

WEEKLY UPDATE – SEPTEMBER 30 – OCTOBER 8, 2017

“But in October what a feast to the eye our woods and groves present! The whole body of the air seems enriched by their calm, slow radiance. They are giving back the light they have been absorbing from the sun all summer.”

John Burroughs (1837-1921), “The Falling Leaves” from
Under the Maples

Welcome to October!! Wasn't last week's brief summer interlude lovely? Aside from the autumnal beauty of the garden, there is nothing to report.

Guide Goings On

1. Thursday, October 12 – Guide/Education Business Meeting
The speaker is Lori Snyder; her topic is
“Wild, Native, Edible and Medicinal Plants”
10:00am – Floral Hall
2. Thursday, October 19 – GLT Meeting – 10:00am – Cedar Room
3. Just a reminder to cart drivers that the “official” cart season ends after Thanksgiving weekend. Whether you continue to provide cart tours depends on the weather and on personal inclination.

Garden Goings On

1. Works by Vicky Earle
Until December 30 at the Bloedel Conservatory and the Josef Wosk Library
2. Vancouver Mycological Society 2017 Mushroom Show
Sunday, October 22 - 11:00am-4:00pm
Floral Hall/Cedar Room
Admission \$3.00

Garden Clippings

1. In the “Weekly Update” archives for 2015
October 2-8 – Nectar Trail on 37th, *Arbutus menziesii*
Neofusicoccum arbuti fungus

In the Weekly Update” archives for 2016
October 1-8 – Chinese Money Maple

2. Oh No!! According to a Global News report, there may be a shortage of good-sized pumpkins this year due to the summer drought. Some commercial fields did not have sufficient irrigation to promote growth and development.
3. SCSHROOM (Sunshine Coast Society for the Hunting, Recognition and Observation of Mushrooms) is hosting its 9th Annual Mushroom Festival in various venues on the Sunshine Coast from October 13-15, 2017.

A Pile of Books for Autumn Reading

A book mentioned in the June 11-18 "Weekly Update", *Birds/Art/Life* by Kyo Maclear has been long-listed for the 2017 Hilary Weston Writers' Trust Prize for Non-Fiction.

"Autumn seemed to arrive early that year. The morning
was crisp and golden as an apple."

J.K.Rowling (1965-present), *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*

Another book which looks interesting is Helen Humphrey's *The Ghost Orchard: The Hidden History of the Apple in North America*. She will be appearing with Kyo Maclear and Marilyn Symonds at the Vancouver Writers' Festival on Tuesday, October 17.

Andrea Wulf whose book *The Invention of Nature* was reviewed here last week is also the author of four other books that you might want to put on your fall/winter reading list. *Chasing Venus* describes the first global collaboration to calculate the distance between the planets during the transit of Venus in 1761 and 1769.

The Founding Gardeners reveals how the American founding fathers and their passion for farming and gardening and their horticultural interests contributed to the ideology of the American Revolution and influenced the development of the nation.

The Brother Gardeners explores how John Bartram, Peter Collinson, Carl Linnaeus, Joseph Banks, Daniel Solander and Captain James Cook overcame their rivalries and were united by their passion for plants.

Finally, the title of *This Other Eden: Seven Great Gardens and 300 Years of English History* is self-explanatory.

The librarian in the Yosef Wosk Library, Marina P., has sent out next year's Bookclub Reading List and there are lots of wonderful books to read and discuss. If you are interested, pay her a visit for more information about the books and the Bookclub.

Tree Highlight – The Garry Oak – *Quercus, garryana*

Walking into the Plaza from the Visitor Center, most visitors look directly across the expanse of Livingston Lake to the peninsula and the towering tree canopy beyond, or they turn their eyes down the ramp to the paths which will take them past the gingkos along the northern edge of the lake or down to the Cypress Pond. Those that do follow their gaze to the left and proceed that way over the bridge are probably still attracted by the vista of the lake and the grasses. They don't pay much attention to the little berm, home to part of the Cascadia Garden, between the Visitor Center and Plaza. It is unfortunate that its presence and plantings are often overlooked because this unassuming spot contains some important plants and trees, one of which is the Garry oak.

Although the Garry oak was Tree of the Month in June, 2012 and it was highlighted in the March-April, 2017 Self-Guided Tour write-up (check out www.ericanotebook.com to review these items), visitors and, possibly, guides don't pay too much attention to the two specimens planted there.

The Garry oak, also called the Oregon white oak in Oregon where it hosts mistletoe, was named by intrepid explorer and plant hunter David Douglas for Nicholas Garry, the Deputy-Governor of the Hudson Bay Company. The only native species in B.C., Washington and Oregon, its range extends from southern California to B.C.; here it can be found on southeastern Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands and in a few places in the Fraser Valley.

It is a stately tree with a round spreading crown that doesn't grow much over 20 meters. Its greyish –black bark is grooved and scaly. The deeply lobed leaves look like typical oak leaves; they are glossy green on the upper side and may exhibit bumps caused by gall wasps. The little acorns have a shallow scaly cup at one end. They are drought resistant and mature trees are resistant to fire.

First Nations people used the wood for combs, digging sticks and fuel. They also steamed and roasted the acorns. But perhaps, most significantly, they managed the natural parkland of Garry oak meadows through controlled burning to cultivate camas, the bulbs of which provided an important food source (refer to the April 23-30, 2016 "WU" for more information). In fact, local First Nations communities still collect and cook camas for community feasts and celebrations.

Garry oaks are the primary tree in an important ecosystem comprising herbaceous shrubs and wildflowers, animals, birds, insects and micro-organisms; it is a microcosm of Humboldt's "web of life". The meadows and woodlands are critical habitats for a number of birds and mammals, some of which are at risk. Parks Canada states that Garry oak woodlands support more species of plants than any other terrestrial ecosystem in B.C. More than 100 species of birds inhabit Garry oak

ecosystems. However, since the arrival of Europeans, the meadows and woodlands have rapidly disappeared and remain under threat.

By the 1990's, more than 90% of Garry oak meadows and woodlands had disappeared on Vancouver Island. Along with the usual culprits that have contributed to their decline, such as logging, agricultural development, livestock grazing and urbanization, fire suppression has also played a critical role because they need disturbance such as fire to survive and prevent encroachment by Douglas firs and invasive plant species such as Scotch broom and English ivy.

Remaining Garry oak meadows and woodlands are now the focus of dedicated conservation efforts. The Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team (GOERT) has a beautifully designed and informative website. Oak Bay, named after the Garry Oak, in Greater Victoria has a Tree Protection Bylaw that levies a \$10,000 fine for cutting or damaging a Garry oak.

In the garden, look for Garry oaks in the Canadian Heritage and Medicinal Gardens, on the island bed in the Horseshoe Driveway off Oak St. and in the Tong and Geraldine Louie Plaza right outside the Visitor Center. Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, planted the little one in 2009.

Please send any comments, questions, corrections etc. to pkbuchanan@shaw.ca

Have a great week of guiding and a Happy Thanksgiving!

“But see, in our open clearings, how golden the melons lie;
Enrich them with sweets and spices and give us the pumpkin pie!”
Margaret Junkin Preston (1820-1897), “The First Thanksgiving”