

WEEKLY UPDATE - SEPTEMBER - 10 - 17, 2017

“O sweet September rain!
I hear it fall upon the garden beds,
Freshening the blossoms which begin to wane...”
Mortimer Collins (1827-1876), “Rain in September”

Finally!! As I prepare this little newsletter, raindrops are penetrating the canopy of smoke, the air is a little bit fresher and perhaps the skies will appear again soon. There is very little to report.

1. Please make sure that you put the red envelopes in the accordion envelope that is on the bottom shelf in the radio cabinet. The trolley is not a secure place to leave the gratuity money.
2. Cart drivers: when you park the cart, please make sure that the charging cable is securely connected and that the charging needle has swung completely to the right.

Another Special Thank You!

Once again this year, I would like to thank Malcolm H. for producing the “Weekly Update” during my annual summer trip to the Kootenays. He does this while also preparing the Gazette for publication, no small task! So another big shout out to Malcolm!!

Guide Goings On

1. Thursday, September 14 – Guide Education/Business Meeting – the speaker will be Guy Pottinger, VDG Garden Director; his topic will be “Concerns and Issues in the Garden.”
10:00am – Floral Hall
2. Thursday, September 28 – AV equipment training session
10:30am – Floral Hall
3. FYI – October’s Garden Walk has been cancelled

Garden Goings On

1. ZimCarvings with Patrick Sephani and visiting artist Peter Kanaji
Until September 30 in the Discovery Room and in the Garden
2. Works by Anna Milton
Until September 27 in the Library
3. Alpine Garden Club of BC Fall Sale
Saturday, September 16 – 1:00pm-4:00pm
Floral Hall – Free Admission

4. Medicine Wheel Ceremony – Canadian Heritage Garden
Sunday, September 17 – 12:00pm-3:00pm
A celebration of the fall Equinox (September 22)

Garden Clippings

1. In the “Weekly Update” archives for 2015
September 4-10 – twinflower, asters, rose of Sharon
September 11-17 – autumn crocus, Oyama magnolia
In the “Weekly Update” archives for 2016
September 3-10 – Katsura trees
September 10-17 – mountain ash
2. Marilyn G. has posted last week’s Gardener’s Walk led by Bruce McD. on www.ericanotebook.com. This walk provided an excellent opportunity to acquire detailed information about the exciting special Backyard Bird Garden project. The plant list for the Backyard Bird Garden has also been provided. Check it out!

A Full Corn Moon (or a Barley Moon)

On September 6th last week did anyone see the full moon through the shroud of smoke? According to the *Old Farmer’s Almanac*, this moon is known as a Full Corn Moon (and sometimes Barley Moon) as it is associated with the picking and threshing of these crops. However, in spite of it being in September and relatively close to the imminent Autumnal Equinox on September 22, it was not this year’s Harvest Moon which is the full moon closest to the Autumnal Equinox. Rather, on October 5th, the next full moon will “shine, shine on” as the Harvest Moon. Like the Full Corn or Barley Moon, it is associated with bringing in the crops as its bright light illuminates the fields throughout the night. In Asian cultures the Harvest moon marks the time of the mid-autumn Festival also known as the Moon Festival or Mooncake Festival. In China it is a public holiday and this year will be celebrated on October 4th.

The Ponderosa Pine (*Pinus ponderosa*)

One of the favourite parts of my drive up to Nelson is through Manning Park and then down the twisty, winding highway into Princeton and onward through the Similkameen Valley towards Keremeos. The dramatic change from the dense “wet” coast forests of cedars and firs on the western side to the drier eastern interior landscape is marked by the appearance of grasslands and pines, especially the majestic Ponderosa pines, the iconic and characteristic tree of this area of southern BC.

Also known as the black jack pine because of dark colour of the trees’ immature bark and the yellow pine because of the clear, even-grained wood of mature trees, it was named the Ponderosa by David Douglas in 1829 because of its majestic size.

Its long, sharp-pointed needles occur mostly in bunches of 3, although 2 or 5 to a bunch is not uncommon. The bark on mature Ponderosas is a bright, orangey-brown and deeply grooved. It can be up to 10 cm. thick and provides protection against forest fires, a critical

defense this year. Many of the Ponderosas that were caught in 2015's Rock Creek fire survived that conflagration as it swept across the highway and up the Christian Valley.

The oval-shaped cones have no stalk and their scales have a rigid sharp prickle on the ends.

The Ponderosa has long, deep roots to access moister soil, making it drought-tolerant; these same roots anchor it securely in the soil, making it wind-firm. The trees can live up to 400 to 500 years.

On hot summer days, the trees exude a 'pine-winy' scent, not surprising because the bark is a source of turpenes. However, many people say that the bark also smells of vanilla or baking cookies but you have to get up close and personal, sticking your nose right into the bark fissures to detect this scent. Others detect a citrus scent when you bend or break a needle.

Indigenous peoples used the seeds from the cones and the inner bark as food sources. Dugout canoes were carved from the wood of mature trees the pitch was employed as a waterproofing agent. It was also mixed with bear grease to make a healing ointment.

The Ponderosa pine is the official city tree of Spokane, Washington and it is also the official state tree and symbol of Montana; many of us associate it with the opening montage of television's "Bonanza" and the famous Ponderosa Ranch, home of the Cartwrights!

In the garden you can find examples of this sturdy tree in beds 22A in the Cascadia Garden; beds 35C and E in the Ornamental Grasses and the Black Garden; bed 55C in the Black Garden; bed 77 in the Conifer section; and in bed 122 in the Sino-Himalayan Garden.

Trees, Beautiful Trees! *The Long, Long Life of Trees* by Fiona Stafford

What to do to pass the time when you're lying on the beach, too lazy to swim or kayak? Read! One of the more delightful and entertaining, but very informative and, I believe, significant, books I borrowed from the Yosef Wosk Library was *The Long, Long Life of Trees* by Fiona Stafford, *The Sunday Times* Nature Book of the Year (2016). For those of you looking to tell stories about trees to complement some of the botanical information we provide, this is a perfect compilation from which to gather material. Although the context is primarily British, Stafford does extend her discussion to include North America and Europe.

The title refers not only to the longevity of some of the trees she examines, but also to the long, long multi-faceted relationship humanity has had with trees, including their place in our myths and legends; their historic, economic and social significance; their importance in our cultural, symbolic and political underpinnings. Using lots of personal references and contemporary anecdotes she weaves all of this together using poetry, literary references including the Bible and travel writing, and visual art to reveal the extent to which the presence of trees has informed and shaped humanity.

To explore the meaning of trees, Stafford has selected 17 common specimens, starting with the yew and ending with apple trees in one of the most lyrical chapters of this engaging collection. In between she examines both well-known deciduous trees, such as the ash, oak and horse chestnut, and a few coniferous examples, such as cypress and pine. There will be

much that is familiar to many of you, but I will wager that you will discover something new and unexpected as you read.

One of the most intriguing aspects was how political history may have been determined by trees. For example, the Lombardy poplar, strongly associated with Jean-Jacques Rousseau because the word 'poplar' was phonetically tied to 'populace', became the popular s(no pun intended), choice for the American Tree of Liberty. In France, poplars became icons of liberty, equality and fraternity. The agricultural labourers who became the Tolpuddle Martyrs gathered under a sycamore on the village green; this episode marked the beginning of the Trade Union Movement and the old tree became a political pilgrimage site. And Stafford obliquely connects Margaret Thatcher's rise to power in the 1970's just as Dutch elm disease was destroying elms and leaving the country permanently altered. She also points here that this epidemic did not emanate from Holland, but from North America; Dutch scientists spearheaded research into the disease.

As Margaret Drabble stated, " Beautifully produced...A chapter a day of this deeply calming book will keep panic away." I found this out first hand as I heard fire roaring down the hillsides to the west of our lakehouse and watched as trees candled while we awaited the evacuation orders which, thankfully, never came.

This book makes a fine companion to Peter Wohlleben's *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate – Discoveries from a Secret World* (reviewed in the Sept. 24-Oct.1, 2016 'WU').

Please send comments, suggestions, questions etc. to pkbuchanan@shaw.ca
And make sure you visit www.ericanotebook.com for continually updated and very useful information to support your guiding practice.

Have a great week of sunny, but cooler, guiding!

"The winds behind me in the thicket sigh,
The bees fly droning on labourious wing,
Pink cloudlets float across the sky
September stillness broods o'er every thing."

John Aldington Symonds (1840-1893), "On the Hillside"