

WEEKLY UPDATE – APRIL 9 - 16, 2015

“The sun was warm but the wind was chill
You know how it is with an April Day...”
Robert Frost “Two Tramps in Mud Time”

The April Flower

April’s flower is the daisy. Traditionally, it signifies innocence, loyal love and purity. Daisies represent keeping a secret, i.e. “I’ll never tell.”

Daisies are said to have sprung from the tears of Mary Magdalene as she washed the feet of Jesus. The daisy is also associated with Venus, and we are all probably familiar with plucking daisy petals and chanting “s/he loves me, s/he loves me not...”

Daisies open and close with the sun’s rays, earning them the Anglo-Saxon name “day’s eye” which morphed into their modern name. Medieval knights wore daisy chains woven by their ladies into battle or in tournaments as a symbol of affection.

In Botticelli’s painting “Primavera” Flora, the goddess of flowers and Spring, wears daisies in her hair.

But the sweet pea, signifying blissful pleasure and goodbye, is also associated with April.

The decline of the Monarch Butterfly in Canada

Globally the monarch butterfly is not considered to be endangered; however, in recent years fewer and fewer monarchs have been observed in North America. They are susceptible to extreme weather, but their present decline is also directly attributable to human activity including logging and farming practices which result in lost breeding habitat, specifically milkweed habitat, and invasive species such as dog-strangling vine which closely resembles milkweed. Milkweed leaves are the only food monarch caterpillars can eat.

We can help monarch butterflies by planting a pollinator friendly garden as well as creating monarch way stations which would include milkweed plants and nectar producing flowers. VanDusen’s Adult Education Program has offered courses on attracting bees, butterflies and birds to our gardens and continues to do so in the spring/summer term. Please see the Adult Education April – September Brochure for more information.

For more information about the status of the Monarch butterfly, please refer to the little article from *Alive* magazine in the front folder of the Guide Binder.

“The earth laughs in flowers.”
Ralph Waldo Emerson

A drive home to Nelson from Vancouver over the Easter weekend was a journey from a vivacious spring to a still somber winter with the steady transformation from the many shades of green we are enjoying here to a landscape notable for, with the exception of the conifers and a few pops of color from plum, pear and peach blossom in the Similkameen valley and in Osoyoos, the predominance of drab, dry brown.

However, in the Richter Pass the hillsides glowed with the prolific blooms of the Okanagan sunflower, otherwise known as arrow-leaved balsamroot (*balsamorhiza sagittata*). It is a native species which grows in challenging conditions. First Nations groups including the Nez Perce, Kootenai, Cheyenne and Salish utilized the plant as a food source and for medicinal purposes. The seeds were used for food and for oil.

It is the official flower emblem of Kelowna.

“Every spring is the only spring, a perpetual astonishment.”
Ellis Peters