

## WEEKLY UPDATE - APRIL 9 - 16, 2017

“...I have seen the Lady April bringing the daffodils,  
Bringing the springing grass and the soft warm, April rains...”  
John Masefield (1878-1967), “Beauty”

The first wet week of guiding is over, the daffodils are in bloom, the green grass is springing, but these April rains are hardly soft and warm. In spite of April’s capriciousness and inconstancy, however, a good turnout of hardy guides carrying colourful umbrellas endured heavy rain last week as we followed James P. through the Eastern North America garden. The pounding of the raindrops was sometimes so loud as to prevent hearing the information James was providing about the plans for his areas of responsibility.

1. Please review the following message from Brian C. *re* the recording of statistics.

New for this year is the gathering and recording of trolley visitor contacts.

The daily walking guide contact statistics form that hangs on the whiteboard in the Volunteer Lounge has been modified to include a column for recording trolley visitor contacts.

The report form, now in landscape format, continues to provide columns for AM and PM statistics for both the booked tour and group tour numbers, walking tour numbers, roaming visitor contact numbers and the new category for trolley contact numbers.

Although they have not been formally gathered and reported in previous years, guide trolley visitor contacts are thought to be significant in number; therefore, it is well worth tracking them and reporting them.

Please ensure that these components of walking guiding statistics are accurately collected and recorded on the daily statistics report form in the Volunteer Lounge.

The monthly statistics summary form has been modified accordingly.

2. The guiding season couldn’t get underway without a great deal preparation and hard work on the part of many. Thank you to John S. for getting the radios ready for use and to the cart co-ordinators, Midge O., Derrick G. and Bruno B. for ensuring that the carts are up and running. And thanks to Brian and Adrienne C. for their work on the new Statistics form, getting the trolley ready for the season and the ongoing task of updating the Guide Information Binder.

“In my old home  
which I forsook, the cherries  
are in bloom.”  
Kobayashi Issa (1763-1828)

## **Guide Goings On**

1. Thursday, April 13 – Guide Education/Business Meeting. The speaker will be Dr. Peter Candido; his topic is “Dinosaurs in My Garden: Birds and Birding in Vancouver”.  
Please bring your own tea/coffee mug.

## **Garden Goings On – a busy Easter weekend in the garden!**

1. BC Plein Air Artists' Exhibition  
Thursday, April 6 – Sunday, April 23  
Discovery Room – Visitor Center
2. Point Grey Chrysanthemum Association Rooted Cuttings Sale  
Saturday, April 15 – 9:00am-12:00pm  
Cedar Room  
FREE
3. 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Great A-MAZE-ing Egg Hunt  
Saturday, April 15 and Sunday, April 16 – 10:00am-1:00pm  
Tickets available on-line only
4. Metro Vancouver Gardening Society Spring Bonsai and Flower Exhibition  
Saturday, April 15 and Sunday, April 16 – 10:00am-4:00pm  
Floral Hall  
Admission by donation
5. THE BIG ONE!! VanDusen Garden Annual Plant Sale  
Sunday, April 30 – 10:00am-4:00pm  
The Great Lawn  
FREE

## **Guide Resources - the Yosef Wosk Library and Resource Center**

Besides the Information Binder and the reference books on the trolley, one of the best places to go for information, inspiration and peaceful contemplation is the Yosef Wosk Library in the Visitor Center. Often featuring art exhibitions, this small, but beautifully designed, space offers a variety of resources for guides. It contains approximately 7000 volumes in its comprehensive collection, including 2 bookcases of Rare/Antiquarian books. There are books about all kinds of gardening, including sustainable and organic; gardens of the world; native plant gardening; plant folklore; plant hunters; environmental science; North American ethnobotany; literature and art in the garden, to name just a few of the categories. When I don't feel like reading too much, I peruse what easily qualify as “coffee table” books, those containing beautiful photographs of gorgeous gardens and a minimum of text.

The library subscribes to over 50 magazines and journals, including one of my favourites, *Hortus*.

As well, if you're looking to add to your own collection, the library has a well-stocked "Books for Sale" cart with a variety of books available at deeply discounted prices. It also sponsors a monthly Bookclub meeting (except in July, August and December) and offers monthly pre-school Storytelling sessions.

Of particular interest to the garden guides are the archived *Gazettes*, Master Gardeners' "Newsletter", VanDusen "Garden Bulletin" now "VBGA Garden Clippings", the "Weekly Update" and more.

One of the newest and most comprehensive additions to this archived collection of documents has been organized by Susan Mawhood who now holds the position of Archivist. It consists of 6 massive binders holding just about everything you might want to know about the history, acquisitions and contents of the garden. Binder 1 has indexes for all of the binders and information on Art in the Garden, both permanent and temporary, in chronological order. Binder 2 contains material on Buildings, Structures and Construction in the garden. Binder 3 focuses on a number of different topics, while Binders 4 and 5 explore the Plant Collections. Binder 6 completes the Plant Information and identifies Garden Areas and Water Features.

So, if it's been a while since you visited the Library or you're looking for tour tidbits, drop in to see what's there for you. Marina P. and her enthusiastic volunteers will be happy to see you and help you find something to inform, interest and inspire you.

### **Signs of Spring – Western Skunk Cabbage – *Lysichiton americanus***

At our lakehouse just outside of Nelson in beautiful Kootenay country, one of the surest signs of spring is the emergence of yellow skunk cabbage in the bog on our property. I will not be up there to watch and smell this phenomenon this spring but, luckily, skunk cabbage grows and flowers in VanDusen Garden.

The western skunk cabbage, also known as the Skeena lily, yellow arum or swamp lantern, is easily distinguished from the eastern species *Symplocarpus foetidus*. Both are in the Arum family (Araceae), but the bright yellow hood-like spathe of the western version is very different from the green and dark purple spathe of the eastern skunk cabbage. And, unlike *S. foetidus*, our local plant does not generate and emit heat.

*L. americanus*, a native species, grows happily in swamps, boggy areas, alongside streams and, generally, in wetlands throughout the Pacific Northwest on an underground root system. Its leaves are short-stalked, a waxy brilliant green and grow to an enormous size. They are said to be the largest of any native plant in Canada. The flowers are borne on a spadix which is contained in and protected by the aforementioned spathe. The distinctive skunky odor attracts pollinators, scavenging flies and beetles.

All parts of the western skunk cabbage are edible but eating it is not recommended as the leaves contains calcium oxylate crystals which can burn all parts of the digestive system and potentially cause death. But after they emerge from hibernation, bears eat the roots to kickstart their bowels and get things moving!

First Nations peoples made a poultice of the leaves and used it as a medicine for the treatment of burns, sores and inflammation. They also used the leaves to line berry baskets

and to carry, dry and store food. Additionally, food such as salmon was wrapped in the leaves for baking or steaming.

*L. americanus* has received the RHS Award of Garden Merit. Look for it in beds 22A and 24B in the Cascadia Garden, in bed 24B around the Ginkgos and in bed 135A near the Medicine Wheel. According to the July 2016 PCR, *S. foetidus* is visible in bed 16 in the Eastern North America Garden

Also according to the July 2016 PCR, an example of the white Asian skunk cabbage, *L. camtschatcensis*, is visible in bed 127D in the Sino-Himalayan Garden. Depending on who you read, it produces a sweet smell or one that is only mildly skunky.

“...and skunk cabbage  
blooms  
in an odiferous kind of way  
really  
it is a most beautiful day!”  
Cherilyn Fry, “A Woodland Path”

Please send any comments, suggestion, questions to [pkbuchanan@shaw.ca](mailto:pkbuchanan@shaw.ca). and don't forget to check out [www.ericanotebook.com](http://www.ericanotebook.com) for general information as well as links to the “Tree of the Month”, the monthly Gardener’s Walk, Self-Guided Tours and the “Weekly Update”.

**“Rain, rain, go away...” and let’s look forward to a drier week of guiding!!**

**And Have a Happy, Hoppy Easter too!!**

“The wind still blows from the northeastern quarter,  
Full charged with chills, and coughs and sniffing sneezes!  
Let poets sing of April’s balmy breezes,  
T’is my belief that Spring’s a wayward daughter,  
Whose parentage is found in clouds and water...”  
Thomas MacKeller (1812-1899), “Rainy April”