

WEEKLY UPDATE - APRIL 24 -30, 2015

“...the soft laughter of April suns and shadow of April showers...”

Byron Caldwell Smith in a letter to Kate Stephens

### DOGWOODS

“After all, I don’t see why I am always asking for private, individual selfish miracles when every year there are miracles like white dogwood.”

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Our beautiful dogwoods are beginning to bloom along boulevards, in parks and in yards and gardens. We all know that the inflorescence of the Pacific dogwood (*Cornus nuttalli*) is B.C.’s official provincial flower. The flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*) and its inflorescence are the state tree and flower for the U.S. Commonwealth of Virginia. It is also the state tree of Missouri, the state flower of North Carolina and the state memorial tree of New Jersey.

There are many cultural references for the dogwood. One of the more interesting has to do with the Language of Flowers. In the Victorian era, flowers or dogwood sprigs were presented to unmarried women by male suitors to signify affection. Returning the flower conveyed indifference, while keeping it became a sign of mutual interest.

*Cornus* ‘Eddie’s White Wonder,’ a cross between *C. nuttalli* and *C. florida*, was hybridized here in Vancouver in 1945 by B.C. nurseryman and rosarian, H. M. Eddie (1881 – 1953). Most of the seedlings were lost in the Fraser Valley floods in 1948; however, one of the best seedlings had been moved to a site in Richmond. From this one seedling, all *C.* ‘Eddie’s White Wonder’ have subsequently been propagated.

The tree is noted for its large, abundant white blossoms and its reliable resistance to disease (although it is not immune).

In the fall, the leaves turn an attractive red colour. After flowering, the tree develops orangey-red fruit (drupes) which are popular fall and winter food for many birds.

A small tree was moved to VanDusen Garden in 1994, perhaps from the garden of the hybridizer’s son which was located on the corner of Southwest Marine Drive and 41<sup>st</sup> Ave. in Vancouver.

*C.* ‘Eddie’s White Wonder’ has been the recipient of many awards given by the Royal Horticultural Society, including the Award of Merit in 1972, a First Class Certificate in 1977 and the RHS’s highest accolade, the Award of

Garden Merit. In 2013, it was shortlisted for the Plant of the Centenary for the decade 1963 to 1972 at the Chelsea Flower Show, but it lost out to a blue-violet coloured Geranium.

(Information taken from *Trees of Vancouver* (1992) by Dr. Gerald Straley; the Royal Horticultural Society website and the UBC Botanical Garden Forum website).

“Everything is blooming most recklessly; if it were  
voices instead of colours, there would be  
unbelievable shrieking into the heart of the night.”

Rainer-Maria Rilke, *Letters*