

WEEKLY UPDATE – OCTOBER 15 -22, 2016

“It was a morning of ground mist, yellow sunshine and high rifts of blue, white-cloud-dappled sky. The leaves were still thick on the trees, but dew-spangled gossamer threads hung on the bushes and the shrill little cries of unrest of the swallows skimming the green open spaces of the park told of autumn and change.”

Flora Thompson (1876-1947), *Larkrise to Candleford*

That was last week! Now the south coast is being pummeled by violent storms. There is very little to report.

1. One of the brakes on the trolley is damaged. A cart chock under the wheel will keep it stabilized until the end of the season when it can be repaired.
2. Pumpkins and the garden's honey have arrived in the gift shop. Just a reminder that Members' Night in the gift shop will be on November 16 and 17.

Guide Goings On

1. Thursday, November 10 – Guide Business/Education Meeting
The speaker will be Gerry G, 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. Peter Wohlleben, the author of *The Hidden Life of Trees*, will be at the Vancouver Writers' Festival on Tuesday, October 18. That event is SOLD OUT. The book was #1 on the BC Best Seller List this past weekend and was the subject of a cheeky review in *The National Post* (October 7). A sure sign that it

has gone mainstream and attracting a wider audience is a brief review in the October 2016 edition of *ELLE* magazine!

John Aubrey (1626-1697), author of *The Natural History of Wiltshire*, was prescient when he wrote "When an oake is felling, it gives a kind of shriek of groanes that may be heard a mile off, as if it were the genius of the oake lamenting." Wohlleben would surely agree that the tree was expressing its pain!

2. Check out Steve Whysall's October 5 blog for a great little item entitled "Never a dull moment in VanDusen Botanical Garden". It features a smiling Tomas E. and the work he is currently doing to rejuvenate and organize the Heritage Rose Garden. Steve also ran into Kumi S. as she searched for a special and very specific tree for a couple to adopt; it needed to be deciduous and close to a path. Kumi, you look great in the photographs! In the Education Center, Steve chatted to some of the Dried Flower Arrangers as they created their seasonal wreathes and centerpieces that will be on sale in a few weeks. As he strolled through the garden, he observed artists at work, new heathers being planted and the gorgeous fall colour.

To find this article, just Google 'Steve Whysall Vancouver *Sun* staff blog' or a combination of the above. Something will pop up!

3. Thanks to Brian C. who has contributed the following:
What is a map quadrant?

"Readers of the "WU" will have noticed that planting bed references now have map quadrant locations to help you find the plant. Users of the Plant Accession Binder should consult Section 3 to find a plant of interest's planting bed number. Finding the location of the planting bed requires a search of the garden map in combination with use of the Binder green pages (Section 7) to read the bed location description. Since planting bed number is not geographical and can be found anywhere on the garden map, the location search can take some time.

The laminated garden map in the Binder is printed with a 4 by 6 grid with each of the resulting 24 quadrants named in the lower left-hand corner of the quadrant. A couple of years ago, the map quadrant within each planting bed is located was added to the green page information.

In summary: find the plant of interest in Section 3. Note the planting bed number. Turn to Section 7. Take note of the planting bed quadrant. Go to the map to search within the specified quadrant to find the bed location. This map search process means significantly less time is needed to find the

planting bed of interest. Of course, if you already know where the bed is, this search process isn't needed (this time)."

And yet more wings!! *Acer Henryi* Henry's Maple

What would fall in Canada be without our resplendent maple trees? Besides being our beloved national symbol, they grow just about everywhere in our country. Belonging to the genus *Acer*, Latin for "sharp", referring to the points on their leaves, in the Sapindaceae family, the approximately 128 species of maple are found in the northern hemisphere, including North America, Europe and Asia. Only one species, *Acer laurinum*, is native to the southern hemisphere.

Acer henryi, Henry's maple, is an Asian species of maple found in mixed forests in central China. Right now, it is modestly showing off its autumn finery. It is dioecious with male and female flowers on separate trees. It is noted for its trifoliate leaf structure, i.e. each leaf consists of three leaflets. In the spring, it displays pendulous clusters of green buds with delicate, pale yellow flowers.

In autumn, Henry's maple is distinguished by its red-purple foliage and the lengthy chains of winged fruits. This year, they are exceptionally dense and abundant.

Henry's maple can be seen in beds 122 and 127D in the Sino-Himalayan Garden.

Augustine Henry was an Irish plantsman and sinologist. Trained as a doctor, he spent twenty years in China where he developed his interests in the flora of that country which, at that time, was little known about in the west. During his time there, he sent approximately 158,000 dry specimens and seeds to Kew Gardens from which 25 new genera and 500 new species were identified.

His was a stunning career, but his discoveries and contributions have been overshadowed by the later, perhaps more well-known, names in the plant hunters' world, including E. H. Wilson, Frank Kingdon-Ward and George Forrest. In fact, it was Henry who gave Wilson the directions to the dove tree. But Augustine Henry has the distinction of having given both his first and last names to many plants.

The Augustine Henry Forestry Herbarium is located in the National Botanic Gardens in the Glasnevin neighbourhood in Dublin.

More about the magic of maple trees is available in the September 18-24, 2015 "WU".

**Book Review - *The Reason for Flowers: Their History, Culture, Biology and How They Change Our Lives*
Stephen Buchmann**

It is Writers' Festival time in Vancouver and so it seems appropriate to review a book of possible interest to guides. Stephen Buchmann's Book, *The Reason for Flowers...*, released this past summer in paperback, will appeal to botanists, history lovers, gardeners, foodies and just about everyone who loves flowers.

Any good writer knows that he/she has to get the reader's immediate attention and hold it. With the tantalizing title of Part I, "Sexuality and Origins", Buchmann certainly achieves that goal as he lays out his thesis.

"Flowers are a little bit of everything, but they are, in essence, the sex organs of the plant. They need sexual favours to spread their sperm and have their eggs fertilized."

To do this, they have become extraordinarily skilled at attracting the attention of their pollinators. Their arts of seduction, whether subtle or flamboyant, are complex and include their colours, their scents, their food offerings (nectar, pollen, floral oils and, in some flowers, edible body tissues), and even their electrical charges, all in aid of their reproductive process - from sex to fruits to seeds to, ultimately, food for the world!

Stephen Buchmann is a pollination ecologist and entomologist specializing in bees; he presently serves as an adjunct professor with the departments of Entomology and of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Arizona and he knows of what he writes. In *The Reason for Flowers...* (do they need a reason?), Buchmann explores their evolution and looks at their cultural, commercial, aesthetic, medicinal, symbolic and scientific significance across civilizations, cultures and communities as he takes us on a journey from the appearance of the first true flowers in the lower Cretaceous age right up to the present.

Although the book is a little bit like, "If this is Tuesday, it must be Belgium" in that it covers a lot of floral territory, in some cases, somewhat superficially, Buchmann freely acknowledges that there is so much information in a particular area, e.g. flowers in literature and art, that he cannot possibly do it justice in this book. But he whets our interest sufficiently to encourage us to investigate a particular topic more thoroughly, providing a springboard from which to plunge into deeper waters.

I was particularly intrigued by some of the content in Part II, "Growing, Breeding and Selling", where the discussion ranges from the use of flowers in the burial rites of ancient, possibly even Neanderthal, civilizations around the world to the desire to produce the blue rose and the black petunia. Flower growing, shipping and selling are the basis of a multi-billion dollar global industry and his account of the growth of Floramerica, a billion dollar business that sprang from a student's botany term

paper in 1967, is riveting, as are his descriptions of the high-tech flower factories in Ecuador; the arrival at Miami International Airport of the jumbo cargo jets, their massive holds full of nothing but flowers from Latin and South America; the Dutch auctions in the cavernous FloraHolland building (at 10,750,000 square feet it is the largest single building in the world); and the bustling Los Angeles Flower Market in the early morning hours.

Part IV, “Flowers in Literature, Art and Myth”, ranges far and wide (think Shakespeare and the Rolling Stones), but a very interesting sub-chapter entitled “The Rise of the Florilegium” examines the development of botanical art for scientific purpose and includes a brief discussion of the work of Ferdinand Bauer, a familiar name to many guides now as a result of Lyn Grants’ informative and beautifully illustrated presentation on October 13.

Part V, “Flowers in the Service of Science and Medicine”, covers some familiar territory for many of us: Mendelian genetics, Darwin’s research, forensic botany in the service of solving violent crimes (CSI anyone?), and the healing power of flowers, with honey, in wound care. However, Buchmann is also very much aware that significant plant losses, the result of human inattention, exploitation and abuse, along with climate change, can mean an end to the beneficial mutual relationship between flowers and ourselves.

Fourteen chapters, each divided into a dozen or mini-chapters, nicely making for “small-bites” reading, four appendices, one containing flower recipes, as well as extensive notes and sources for the material in each of the chapters add up to a fairly substantial book. But Buchmann’s writing is accessible and engaging. Although he is not shy about using the Latin botanical names for flowers, he uses a light touch and includes lots of personal anecdotes and opinions. For example, he is slightly disparaging of the “grand illusion” of the Chelsea Flower Show with its “pomp and circumstance” and “phantasmagorical artificial environments”.

Buchmann is also an accomplished photographer and his gorgeous pictures, unfortunately only in black and white in both the hardcover and softcover editions of the book, complement his clear, poetic prose. In *The Reason for Flowers...*, he shows us why flowers have always inspired and will continue to inspire and to be an integral part of just about every aspect of our lives. We are happy and willing victims of their seductive wiles.

As always, please send your comments, suggestions, questions etc. to pkbuchanan@shaw.ca. The guiding season is drawing to a close and the “Weekly Updates” will soon be suspended until April 2017. I am looking for suggestions for relevant topics for next year’s “WU”.

And look for the write up of Cynthia Sayre’s most excellent October 6 Gardener’s Walk on www.ericanotebook.com, a source of much interesting and informative material for guides.

“Rain, rain, go away...” Have a happy, possibly wet, week of guiding!

“Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;
Lengthen night and shorten day:
Every leaf speaks bliss to me
Fluttering from the autumn tree.”

Emily Bronte (1818-1848), “Song”