

WEEKLY UPDATE – APRIL 30 – MAY 7, 2017

“May has come in – young May, the beautiful,
Wearing the sweetest chaplet of the year...
Thomas Buchanan Read (1822-1852), from *The New Pastoral*

After 2 lovely days, it is raining, but bluebells, dogwoods and the frothy pink *Clematis montana* ‘Rubens’ are starting to bloom; however, it is hardly “the blaze of growing” we experienced last year at this time.

Guide Goings On

1. Thursday, May 11 - Guide Education and Refreshments (no Business Meeting)
Janis Matson who frequently instructs in the Adult Education program will speak on “Designing with Ferns”.
A Spring Tea will be held for our former guides and garden tours will be available for them as well.

Congratulations to the following guides who were honoured for their volunteer service at last Monday’s VBGA Volunteer Recognition and Annual Meeting. The Award of Recognition was presented to the following: Barbara E., Michael M., Debo S., John S. and Angela W. Receiving the Award of Distinction were Marilyn G., Eve H., Malcolm H. and Alison H.

Garden Goings On

1. Vancouver Bird Week Walk with Richard Wing
Saturday, May 6 – 10:00am
Limited to 25 participants
This walk helps launch Vancouver Bird Week which runs from May 6 – 13
This year’s theme is “Birds of the Shore”
2. Vancouver African Violet and Gesneriad Society Show and Sale
Saturday, May 6 – 1:00pm-4:00pm
Floral Hall
Admission by Donation
3. Rain Barrell and Backyard Composter Sale
Sunday, May 7 – 10:00am-3:00pm
C-Drive off Oak St.
4. Chinese Penjing Society of Canada – Exhibition/Sale
Saturday, May 13 and Sunday, May 14 – 10:00am-4:30pm
Floral Hall
\$5.00 per family or \$3.00 per person
5. Saturday, May 13 – A busy bird day in the garden!
-Bird Walk with Jeremy Gordon – 10:00am-12:00pm
-“Bird Songs of the Boreal Forest: cradle for billions of songbirds”
Presented by John Neville – 2:00pm-3:30pm
VDG Guides Classroom – by donation

6. Mainly Vancouver – Work by Michael Kluckner; his first local exhibition in 11 years
Until May 28
Discovery Room in the Visitor Center

Garden Clippings

1. In the 'WU' archives for this time of year **in 2015**
 - Eddie's White Wonder dogwood – April 24-30
 - Lily of the Valley, Solomon's Seal – May 1-7
 - Common Hawthorne, Glastonbury Thorn, Tree Peonies – May 8-13

In the 'WU' archives for this time of year **in 2016**

- Dogwoods, Chestnuts, Camas lilies, fragrant plants – April 23-30
- Special May flowers, Candles/Candelabra, Dove Tree – April 30-May 7
- Lily of the Valley, Laburnums, Hawthorn, Judas Tree – May 7-14

Go to www.ericanotebook.ca for this seasonal information as well as links to "Tree of the Month", the monthly Gardener's Walk, and the Self-Guided tours.

2. The sweet olive is in bloom on the Rhododendron Path and it smells heavenly.

Part 3 of a Trillium Trio – *Trillium ovatum*

Trillium ovatum, also known as Pacific trillium, western white trillium and western wakerobin, is native to Western Canada and the US with a range extending from southern BC to northern California where it grows under coast redwood and as far east as southern Alberta, Montana, Wyoming and northern Colorado.

It grows under both deciduous trees and conifers and can frequently be found growing under Douglas firs. Like its 'cousins', it has 3 bracts (leaves), while the flowers consist of 3 sepals and 3 petals. '*Ovatum*' refers to its egg-shaped leaves.

It is a charming understory plant; its star-shaped flowers with golden anthers at the center emerge white, but grow darker pink as they age.

There are lots of them in both the Eastern North America Garden and in the Canadian Heritage Garden. A variety found on Vancouver Island, *T. ovatum* var. *hibbersonii* 'Album', can be seen in bed 22A in the ENA.

BC First Nations used the root extract for eye medicine.

A May Plant – Mayapple – *Podophyllum peltatum*

Another spring understory plant that is pushing vigorously through the cold soil is the *Podophyllum peltatum* or Mayapple, although this is a bit of a misnomer since the "apples", which are a round, yellow-green single berry the size and shape of a small lemon, don't usually ripen until late June. A perennial, it belongs to the Berberidaceae family and is native to eastern Canada and the US although it extends as far west as Texas. Other common

names include wild mandrake, although it is not a true mandrake, wild lemon, Devil's apple and raccoon berry.

It is easily recognized by its large umbrella-like leaves on a stem that can be as tall as 18 inches. Each coarsely toothed leaf is attached to the stem in the center and has 5 to 7 lobes. Only stems with 2 leaves bear flowers which appear in the axil beneath the leaves. Because they also point downwards, they are difficult to see.

The roots are poisonous but First Nations tribe members boiled them to make a laxative. Indeed, a drug taken from the root, called podophyllin, is a strong purgative. The resin of the root was used topically to treat plantar's wart.

The fully ripened, yellow fruits are edible as long as the seeds are removed and can be used to make jams and jellies.

In Russia and parts of Europe, *P. peltatum* is a cash crop.

P. peltatum is growing in the Eastern North America, and the Canadian Heritage Garden. Because the leaves are not fully formed, the flower buds are visible right now. *P. hexandrum*, native to Western China and the Himalayan area can be found in the Sino-Himalayan Garden, as can *P. plelanthum*, native to central and southeast China.

Malcolm H. will be writing the Weekly Update" for the month of May. Thank you so much, Malcolm! Please send any comments, questions or suggestions to Malcolm or to pkbuchanan@shaw.ca.

Have a wonderful week of guiding!

"Oh, sing! The swallows are in tune.
Forget the rain of yesterday;
A few more suns will bring us June,
And this, 'tis Chaucer's month, 'tis May!"
Thomas William Parsons (1819-1829), "May Day"