

WEEKLY UPDATE - JUNE 26 - JULY 2, 2015

“The summer looks out from her brazen tower,
Through the flashing bars of July...”

Francis Thompson (1859-1907), *A Corymbus for Autumn*

Plant Highlight – *Mahonia* – Oregon Grape

Mocha and Vinnie, his pudgy pug pal, followed the scent of a raccoon into a dense hedgerow of Oregon grape. While the largest lab in Kitsilano was able to blunder his way out, poor little Vinnie had to be manually extricated from the prickles, a definite affront to his mock Churchillian dignity!

Mahonia, also known as Oregon grape, is a genus of approximately 70 species in the family Berberidaceae. There is a bit of a taxonomy debate as to whether it should be classified as *Mahonia* or *Berberis*. It is named after Bernard McMahon, a Philadelphia horticulturalist, who introduced the plant from materials collected by the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Three examples of the most common species are abundant throughout VanDusen Garden. All are evergreen. *M. repens*, the creeping variety, is the lowest growing while *M. nervosa*, also known as dull, low or dwarf Oregon grape, is somewhat taller. The species *M. aquifolium* is the tallest and grows along the Pacific Coast from Southern Alaska to Northern California, often occurring as understory in Douglas fir forests and from northern Alberta down to the Mexican border. In the spring, it produces sprays of bright yellow, fragrant flowers that attract bees, hummingbirds and other pollinators. After flowering, clusters of berries appear and darken to a dusky bluish black. The berries are edible and rich in Vitamin C but very tart. Mixed with salal, they were a food source for First Nations groups and were used in the treatment of indigestion, infections and skin conditions.

Cease Wyss referenced Oregon grape in her presentation on indigenous plants. *M. aquifolium* is the state flower of Oregon.

The Butterfly Bush, Another Back Alley Escapee from Cultivation

Buddleja, also known as the butterfly bush and summer lilac, was named by Linnaeus to honour the Reverend Adam Buddle (1662-1715), a botanist and rector in Essex, England. The genus comprises over 100 species and is native to four continents: North America, South America, Asia and Africa. It is a rich nectar source for bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.

Buddleja globosa or orange ball tree is noted for its honey-scented orange globular inflorescences. You can find it in bed 59 near the Southern Hemisphere and Mediterranean Gardens.

Buddleja davidii grows in the Canadian Heritage Garden. It takes its name from Father Armand David, known as Pere David, a Basque missionary and explorer in China. Being self-sowing, it is a colonizer of dry open ground and is considered invasive in many areas. In Britain, after WWII, it was known as the “bombsite plant”. Washington and Oregon classify it as a “noxious weed”.

However, many species and cultivars are holders of the RHS Award of Garden Merit.

What’s Your Favourite Pink Rose?

“The serene philosophy of the pink rose is steady. Its fragrant, delicate petals open fully and are ready to fall, without regret or disillusion, after only a day in the sun. It is so every summer. One can almost hear their pink, fragrant murmur as they settle down upon the grass; ‘Summer, summer, it will always be summer.’”

Rachel Peden (1901-1975)

Your comments, suggestions, quotes and questions are so welcome. Please send them to pkbuchanan@shaw.ca.

“The hum of bees is the voice of the garden.”

Elizabeth Lawrence (1904-1985)

Elizabeth Lawrence was a noted southern garden writer who maintained a correspondence with Katharine S. White, a writer and fiction editor of *The New Yorker* from 1925 to 1960. Their collection of letters, *Two Gardeners: A Friendship in Letters* (Beacon Press, 2002) was briefly discussed by the VanDusen Book club in November, 2014.

Happy Canada Day (it’s also a Full Moon Day)

The Last Word – this is taken from the August 7-14, 2014 “Weekly Update”.
And it is still only June!

“Heat, ma’am! It was so dreadful here that I found there was nothing left for it but to take off my flesh and sit in my bones.”

Sydney Smith, *Lady Holland’s Memoirs* (1855)