

WEEKLY UPDATE #16 July 16 - July 23, 2016

The dry weather earlier this year stressed the trees and maybe brought an early start to autumn for some. The yellow 'flowers' on the Chinese Tulip Tree/*Liriodendron chinense* near the Fern Dell, when nearer, are leaves preparing to join their brethren on the ground below.

GUIDE GOINGS ON

1. There are no Guide meetings in July or August - enjoy your holidays!
2. The next event for Guides will be the August 4th Garden Walk with Miguel in the Canadian Heritage, Vegetable and Alma VanDusen gardens.

GARDEN GOINGS ON

Wednesday, June 8 - Monday August 1

Strength and Fragility, Discovery Room, VanDusen Visitor Centre. Exhibition and sale by Shona Sculptor **Patrick Sephani** and Canadian Aboriginal Artist **Adele Maskwa-iskwew Arseneau** now continues until August 1, 2016.

Sunday, July 17

1. 10 am - 4 pm **The Vancouver Shade Garden Society Annual Show** in the Floral Hall - **FREE ADMISSION**
2. 12 pm - 3 pm (1 pm concert at the Great Lawn) **Kids Day with Will's Jams**. Little people (and big ones too) can sing and dance at a live concert by Will Stroet, star of the musical TV series Will's Jams on Kids' CBC. After the concert, they can create garden themed arts and crafts, play fun lawn games like Connect 4 and giant Jenga, savour tasty eats & much more! - **FREE FOR VAN DUSEN MEMBERS**

Saturday & Sunday July 23 & 24th

Sat 10 am - 5 pm & Sun 10 am - 4 pm **BC Fuchsia and Begonia Society Show & Sale**. (Floral Hall and Cedar Room) **FREE**. You can also buy "Heather's Jams".

FEEDBACK

In WEEKLY UPDATE #15, Mystery Plant 1 was *Romneya coulteri*, Matilija poppies or tree poppies. The link: http://www.sfbotanicalgarden.org/garden/bloom_11_08.shtml was sent by Lisa L. It states that the name Matilija honours Chief Matilija of the Chumash, a tribe inhabiting the area where the plant grows.

The link is to the San Francisco Botanical Garden website. It has useful references, for example: http://www.sfbotanicalgarden.org/garden/bloom_12_09.shtml describes the Wollemi Pine/*Wollemia nobilis* - under 100 in the wild, height over 120 feet, nearly all genetically identical, around 2 million grown annually from cuttings as 90% of seeds fail.

MYSTERY PLANT 1

Crossing the zigzag bridge into the Australian and New Zealand sections of the Southern Hemisphere Garden and heading towards the Western Red Cedar, the bed on the left is 58C and the bed on the 'Gunnera' side is 58A. There are many large clumps of bronze or green strap-shaped leaves, 0.5-1.5 m high and 0.5-1.5 m wide. These are New Zealand Flax or Phormium. There are 11 planted varieties in the Garden and several more in the nursery. The largest number (19 plants in bed 58A) are Phormium 'Sundowner'. Look at: http://plants.gardenworks.ca/11190002/Plant/14057/Sundowner_New_Zealand_Flax Although bed 58C, the main dedicated Australian and New Zealand bed, does not have any Phormium recorded, some are listed in 'bed 58' - bed 58C used to be part of bed 58.

MYSTERY PLANT 2

In the middle of the Black Garden, beneath the laburnum, there are four plants - a fifth is to the left of the path opposite and a sixth is on the left, under the Doncaster rose when approaching the 'Sequoia end'. The plants are 0.5-1 m high with irregular leaves like 'Lady's Mantle', but pointed not rounded (more like Lisa Simpson's head). The leaf underside is reddish and the stem and leaves are hairy. With the light shining through them, the 'hairs' on the stem look purple. At the end of May, the rare plant sale had some of these plants on offer. They were Red Leaved Velvet Senecio or *Senecio cristobalensis*. For photographs see: <http://plantlust.com/plants/senecio-cristobalensis/>

PLANT HIGHLIGHT - Rhododendron Auriculatum

One of the joys of VanDusen is seeing the steady progress of the rhododendrons in bloom throughout the year. The Great Bell Rhododendron in the Sino Himalayan Garden starts to open its candy-floss pink flowers at the end of January. Then there are sputtering bursts of individual rhododendrons, leading up to the highlights of the large flowered, strongly scented Loderi and the full psychedelic onslaught of the massed blossoms of the Rhododendron Walk before the last big bang of the firework display in the blooming 'booming' of *Rhododendron auriculatum* in mid-July.

Rhododendron auriculatum is a species rhododendron - one of the 1000 or so wild, naturally occurring rhododendrons that, when crossed, produced the profusion of more than 28,000 cultivars available today - see:

<http://rhodygarden.org/cms/our-plants/rhododendrons/about-rhododendrons/>

The original design for the Rhododendron Walk was to plant the species alphabetically, with the offspring derived from these species rhododendrons planted nearby, so there are two *Rhododendron auriculatum*s planted in bed 46A (between gates 1 and 2) at the bottom of the Rhododendron Walk.

There is the intriguing possibility that one or more *Rhododendron auriculatum* in VanDusen could be plant 'celebrities', the ancestors of recognised hybrids. Near the end of his 2002 article: <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/v56n2/v56n2-justice.htm> Clive L. Justice wrote:

In 1946, only a year after the formation of the American Rhododendron Society (ARS) in Portland, the Rhododendron Group of the Royal Horticultural Society with a membership of 230, had 31 members from the states of Washington, Oregon and California in the Pacific Northwest. There were only two RHS Rhodo Group members from British Columbia, the husband and wife team of Mary and Ted Greig. The Greigs operated the Royston Alpine Nursery at Royston on Vancouver Island. In their 1941 catalogue they listed 127 species and 10 hybrid rhododendrons. None of the latter, however, were hybrids of *williamsianum*. Of the species there was Hooker's most charming *R. campylocarpum*, but *R. griffithianum* was not listed nor was the rhododendron from the "romantic glen," *fortunei*. However, *williamsianum* was, and while there were no sizes given, you could get one for as little as \$1.50 and on up.

The Greigs are commemorated in the Ted and Mary Greig Memorial Garden in Vancouver's Ceperley Park, now a part of Stanley Park. It contains many specimens of the species rhododendrons they raised from seed thirty-five years ago, along with several hybrids using the late blooming (July/August) plant with large lanceolate foliage, *Rhododendron auriculatum*, as a parent. Among several in the garden that have been named are 'Royston Rose' and 'Royston Radiance'. This latter hybrid has flowers the size of the Loderi Group. In the cool coastal Pacific Northwest the Loderis and their progeny and *R. fortunei* and its progeny all do fine.

All except 2 of the 27 *Rhododendron auriculatum* in the Garden have accession dates between 1980 and 1983, so these 25 were probably transplanted from Stanley Park around that time.

Generally when "auric" appear in a plant name, it implies a connection with "gold". In this case, the connection is with "aural" - where the leaf blade meets the petiole it is shaped like ear lobes.

Rhododendron auriculatum was discovered by Augustine Henry close to Ichang in 1885 and named by him in 1889. Seed from it was collected by Ernest Wilson on his first expedition to China in 1889, sponsored by Veitch Nurseries. For details see: http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/~gdk/stabg_new/poms/images/pom_pdf/Aug09.pdf

The large white trumpet flowers of *Rhododendron auriculatum* are fragrant and a particularly accessible specimen may be found along the pathway from the "three faces" sculpture at the top of the Great Lawn, next to the "little oasis" of Windmill palms.

FOOD CROPS

The theme this year in the Vegetable Garden is the way in which the movement of food crops around the globe have shaped national diets to the extent that people tend to forget that they often use non-native plants introduced from elsewhere. In June 2016, there was an article **Surprising global origins for regional food favourites** at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-36471362>

that may be of use when talking about the Vegetable Garden display. It is a digest of a report published in **Proceedings of the Royal Society (Biological Sciences)** and gives a link to the open access report at:

<http://rspb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/283/1832/20160792>

If you click on the tiny map in Section 3 Results, Figure 1, **Primary regions of diversity of major agricultural crops worldwide** it will expand to show a global map with the main 81 crops and their geographical places of origin.

WEATHER FORECAST

There is an old English tradition that the weather on July 15th, the feast day of Saint Swithun (c 800 AD - 2nd July 862 AD) will predict the weather for the next forty days:

St Swithun's day if thou dost rain
For forty days it will remain
St Swithun's day if thou be fair
For forty days 'twill rain nae mare

Around the middle of July, the jet stream settles into a pattern which, in the majority of years, holds reasonably steady until the end of August. When the jet stream lies north of the British Isles then continental high pressure is able to move in; when it lies across or south of the British Isles, Arctic air and Atlantic weather systems predominate. Summer weather patterns establishing by the beginning to the middle of July tend to persist throughout the coming few weeks. This is statistically true in 7 to 8 out of 10 years. see:

<http://www.weatheronline.co.uk/reports/wxfacts/St-Swithuns-Day.htm>

The weather in BC is not too dissimilar to that in the UK, so it is possible that this traditional prediction may be transferrable.

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

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

During Patti B's absence over the next few weeks, please send any comments, suggestions for future "Weekly Update" topics, questions etc. to:

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