

WEEKLY UPDATE #17 July 23 - July 30, 2016

In the Alma VanDusen Garden the delphiniums are down and the sunflowers are out. The Vegetable Garden is starting to look good and the informative and colourful plant origin signs are attracting the attention of visitors.

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

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”.

Thursday to Monday, July 28th to August 1st

9th Annual Sculptors’ Society of BC Show

Thurs July 28 **Opening reception** 5:30 – 8:00 pm - Everyone Welcome!

Show Fri 29 July to Mon 1 Aug - 10 am – 8 pm

Modern sculpture from the bizarre to the exquisite: bronze, stone, hybrid animal/human droids, interactive automata, whimsical ceramic and classical busts. Meet the Sculptors and watch daily live sculpting demonstrations.

MYSTERY PLANT 1

In the two lawn-side beds of the Fragrance Garden, are ten straggly little plants having odd white flowers with a touch of yellow. They are *Nemesia cheiranthus* 'Masquerade' - *cheiranthus* comes from the Greek for hand or claw (cheiri) and flower (anthos) - see: <https://thebikinggardener.com/2014/07/29/a-nemesia-with-attitude-nemesia-cheiranthus/> The white strands resemble desiccated coconut and the flowers reputedly have the scent of coconut. The yellow lip has given another cultivar the name 'Bart Simpson'.

MYSTERY PLANT 2

In the Black Garden are 10 plants with irregular shaped palmate leaves. 8 lie under the laburnum and 2 under the ninebark. They are silvery greyish green on top and orange to red underneath. They are less than 0.5 m high. A garden trainee made enquiries and said the plants are probably Begonia Gryphon - this matches their appearance - see: [http://plants.makeitgreen.ca/11090002/Plant/13134/Gryphon Begonia](http://plants.makeitgreen.ca/11090002/Plant/13134/Gryphon_Begonia)

PLANTS WITH SILLY NAMES

Prickly Pear Cactus - *Opuntia*

The yucca bed above the Southern Hemisphere Garden zigzag bridge has been planted with prickly pear cactus. Their spiky round pads bring to mind a group of punk Mickey Mouse fans. *Opuntia* is named after Opus, a city in Greece, because Pliny the Elder said it grew there, but he must have been thinking of something else because he died in AD 79, during the eruption of Vesuvius, and the cactus is only native to the New World.

Black Spruce - *Picea Mariana*

A few metres to the right of the floating bridge, amongst the knees of the bald cypresses, there is a Black Spruce *Picea mariana*. There are others in bed 135B, facing the back of the Sugar Maple collection. 'Black' is a fairly safe word, though the tree is not actually black. 'Spruce' is derived from the Polish name for Prussia which was '*Prusy*', (a historical region, today part of Poland). It became spruce because in Polish, '*z Prus*', sounded like 'spruce' in English (meaning 'from Prussia') because the tree was believed to have come from Polish Ducal Prussia. The first part of the Latin name, '*Picea*', just means it produces 'pitch', which is fair enough. The second part '*mariana*' means 'of Maryland' - Phillip Miller, who named the species, felt that Maryland epitomized North America, but, although it grows across the continent, it does not grow in Maryland. This non-black, non-Prussian, pitch-producing tree that is not from Maryland does not have the most helpful of names.

USEFUL FREE BOOK

One source for the notes on Black Spruce above was: **TREE BOOK Learning to Recognise Trees of British Columbia**. It has many facts useful for guiding and is available free from: <https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfd/library/documents/treebook/treebook.pdf>

BLACK MULBERRY - *Morus nigra*

The Black Mulberry tree facing the tea plants, by the red throne near the top of the Rhododendron Walk, was damaged. Sadly, it was removed on Tuesday 12th July. It was fun to talk about because of James I of England/James VI of Scotland. In the early 1600's he planted 100,000 of them, to make Britain the centre of the world silk industry. He did not know silk worms prefer leaves of the White Mulberry *Morus alba* and do not give good silk with Black Mulberry leaves. The Paper Mulberry *Broussonetia papyrifera* in the Fern Dell is at one end of a path. The other end faces the White Mulberry. On the uphill side of the path around the White Mulberry is a Silk Tree *Albizia julibrissin*, which should bloom next week. Despite its name, it has nothing to do with silk production.

PLANT HIGHLIGHT - Hardy Ginger *Cautleya spicata*

Facing the candelabra Western Red Cedar, near the sign on the staghorn sumac side, there is a blooming Hardy Ginger *Cautleya spicata*. It has yellow spikes ('spicata') of flowers emerging from a deep red stem which contrasts well with the long green leaves. See: <http://www.hardy-plant.org.uk/plantmonth/2014/august.php> for a photograph.

On his July 7th Garden Walk, Casey mentioned another hardy ginger he had planted - *Hedychium gardnerianum*. Unfortunately, there are not just two 'Hardy Gingers' there are around a hundred, see T.M.E. Branney's book *Hardy Gingers in:* <http://permaculturenews.org/2014/03/12/hardy-gingers-food-forest-understory/> 'Hardy' is a useful description for a plant but it is not ideal as so many plants are hardy. It is tempting to remark that laurel is hardy, but the laurel family alone has thousands of species so to use laurel as an example would get you into another fine mess.

According to the Wikipedia entry on *Cautleya spicata*, it was first described by James Edward Smith in 1882. If true, this would be remarkable as he died in 1828. The Himalayan spruce, *Picea smithiana*, is named for him. There are three in VanDusen. His main claim to fame is that he bought the collection of Carl Linneaus for £1000. It arrived in London in 1784. He founded the Linnean Society of London in 1788. He married Pleasance Reeve who survived him by 49 years - she was born in 1773 and died in 1877. Pleasance Smith (née Reeve) was a friend of Lorina Hanna Liddell (née Reeve), whose daughter Alice Pleasance Liddell was the inspiration for the book *Alice in Wonderland*.

The current name of the plant *Cautleya spicata* honours Sir Proby Thomas Cautley (1802-1871) who was responsible for the Ganges Canal in India. As an amateur palaeontologist, he searched for fossils in the Sivilak Hills. In January 2016, new findings were published about a fossil he found in the 1830's, a massive prehistoric giraffe, see: <http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-35292660>.

TWO USEFUL REFERENCES

If you have spare moments and you want to find interesting stories to entertain visitors, a good place to start is: **The Gardener's Atlas: The Origins, Discovery and Cultivation of the World's Most Popular Garden Plants** by John Grimshaw ISBN 1552976734 (pbk.) The Yosef Wosk Library at VanDusen has a reference and a circulation copy. It has chapters on various plant families and different types of gardens

Another good book is: **The Private Life of Plants: a Natural History of Plant Behaviour** by David Attenborough ISBN 0691006393. The book is based on a six-part BBC television series and so has chapters based on each of the episodes: 1 Travelling, 2 Feeding and Growing, 3 Flowering, 4 The Social Struggle, 5 Living Together, 6 Surviving. The Yosef Wosk Library has a reference and a circulation copy. It also has a DVD set of the series.

WHAT IS MEMORABLE?

As Guides we always seek to entertain and be informative. As we cannot tell everything there is to know about plants and the Garden in one tour, then our aim must surely be to have visitors enjoy their time with us so much that they want to return, to VanDusen or another botanical garden. Sometimes it is the little things that stick in the memory, even if they are not the most relevant.

You may know:

**I think that I shall never see,
A poem lovely as a tree**

The lines are the opening of 'Trees' - ranked 26th out of most quoted lines of poetry as measured by Google hits. For the complete poem see:

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/detail/12744>

You may ask yourself which of the following facts you will remember a year from now:

1. It was written by Joyce Kilmer in 1913
2. He was shot dead by a sniper on July 30th, 1918, a First World War casualty
3. His father, Frederick Barnett Kilmer, was responsible for the introduction of Johnson and Johnson's baby powder in 1893

It may well be that the 'bottom' fact will stick, though baby powder should not stick.

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

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

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