

WEEKLY UPDATE - JULY 3 – 9, 2015

“We’re having a heat wave
A tropical heat wave
The temperature’s rising
It isn’t surprising...”

Irving Berlin, *A Thousand Cheers*, 1933

The North American Perennial Plant of the Year

The Perennial Plant Association (PPA), which is composed of plant breeders, growers and retailers, landscape architects, and designers, landscape contractors and others have selected their Perennial Plant of the Year for 2015. It is Biokovo cranesbill (*Geranium x cantabrigiense* ‘Biokovo’, a naturally occurring hybrid of the Dalmation cranesbill (*G. dalmaticum*) and bigroot geranium (*G. macrorrhizum*). You can read more about this creeping plant, noted for its beautiful pale pink flowers, fragrant leaves, bright red fall foliage, deer resistance and dry-shade tolerance, in the article in the front pocket of the Guide Information Binder. There is also a list of previous winners of this Oscar of the plant world, many of which can be found in VanDusen Garden.

The Roses Keep On Blooming!

Steve Whysall has an article in Friday’s *Vancouver Sun* “In the Garden” section(D3) about George Mander, a Coquitlam rose breeder, whose red and yellow miniature rose ‘Glowing Amber’ has been chosen for admission to the Rose Hall of Fame by the American Rose Society.

There’s an App for That!

A free smartphone app from Garden Compass (gardencompass.com) will help you identify unknown plants. Submit a photo and their plant detectives will make a positive ID for you, usually within 24 hours.

Plant Highlight - *Cotinus coggygria* - Smoke Bush or Smoketree

Poor old Mocha is prostrated by the heat and even cooler morning walks are challenging so staying close to home is the order of the day. One of the neighbours has a gorgeous ‘Royal Purple’ smoke bush in the garden and like everything else this year, it is showing its “smoke” earlier than usual.

Smoke bush is a genus of two species of flowering plants in the family Anacardiaceae. It is closely related to the sumacs (*Rhus*) and, in fact, it was classified as *Rhus* in the past.

Cotinus coggygyria, which takes the form of a shrub or small tree, ranges from Europe to China. 'Cotinus' comes from the Greek for wild olive, i.e 'kotinus'. It has been grown in Britain since 1656.

In summer, the frothy, feathery panicles cover the shrub, forming a soft, white haze. They fade, turn silvery-white and look like puffs of smoke, thus the name Smoke bush.

VanDusen Garden has many specimens of Smoke bush; a concentration which includes both golden and purple Smoke bush from the Rubrifolius group is evident in Bed 55, along with many fine examples of *C. coggygyria* 'Royal Purple', also known as Venetian sumac due to its rich, red-purple colouring.

“We go in withering July
To ply the hard, incessant hoe;
Panting beneath the brazen sky
We sweat and grumble, but we go.”
Ruth Pitter (1897-1992), “The Diehards”

An overlooked and obscure English poet, Ruth Pitter was the first woman to receive the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry in 1955 and a CBE for her contributions to English literature in 1979. Previously, in 1974, she had been named a Companion of Literature, the highest order given by the Royal Society of Literature. She was skillful at the flower painting used in both furniture and tray decorating and design.