

WEEKLY UPDATE - JULY 10 – JULY 16, 2015

“Loud is the summer’s busy song
The smallest breeze can find a tongue
While insects of each tiny size
Grow teasing with their melodies
Til noon burns with its blistering breath
Around, and day dies still as death.”

John Clare (1793-1864), “July”
From *The Shepherd’s Calendar*

A July Flower - Silene

“And glowing in all colours, the live grass,
Rose-campion, bluebell, kingcup, poppy, glanced
About the revels...”

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892), “The Last
Tournament” from *Idylls of the King*

Traditionally, the July flower is the larkspur (delphinium), but the garden delphiniums are finished. Another is the water lily which next week’s “Weekly Update” will explore. However, a little book, *Year Round Things to Do* (Folio Books, 1975), identifies the red campion (*Silene dioica*) from the pink family, Caryophyllaceae, as the July flower even though campion is often regarded as more of a spring flower. It is native to central, northern and western Europe. The scientific name ‘Silene’ comes from the Greek woodland god Silenus, the tutor of the god of wine, Dionysus, and often depicted as drunk. It grows about two feet high, and in summer its deep rose-coloured flowers are pollinated by butterflies and bees. Several species of moth feed on the foliage. Its crushed seeds have been used to treat snakebite. Several species of *Silene* grow through VanDusen Garden, including *S. uniflora*, *S. alpine* and *S. coronaria* ‘Purpurea’.

Plant Highlight - The Blue Coast Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens* ‘Glauca’)

Belonging to the Cupressaceae family (like our western red cedar), this is a redwood unlike the other redwoods, many of which are the tallest trees in the world. Although it is fast growing and grows upright if the leader branches are cut, it tends to hug the ground more, giving it a prostrate appearance. One cultivar, *S. sempervirens* ‘Steel Blue’, has exceptionally blue foliage, and some research has uncovered two additional slow-growing, ground-hugging examples, *S. sempervirens* ‘Kelly’s Prostrate’ and *S. sempervirens* ‘Cantab Prostrate’. VanDusen Garden’s blue coast redwood can be found in bed 30 in the Eastern North American Garden. It is definitely more of a prostrate example and is to be admired for its long, bluish new growth as well as its unusual shape.

Invasive Species Threat -Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)
(Incest in the Garden)

One of Mocha's favourite strolls takes us along the country lane at the foot of Trafalgar Street below Point Grey Road. Someone has been making diligent efforts to control the Japanese knotweed here by slashing it back. Japanese knotweed is a large herbaceous perennial of the Polygonaceae family. Because it grows on rhizomes and establishes roots that can reach ten feet down, this is not the most reliable way of controlling what the World Conservation Union has listed as the world's most invasive species.

A recent article in the *The Province* (Sunday, July 5, 2015 A14) discusses the threat posed by a hybrid called Bohemian knotweed, a cross between Japanese knotweed and giant knotweed. This aggressive breed is "back crossing" with its parents to create fast spreading and hard-to kill-new breeds. Thus, the incestuous nature of its proliferation.

Japanese knotweed does have some positive features. It is an important source of nectar for honeybees, and a monofloral honey is produced. In Japan, it is eaten as a wild, foraged vegetable, probably as a way of controlling its rampant growth. It is also an important concentrated source of resveratrol and its glucosoid, piceid, replacing grape byproducts. But in the UK, evidence of Japanese knotweed on your property or a neighbour's can kill your chances of getting a mortgage! More information on Japanese knotweed is available on the following websites.

www.agf.gov.bc.ca/croppot/knotweed

www.bcinvasives.ca/invasive-species/identify/invasive/knotweed

And an absolutely fascinating article in the June 12, 2015 edition of *MacLeans*.

www.macleans.ca/society/science/the-plant-thats-eating-bc

Jane Austen can have the last word this week.

"What dreadful hot weather we have! It keeps me in a continual state of inelegance."

Letter (1796-09-18), *The Letters of Jane Austen*