

WEEKLY UPDATE - MAY 29 - JUNE 4, 2015

“Won’t you come into the garden? I would like my roses to see you.”

Richard Brinsley Sheridan

The June Flower - the rose

“The roses make the world so sweet,
The bees, the birds have such a tune,
There’s such a light and such a heat
And such a joy in June.”

George Macdonald, “To -----“

What else could the June flower be but the rose? Throughout history, the rose has had a special significance, and in the language of flowers its meanings, depending on the colour or whether given singly or in a bouquet, are multiple.

Take a walk through the streets and back alleys of the city. Roses are spilling over fences, climbing up into the branches of trees, decorating the traffic calming circles, rambling and spreading along pathways and riverbanks and pushing themselves up in vacant lots.

In the Formal Rose Garden, a beautiful Floribunda, *Rosa* ‘KORmantiza’ Floral Fairytale, is displaying lovely peach-coloured blooms, while a Hybrid Tea Rose, *Rosa* ‘Kormiach’ LIEBESZAUBER is showing glossy foliage and beautiful dark, pinky-red blooms.

In the Heritage Rose Garden, some of the Albas are particularly pretty at the moment, including *Rosa alba* ‘Alba Semiplena’ and *Rosa* ‘Belle Amour’. The Burnet rose or Scotch rose, *Rosa spinisissima*, in the Pimpinellifolia section, is finished, and its hips are already forming.

The semi-double flower, highly scented Gallica rose, *Rosa gallica* ‘Officinalis’ or ‘Apothecary’s Rose’ is just coming into bloom. The species name *gallica* reflects its association with France where Crusaders are said to have brought it from the Middle East; *officinalis* comes from the Latin for “shop” or “pharmacy”. Its buds, crimson pink flowers and oval red hips once supplied ingredients for remedies dispensed by apothecaries throughout the Western world. In England, this rose enjoyed its greatest popularity during the time of Elizabeth I when it was considered a “cure-all” for more than fifty ailments. In *The Garden of Health* by William of Langham, it was recommended for everything from “general aches, backaches, belly and bladder griefs, bloody flux, sore breasts and weak brains to vomiting, tongue ulcers, stopped urine, white discharges, windiness, worms and wounds.”

The fragrance in the Heritage Rose Garden and in the Black Garden, where there are plenty of old roses, is overwhelming, a lovely place in which to walk and breathe deeply right now. The warm weather of the past week and the heat yet to come are a guarantee of the ahead-of-schedule blooming that has been the pattern so far this year.

Information taken from *A Rose By Any Other Name* (2009) by Douglas Brenner and Stephen Scanniello and *Seven Flowers and How They Shaped Our World* (2013) by Jennifer Potter).

News Flash

According to a recent article in the *National Post* (May 26, 2015, A12), botanists are a disappearing breed of scientist, “as students are being pushed into more modern, technology-related majors.” Combined with the closure of U.S university plant species collections, a shortage of botanists will have serious consequences for the plant world. A copy of the article is in the front pocket of the Guide Information Binder.

California Lilac (*Ceanothus*)

Early morning walks with the dog take us past neighbourhood gardens bursting with later-blooming rhododendrons and azaleas, roses of all kinds, especially ramblers and climbers, foxgloves, honeysuckle and iris. A bright blue flash overhead reveals a Steller’s jay while the even more vivid flash of cobalt blue farther down the street and closer to the ground becomes a hedge of California lilac (*Ceanothus*). The genus *Ceanothus*, which comes from a Greek word meaning “spiny plant,” contains 50 to 60 species of shrubs or small trees. VanDusen Garden has two examples of California lilac: *C. Dark Star* and *C. Concha* both of which have received the Royal Horticultural Society’s Award of Garden Merit. There are six other specimens which go by the common names Snowbrush, Blueblossom and Oregon Tea.

Ceanothus grows “in the wild” only in North America. Propagation in its natural habitat is by seed; the seeds can remain viable for hundreds of years and germinate only in response to forest or range fires.

First Nations cultures used the dried leaves of *Ceanothus* as an herbal tea while American colonists and pioneers used them as a substitute for black tea. *C. americanus* is known commonly as New Jersey tea. In the garden, some cultivars and hybrids exude a delicate, floral scent which, combined with the bright blue flowers, attracts bees.

“Green is the fresh emblem of well-founded hopes. In blue,
the spirit can wander, but in green it can rest.” Mary Webb