

## WEEKLY UPDATE – JUNE 18 – 25, 2017

“In the month of June, when the world is green,  
When the dew beads thick on the clover spray,  
And the noons are rife with the scent of hay,  
And the brook hides under a willow screen;  
When the rose is queen, in Love’s demesne,  
Then, the time is too sweet and too light to stay:  
Whatever the sun and the dial say,  
This is the shortest day.”

Edith Matilda Thomas (1854-1925), “Solstice”

I hope you are enjoying a Happy Father’s Day and looking forward to a celebration of the Summer Solstice on Tuesday, June 20, the longest day of the year. (Why might Thomas say it’s “the shortest”?) At 9:34pm PDT, the planet’s northern polar tilt will be closest to the sun. A pagan celebration, it will bring out the Druids at Stonehenge and Avebury in the UK; it is also known and celebrated as Midsummer in Scandinavian countries where it has huge significance.

Plants associated with the summer solstice and its rituals include the oak tree, the ash tree, honeysuckle and sunflowers. Some people believe that golden-flowered midsummer plants have healing powers.

A few items to report:

1. Please raise the umbrella on the trolley to only the first or second hole on the pole and wrap the pull cord around the pole to ensure that it and/or the knob on its end do not get tangled up in the umbrella ribs.
2. The on-loan vests and jackets are now available in the Volunteer Lounge. They are numbered. There is a sign-out/sign-in sheet for you to use if you are going to borrow one of these garments for your shift. Please return the item to the appropriately numbered hanger.
3. A Monday visitor left the following message: “We want to thank Margaret who gave us a tour on Monday. She was so pleasant and informative...was a great driver...we really enjoyed it. Thank you.”
4. Please make sure that when you record your statistics, you total them and enter the number in the Total column.

### **Guide Goings On**

There are no meetings during July and August; however, the Gardener’s Walks will continue.

1. Thursday, July 6 – Gardener’s Walk with Miguel Molina through the Canadian Heritage, Vegetable and Alma VanDusen Gardens.  
Meet on the Plaza at 10:00am

## Garden Goings On

1. ZimCarvings with Patrick Sephani and visiting artist Peter Kananji  
June 16 – September 30  
Discovery Room and in the Garden
2. UP-CLOSE presented by the Vancouver en-plein-air Group  
Until June 27 in the Library
3. Medicine Wheel Ceremony  
Sunday, June 18 – 12:00pm – 3:00pm  
A celebration of the summer solstice (June 20)
4. Judy Aird's Retirement Party  
Thursday, June 29 – 2:00pm-5:00pm  
Floral Hall

## Garden Clippings

1. In the "Weekly Update" archives for 2015  
- June 26 – July 2 – Mahonia, Buddleja  
In the "Weekly Update" archives for 2016  
- June 25 – July 2 – Birch, Staghorn sumac, Oaks
2. A helpful and informative brochure entitled "Help Stop the Spread of Invasives" is available in the Library and at the Visitor Services desk. As well as identifying some of the most well-known invasive species, it identifies many native plants to use as replacements.  
In the June 15 *Globe and Mail Life & Arts* section, Marjorie Harris stresses the importance of using native plants, particularly native spring ephemerals, in the garden as a way of building up and protecting ecosystems as well as providing a habitat for beneficial insects. Her feature plant is *Amsonia* 'Blue Ice' or bluestar. It is not an ephemeral, but it is one of the plants on display in the Plants to See collection at the entrance to the Visitor Center. The full article has been placed in the front pocket of the Information Binder.
3. On June 22, Monty Don's "The Secret History of the English Garden" explores garden design in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
4. If you can't get to France this summer to see Monet's garden, go to the Vancouver Art Gallery instead. Two new exhibits, "Claude Monet's Secret Garden" and "Stephen Shore: The Giverny Portfolio", run from June 24 until October 1.

## More Summer Reading

Our chilly wet weather, hopefully about to change with the official onset of summer, has been conducive to curling up with a good book. Here are a few more to consider.

In *Japanese Garden Notes: A Visual History Guide to Elements and Design*, Peter Keane, a creator of Japanese Gardens in the US and Japan, identifies the essential elements of the

Japanese garden. It is a “powerfully quiet place” and its design allows human society and wildlife to co-exist in peaceful harmony and become unified.

Another interesting book is *Cutting Back: My Apprenticeship in the Gardens of Kyoto*. With little Japanese language skill, successful American landscaper Leslie Buck recounts spending long hours of work 6 days a week for 3 seasons learning how to prune trees. Besides mastering technique, she also learns humility, patience, resilience and how to endure and succeed under stressful and lonely circumstances.

In *Witness Tree: Seasons of Change with a Century-old Oak* Seattle journalist Lynda V. Mapes tells the story of climate change through one tree, a giant oak in the Harvard Forest, over the course of a year. In seeking the “urgent testimony of living things to a world already changing around us”, Mapes delivers not only a powerful message about the impact of global warming but also offers hope that with understanding and action we can preserve the relationship between trees and people. If you have read Peter Wohlleben’s *The Hidden Life Trees*, this would be a good follow-up.

### **Celebrating 150 years of Canada at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show**

Among the many highlights at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show each year are the show gardens. Although there were only 8 this year, a significant decrease from previous years, each one was intriguing and deserving of the medal it won.

One of the most impressive and a Gold Medal Winner was the Royal Bank of Canada Garden which was inspired by the boreal forest and freshwater lakes of Canada. According to the brochure, “The boreal forest is the largest intact forest and wetland ecosystem on earth which stretches across the northern latitude of Canada, Siberia and Scandinavia. It accounts for 25% of the world’s wetlands, is the largest unfrozen source of freshwater and stores twice the amount of carbon per acre as tropical forests according to the International Boreal Conservation Campaign.”

The Canadian boreal forest stretches from the Yukon to Newfoundland and Labrador and comprises 1.2 billion acres of rock, water, forests and wetlands. It is very different from our majestic west coast rain forest environment, although many of the plants will be familiar. The lead designer of the garden, Charlotte Harris, researched by travelling to northern Ontario and exploring the heart of the Canadian wilderness by boat, canoe and on foot. Her garden is not a recreation of the boreal; rather she has tried to create a space inspired by it and using “hard materials that evoke to the boreal’s ecology and geology, and selected planting that is native to it, or similar British and European alternatives.”

The tree that anchors the garden is the jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*), so familiar to us from the iconic paintings of Canada’s Group of Seven, most notably those of Tom Thomson. Besides the trees and plants, the architects and designers have incorporated hard materials such as copper and granite boulders into the garden. At the end of the show, the garden will be moved to a permanent home at the Wildfowl & Wetland Trust’s Martin Mere Wetland Centre in Lancashire.

Look for VanDusen Garden’s jack pines in beds 79 and 81 in the Nature Center area and in bed 137E in the Canadian Heritage Garden.

A more detailed pamphlet is available in the front pocket of the Information Binder.

### **A little garden stroll**

What a difference a day makes! Thursday guides had yet another dismal wet day to contend with and while the garden has its own charm in the rain and we took out a few tours, only

the inclement weather caught our attention. Friday, on the other hand was entirely different and during a little stroll, many lovely things revealed themselves.

- the dinner-plate sized flowers starting to bloom on the top of the big leaf cucumber magnolia (*Magnolia macrophylla*) in the ENAG
- bright yellow perennial nasturtiums in the SHG
- *Iris* 'Midnight Oil' and *Iris* 'Superstition' in beautiful bloom in the Black Garden
- the fragrant hybrid Rugosa rose, *Rosa* 'Hansa' hanging over the path alongside Livingstone Lake
- two turtles sunning and the heron hunting beside the lake's island

### **Plant Highlight - Eastern Redbud - *Cercis canadensis***

In the Black Garden, a beautiful purple-leafed eastern redbud cultivar, *Cercis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy', provides a sharp contrast to the golden leafed smokebush *Cotinus coggyria* (Golden Spirit)= 'Ancot' it stands behind.

The eastern redbud is a large deciduous shrub or small ornamental tree, native to eastern North America although it can be grown as far west as California as long as it gets enough water. Like the Princess tree and the Judas tree, it belongs to the Fabaceae family and its showy flowers appear before the leaves.

In Appalachia, it is known as the spicewood tree because its green twigs are used as seasoning for wild game such as venison and opossum. Native people ate the flowers either raw or boiled and also roasted the seeds.

The blossoms of the eastern redbud draw in long-tongued nectar-seeking insects and songbirds such as chickadees eat the seeds. Its leaves and branches provide nesting materials and sites for birds and shelter for animals.

It has received the RHS Award of Garden Merit and is the state tree of Kentucky.

Besides the Black Garden, many varieties of the eastern redbud can be seen in bed 117 in the Canadian Heritage Garden.

As always, please send any comments, questions and suggestions to [pkbuchanan@shaw.ca](mailto:pkbuchanan@shaw.ca). As well, check out [www.ericanotebook.ca](http://www.ericanotebook.ca) for additional resources.

It looks like the weather is going to change so wear your hats and sunscreen, have your water handy and have a great week of guiding in the summer sun!

"Ah! The bud is open now,  
Hints of fruit hang on the bough,  
And the velvet rose is born  
At the coming of the morn:  
There's a gladness in the sun  
Speaks of something new begun,  
Of a work mysterious  
Nature has performed for us.  
Hark, the honey-bee's low hum  
Tells us that the summer's come."

Frank Dempster Sherman (1860-1916), "Summer"