuchanan@shaw.ca . And make sure you visit www.ericanotebook.com to get the latest on the most recent Gardener's Walk and the September Tree of the Month.

Enjoy the onset of warm, sunny weather and have a great week of guiding!

“September fattens on the vines.
Roses flake from the wall.
The smoke of harmless fires drifts to my eyes.

This is plenty. This is enough.”
Geoffrey Hill (1932-2016) “September Song”