

## WEEKLY UPDATE #19 August 6 - August 13, 2016

At the start of August, we have a cooler week ahead and some chance of much needed rain.

The gently waving grasses on the mound in the late afternoon, with the light shining through them, is impressive enough, until you notice the rainbow in the fountain on Livingstone Lake and realise that all of these 'natural' effects have been carefully planned to be seen in just such a way. It is easy to become over-familiar with such subtle design gems on show at VanDusen until a combination such as this reminds us that we daily wander through a work of art.

The tale of the 'mice under the shingles' in a Douglas Fir cone can be used throughout the year, but usually they are little brown mice under brown shingles. With the current 'crop' of pale green cones, there are many tiny pink mice struggling to make their way to shelter. The Douglas Firs around the Japanese Maple collection have some branches close to the ground and show the new cones well.

Children instinctively know that the wrapping around a present may be more interesting than the present. Adults tend to look more at the contents, but we should always try to retain the wisdom of children. The formal rose garden is eye-catching and it is easy to ignore the yew hedge around it as just 'green'; but a closer look from the top shows that the new growth is gold and amongst the green and gold of the leaves are a number of bright red yew arils.

The Chinese Scholar Tree *Styphnolobium japonicum* in the Japanese Garden has produced a mass of flowers. Many of these have now fallen and carpet the ground beneath the tree.

The Pokeweed, *Phytolacca clavigera*, near the middle of the path at the top of the Meconopsis Dell, on the lower side, is producing what appear to be mutant maize cobs, where the kernels start green, then turn flamingo pink and finally become black. It is a Chinese relative of the variegated poke *Phytolacca americana* 'Variegata' in the container on the 'Garry Oak' corner of the Plaza. Thanks are due to Guide Susan M. for suggesting that this be mentioned.

### GUIDE GOINGS ON

There are no Guide meetings during August.

### GARDEN GOINGS ON

#### Friday August 5th to Wednesday August 31st, Discovery Room, during Garden hours

**Flora:** An exhibition of several series of paintings. Each series was a response to the joy that the artist Jan Henry found in the colours and textures of flowers.

**For Children - Interactive paint project** Sunday, August 21st, 1–4 pm with the exhibition artist Jan Henry.

## WEEKLY UPDATE #18 - MYSTERY PLANT 2 RECONSIDERED

Weekly Update #18 stated: "On each side of the path facing the Black Garden laburnum, are several small succulents whose rosettes of green leaves have pink edges. They are probably aeoniums, most likely *Aeonium colorata*." Further examination of the Accession Book shows that a better candidate may be *Aeonium arboreum* 'Atropurpureum'. Some of the photographs produced by an Internet search seem to be consistent. See: <http://worldofsucculents.com/aeonium-arboreum-var-atropurpureum-purple-rose-purple-aeonium/> The *Aeonium colorata* appear to be in the display bowls on the Garry Oak side of the Plaza. The black rosetted succulent, in the Golden Creeping Jenny on the Laburnum side of the path in the Black Garden are *Aeonium* 'Zwartkop'. See: [http://www.smgrowers.com/products/plants/plantdisplay.asp?plant\\_id=2885](http://www.smgrowers.com/products/plants/plantdisplay.asp?plant_id=2885) for photographs and a history of why the plant may be labelled *Aeonium arboreum* 'Zwartkop' or 'Schwartzkopf'.

## MYSTERY PLANT 1

In the Australia and New Zealand section of the Southern Hemisphere Garden are numerous plants, about a foot tall, with either white or pink flowers. The flower centres are yellow or yellow to black. These are *Xerochrysum bracteatum*, Australian Strawflowers or Golden Everlasting. See: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/details?plantid=2058> The Latin name *Xerochrysum* was derived from the Greek words *xeros* "dry", and *chrysum* "golden". *Bracteatum* refers to the papery bracts (easily mistaken for petals) of the flower heads. Thanks are due to Guide Joan Baker for identifying this plant and providing the quote: "The plant has the dubious distinction of being attractive dead or alive".

## MYSTERY PLANT 2

On the path side of the bed next to the Dried Flower Arrangers Bed, at the Sequoia end, there are a number of pinkish-mauve daisy-like flowers where the petals seem rolled except at the end. The result is that the flowers have a number of 'spoons' attached at the centre. These are African daisies or *Osteospermums*. The best match in the Accession book appears to be *Osteospermum* 'Whirligig', but the best picture match is *Osteospermum* x 'ASTRA Pink Spoon'. See: <https://mikesgardentop5plants.wordpress.com/page/33/>

## CONEFLOWERS - Common Name Confusion

Leaving the Plaza down the ramp and next to the map, there is a clump of "Coneflowers". These are Echinaceas. A short walk away, down the slope, next to the Evergreen Magnolia and in front of the Franklin Trees, there is another clump of "Coneflowers". These are Rudbekias. The close proximity of these two groups makes them a useful example when explaining why common names are not always as helpful as they first appear. Some people are allergic to Echinaceas but would have no problems with Rudbekias.

## PLANT HIGHLIGHT - PeeGee Hydrangeas

The lawn by Heron Lake, next to the Giant Sequoias, is often used for weddings. To give good photographs, the gardeners have selected a number of colourful plants to enhance the background. In the July 2014 Guide Gazette, Casey Werfl said that these adjacent planted areas are known as "The Wedding Beds". In July and August, amongst the most outstanding features to complement wedding dresses are the big patches of whites, creams and pinks supplied by the PeeGee hydrangeas.

Hydrangea blooms are generally ball-shaped (Mopheads), curved to flat (Lacecap) or roughly conical (Panicked). The Oakleaf hydrangea is a North American panicked hydrangea, which is easily identified as having leaves like that of an English oak. Hydrangea *Paniculata* 'Grandiflora' is native to Eastern Mainland China, Japan, Korea and Sakhalin. "*Paniculata* 'Grandiflora'" is not the easiest of word combinations, so it became abbreviated to "PG", leading to the name PeeGee hydrangea. As so often happens with language, people forget the origin of words and so "PeeGee" has been used as a term for all panicked hydrangeas by some people, leading to confusion. See: <http://www.hydrangeashydrangeas.com/paniculata.html>

The Wedding Beds have a number of big PeeGee hydrangeas, but two that are really colourful at the moment can be found along the right side of the bark path leading away from the lawn. The first of these is the gloriously named *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Dvppinky' Pinky Winky. See: <https://www.provenwinners.com/plants/hydrangea/pinky-winky-hardy-hydrangea-hydrangea-paniculata> At the far end of the path, the other is named *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Renhy' Vanille Fraise. See: <http://www.bhg.com/gardening/trees-shrubs-vines/shrubs/hydrangea-vanilla-strawberry/#page=0>

## PLANTS WITH SILLY NAMES

### Strawberry Begonia

Going up the Rhododendron Walk, on the left, there is a patch of low plants with pink bottoms to their leaves. They are known as 'Strawberry begonias' despite the fact that they are neither strawberries or begonias - they are saxifrages, *Saxifraga stolonifera* 'Harvest Moon'.

### Rose of Sharon

The name "Rose of Sharon" first appears in English in 1611 in the King James Version of the Bible, in the song of Solomon. The Sharon plain is the northern half of the coastal plain of Israel. There are many ideas, but no agreement as to the plant first referred to. The name "Rose of Sharon" is now applied to several different plants, including, Hypericum, Hibiscus and varieties of Iris, apple and peony. None are roses or grow on the Sharon plain. In VanDusen, the 'Rose of Sharon' is used for the various cultivars of *Hibiscus syriacus*, the National Flower of Korea. Despite its name, *Hibiscus syriacus* is not from Syria.

## WHICH PLANT HAS THE LARGEST LEAF?

The answer to the question depends upon exactly how you define 'largest'. If you mean 'longest' then the answer is a palm, which one of the four candidates depends upon the leaf criteria used. If by 'largest' you mean 'surface area', then the answer is the Giant Amazonian Waterlily *Victoria amazonica*. If you mean 'surface area and growing on land' then the answer is probably *Gunnera manicata*. There is a discussion of the various options at:

<http://gardenofeaden.blogspot.ca/2015/07/what-is-worlds-largest-leaf.html>

Remember you can always seek online Guiding inspiration in Erica's Book at:

<http://www.ericanotebook.com/>

Please send any comments about this Weekly Update to: [malcolmjhunter@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:malcolmjhunter@hotmail.co.uk)

Next week Patti B. will return and suggestions for the Weekly Updates should be sent to her at: [pkbuchanan@shaw.ca](mailto:pkbuchanan@shaw.ca)