

WEEKLY UPDATE – JULY 23 – 30, 2017

“July breathes hot, sallovs the crispy fields,
Curls up the wan leaves of the lilac hedge...”
James Russell Lowell (1819-1891), *Under the Willows*

The weekend respite from the heat has been most welcome. There is very little to report.

1. At the end of your shift, please ensure that **ALL** keys, including the key to the radio cabinet and the three sets of cart keys, are returned to the drawer at Visitor Services. If you are not familiar with how to open this drawer after hours, please ask your captain for the appropriate information. When keys go missing it is difficult to carry out guide duties.
2. Because Sam S.'s hours have been cut, the “Tree of the Month” will no longer be produced. Hopefully, this is a temporary situation as the work that Sam does is invaluable for the garden, in general, and for the guides, in particular.

Guide Goings on

1. Thursday, August 3 – Gardener’s Walk with Tomas E. through the Rose Gardens, Phyllis Bentall Garden and the alpine plants.
2. Thursday, September 7 – Bruce McD. will provide garden updates.

Garden Goings On

1. ZimCarvings with Patrick Sephani and visiting artist Peter Kanaji
Until September 30 in the Discovery Room and in the Garden
2. Works by Anna Milton
Until September 27 in the Library
3. BC Fuchsia and Begonia Society – Annual Sale and Competition
Saturday, July 29 and Sunday, July 30 – 10:00am -4:00pm
Floral Hall and Cedar Room
Admission: \$3.00

Heather’s Jams will be for sale at this event on both days. **ALL** profits go to the VBGA to support a notable current garden project: new, improved labeling for the heritage and medicinal plant collections.

Garden Clippings

1. In the “Weekly Update” archives for 2015
July 31-Aug. 6 – Blue moon, *gladiolus*, strawberry tree, cardoons

In the “Weekly Update” archives for 2016
July 30-Aug. 6 – *eucryphia x nymansensis*

2. In the garden – lots of lilies – especially beautiful are the blue lilies of the Nile (*Agapanthus*); pairing them with the bright red *Crocsmia* makes for a striking contrast.
- beautiful sculptures, part of the Zimbabwe Sculpture Exhibition, are on display throughout the garden. Check out the Perennial, Rose and Heritage Rose Gardens as well as the alpine areas.
 - the Goldenrain trees (*Koelreuteria paniculata*) at the end of the Laburnum Walk are just starting to bloom.
 - Resin is oozing from the big cones on the Himalayan pine (*Pinus wallichiana*) in the Heritage Rose Garden. To learn more about this majestic tree, read Susan M.'s informative article in the November, 2015 Guide *Gazette*.

The Sitka spruce – *Picea sitchensis*

“This giant spruce of enormous span
one thousand years
in the age of man...”
Debby Rosenberg, “Sitka Spruce”

These lines accompany a picture of a massive Sitka spruce in the Lake Quinault Rainforest in Washington’s Olympic National Park, home of some of the tallest, largest by single-stem wood volume and stoutest trees in the world.

The Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), a coniferous evergreen tree, is the largest species of spruce, noted for its immense height and size. Its name is derived from the community in Sitka in Alaska and it is the Alaskan state tree. In North America, its range extends from the Kenai Peninsula in northern Alaska to northern California, but it has been successfully introduced into Britain and northern Europe.

Examples of Sitka spruce over 90 meters in height can be seen in Pacific Rim National Park and the Carmanah Walbran Provincial Park on Vancouver Island. In fact, the second largest Sitka spruce in the world, the San Juan spruce, is situated close to Port Renfrew. The largest and stoutest is the Queets spruce, located in Olympic National Park; it is estimated to be between 350-450 years old. Its widely spaced rings suggest that it adds more than a cubic meter of wood a year.

The wood of the Sitka spruce is used in timber and paper production. Its excellent acoustic properties make it ideal for musical instruments such as pianos, violins, guitars and their sounding boards. It is also used for aircraft wing spars and sailboat spars.

The Pacific Northwest Coast First Nations peoples, especially those in Alaska and Haida Gwaii, used the root bark for making twine for baskets, hats, ropes and fishing lines. The newly grown tips of the branches were used to flavor spruce beer and for making syrup.

In Haida Gwaii, a genetic mutation resulted in needles that were golden in colour. To the Haida, the Golden Spruce was known as Kiidk’yaas and was sacred to them, figuring strongly in their mythology. Brian C. wrote about his personal experience with this tree in

the October 1-8, 2016, "Weekly Update". You can also read John Vaillant's *The Golden Spruce*.

On his Gardener's Walk a few weeks ago, Miguel showed us the Sitka spruce nurse log at the 4-way junction across from the mountain ash collection. The log, in rapid decomposition, is currently supporting a fir tree, a spindly mountain ash, salal, ferns and what looks to be a huckleberry bush (although I am not certain). It is not clear whether the large cedar growing at one end is independent or an outgrowth of this massive log. As noted in the Gardener's Walk notes which you can access on the www.ericanotebook.com website, Miguel has planted more Sitka spruces in bed 118 by the Alma VanDusen Garden. A dwarf variety, *P. sitchensis* 'Tenas' grows in bed TR27 in the alpine troughs area.

Tribute to Grace McCarthy by Midge O. (*Globe and Mail*, Saturday, July 15)

This is the full text of the article.

"In the many fine obituaries of Grace McCarthy that were published there was little or no mention of one her best achievements for the City of Vancouver: helping to make possible the creation of VanDusen Botanical Garden.

In the early 1960's, as a busy young mother and a florist, she was also a popular Vancouver Parks Board Commissioner. She worked tirelessly, along with many private citizens and groups, for part of the abandoned Shaughnessy Golf Course to become a botanical garden, instead of being developed by the owners, CP's Marathon Realty. Approval by the city for a botanical garden took six years.

Negotiations with CP and fundraising were to take another four years, with Grace McCarthy, then in the provincial legislature, always still at the heart of the struggle.

VanDusen Botanical Garden is a beautiful gem in our city for which we have, in large part, to thank 'Amazing Grace.' – Midge O., VanDusen Botanical Garden guide"

Your contributions to the "Weekly Update" are most appreciated! Please send them to pkbuchanan@shaw.ca. For great resources, check out the Library, www.ericanotebook.com and VanDusen's Twitterfeed.

Have a great week of guiding!

"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
Till noon burns with its blistering breaths
Around, and day lies still as death."

John Clare (1793-1864), *The Shepherd's Calendar*