

WEEKLY UPDATE – OCTOBER 8 – OCTOBER 15, 2016

“On the motionless branches of some trees, autumn berries hung like clusters of coral beads, as in those fabled orchards where the fruits were jewels...”

Charles Dickens (1812-1870), *Martin Chuzzlewit*

A definite chill in the garden today kept visitors away, even though, in many ways, it is at its most lovely and offers so many opportunities for a profound contemplation of time and change. There is very little report.

1. As the guide season winds down, don't forget to record your Volunteer hours on the yellow sheets and submit them to Judy.
2. Two weeks ago, Malcolm noted that the contorted black locust, *Robinia pseudoacacia* 'Tortuosa', which had been planted in bed 107C (across the mulched path from the Kentucky coffee tree) in the ENA Garden, had been cut down. A subsequent conversation with Cynthia Sayre, the garden's Curator of Collections, confirmed that this had been done for curatorial reasons, perhaps a case of the wrong tree in the wrong place, as its survival was going to be difficult due to the tree canopy. Malcolm noted that this tree was a very useful example of a tree mutation to show to visitors, along with other examples such as the weeping forms, colour variations and variegation. Presently, there are no plans to replace it, but, according to the September 2016 Plant Collection Records, there are two other examples in bed 55 in the boundary area between the Black Garden and the Heather Garden.
3. The berries of the doll's eyes or white baneberry plant (*Actaea pachypoda*) can be seen just past the big leaf Cucumber Tree in the ENA Garden.

Guide Goings On - Looking Way Ahead

1. Thursday, November 10 - Guide Business/Education Meeting
The speaker will be Gerry Gibbens, sharing "Stories from the Garden".

Garden Goings On

1. The Signature of All Things – October 2-31 in the Discovery Room.
An art exhibition inspired by Elizabeth Gilbert's botanical novel.
2. Dried Flower Arrangers' Show and Sale
Friday, October 28 – 1:00pm-4:00pm
Saturday, October 29 – 10:00am-4:00pm
Sunday, October 30 – 10:00am-4:00pm
HSBC Arrival Hall in the Visitor Center
3. Vancouver Mycological Society Annual Mushroom Show
Sunday, October 30 – 11:00am-4:00pm

Floral Hall and Cedar Room
Admission - \$3.00

Garden Clippings

1. The Devil's Blackberry Day falls on October 10 (or 11) and, after this date, blackberries are no longer safe to eat. It is also known as Old Michaelmas Day because calendar reformation in 1752 pushed Michaelmas back to September 29. According to folklore, on this day, St. Michael the Archangel tossed Satan out of Heaven. He fell into a blackberry patch whereupon he cursed them, stomped on them, blew on them with his fiery breath and spit on them (or urinated on them, depending on regional origin of the story), thereby making them unwholesome.

Actually, the flesh fly lays its eggs on blackberries, making a sticky kind of coating, which is a little bit toxic. Furthermore, spiders spin their gossamer webs over the bushes making it look like the Devil has thrown a veil over the blackberries. An old Irish proverb says "On Michaelmas Day, the Devil puts his foot on blackberries."

So if you haven't finished picking blackberries for pies and jams, you don't have much longer to gather these juicy morsels before they soften and go bad.

More wings! *Pterostyrax hispidus* - Fragrant Epaulette Tree

The fragrant Epaulette tree, *Pterostyrax hispida*, is one of four species in the Styracaceae family. A deciduous tree or shrub, native to China and Japan, it is a four-season tree notable for its bloom, light fragrance and pretty foliage. The genus *Pterostyrax* takes its name from the Greek "ptero" meaning "winged" and "styrax" referring to the fruit.

The creamy white flower clusters, which bloom in spring through to midsummer (they were in full, beautiful bloom on April 30 this year), have been compared to white wisteria or the flower panicles of the black locust. They dangle in drooping panicles up to 9 or 10 inches long, looking very much like the shoulder epaulettes on military uniforms. Their delicate fragrance attracts lots of pollinators.

In the spring and summer, the topside of the leaves is an apple green color, while the underside is silvery. Right now, in the fall, they are a yellowy-chartreuse colour.

The bark is also quite colourful with orange and tan tones streaking through the grey outer bark.

The species name, *hispidus* (*hispidus* is the feminine form), which means “bristly”, refers to the small, oblong ribbed fruits, dry drupes, covered in bristles. The fuzzy, grey seedpods stay on the branches all winter and are frequently used in dried flower arrangements.

P. hispidus received the RHS Award of Garden Merit in 1993. Look for examples in bed 26A in the Woodland Garden; in bed 46A at the eastern end of the Rhododendron Walk; in bed 74 on the north side of the Upper Great Lawn in the Sino-Himalayan Garden; and in bed 123 in the Sino-Himalayan Garden.

The garden also contains examples of *P. corymbosa* in bed 121B in the Meconopsis Dell. *P. psilophylla* in bed 124, right across the path from the spreading ginkgo, just before the Waterfall, is probably, to walking and cart visitors alike, the most visible of the garden’s Epaulette trees. It has been identified as Vulnerable by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Please send comments, questions, corrections and suggestions to pkbuchanan@shaw.ca and be sure to have a look at www.ericanotebook.com for lots of useful material to inform your guiding practice. The latest addition is the very popular September Self-Guided Walk, “Shakespeare in the Garden” contributed by John S.

It’s pumpkin pie time again!!

Have a great week of guiding and a Happy Thanksgiving.

“Radiant joy is everywhere.
Spirits in tune to the spicy air
Thrill to the glory of each day.
Life’s worth living when we say “October”!
Joseph Pullman Porter (1893-1980), “October”