

THE NEW WESTMINSTER HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Club address: Suite 392, 104—1015 Columbia St., New Westminister, V3M 6V3

www.newwesthortsociety.org

Editor: Audrey Barnes, 604-526-8284 before 8pm;

April 2005

CLUB CALENDAR:

APRIL MEETING: Tonight, Tues, Apr 12. DARREN SILCOX, of Arbour Care (*the tree pruning experts and the people to call if you have a tricky or unusual pruning problem*) and GLENN MURRAY of GLENN MURRAY TREE CONSULTING SERVICES (consulting arborist, *the person to call if you have questions about maintaining healthy plants*) will be conducting a session “PRUNING AND GARDEN PROBLEMS: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS”. If you have not yet submitted your questions, submit them in writing before the meeting to get yours answered first. *Tonight is the deadline for renewing your membership for 2005—we will shortly be redoing the roster.* First parlour show of the year—take time to review the exhibits (and perhaps join in next month?)

MAY MEETING: Tues, May 10th, 7:45. We will be celebrating the success (hopefully!) of the sale with a light-hearted presentation by DES KENNEDY. Upon our request, he will orate on “THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS OF GARDENING”.

JUNE MEETING: Because it was such a success last year, we will once again be conducting a Mini Plant Sale before the meeting and during tea. We will be growing some squash and other “must have warm weather to plant” items. If you would like to donate plants or help with the organizing (please!), talk to Audrey at the May meeting.

CLUB OUTINGS:

Richard McBride Elementary School Playground Fund-raiser: Garden Themed Hot Dog Sale: Sat. Apr 16; 11:00 to 3:00 at the Royal Square Mall Safeway. From 11:30 to 12:30 or 1:00, NWHS will have a table set up with a couple of club members answering garden questions (if you want to help, see Audrey)—and of course promoting the sale! We are contributing a gift certificate (\$10 of plant sale plants) to their raffle prize basket. Drop by the mall and check it out.

Pruning & Garden Care Workshop: Sat. Apr 16; 2 to 4pm. This has evolved from less of a “hands-on” workshop to more of a “demonstration of pruning and plant care advice” by two extremely knowledgeable people: Darren Silcox and Glenn Murray. The first garden will be at 117 Seventh, New Westminister also known as “the yard”. We will tip-toe around the sale plants. The second yard will be 111 Princess (Anna Camporese’s), one block away. Hopefully we will have time for both. Within these two gardens, there is a huge variety of plants. Please sign-up on the sheet at the head table.

OUR ANNUAL PLANT SALE: Sun May 1, 10am to 4pm, inside Royal Square Mall. Under 3 weeks to go! Not long to go now. Huge amount of work to be done in a very short period of time! **Last day to drop plant material to the yard is this Sunday, April 17.** Sign-up sheets for transport, set-up and day of sale help at head table—as is the yard calendar for these final three weeks. Please add your name and phone number and join in the club’s biggest annual event. We really do need your help during this final push to sale date. Thanks. See the Plant Sale Extravaganza handout for more sale details, especially day of sale procedures.

PRESIDENT’S CORNER: by Audrey

What a horrendous month it has been in the yard! I’m very indebted to those of you who came out on those cold, wet days to pot up the plants. Brrrrr.... One day it was so cold we could see our breath! At least the weather is good for our potted plants. They are certainly well-watered and the cool temperatures have held back the development of the top growth. If the weather was as balmy as February, they would look like dead weeds by now. Also, thanks for the keen tag makers—without your prompting for “more tags, more tags...”, we would be much further behind. I have tags to hand out tonight but we need them back by next Monday. Drop them off at my house when you attend the yard care workshop on Saturday.

A week ago I was bemoaning “We’re missing...” Thankfully, since then many of the gaps have been filled. Don’t let that deter you from dropping off your plants—and when you do, glance at the yard. It really is developing into “a glorious sight”.

Other things you can do: Help with the publicity blitz. Lots of posters available tonight. With our current weather, probably hold off until the final week for posting on telephone poles. Enclosing the edges with masking tape helps. Collect cardboard flats and bring them directly to the mall. Thanks!

WEBSITE UPDATE:

One year ago, to celebrate NWHS’s 70th anniversary, we launched our website: www.newwesthortsociety.org. This year we are contemplating some changes. Some of you may have been frustrated trying to find our site when you didn’t know the exact address. We have researched this problem. Two routes seem available: pay considerably more per month to upgrade our server service or get linked to as many other sites as possible. Most garden clubs follow the latter route with their sites—and we are trying that as well—or at least, Lori Jenvey as our web-master is. In her research checking out other clubs’ sites, she noticed that many post their newsletters. We propose putting our newsletter on our site as a PDF file. It would be very handy for those who miss a meeting. If anybody is concerned about the privacy issue of having their name published, please talk to Audrey—she will avoid mentioning you in the newsletter! We can’t imagine anybody who would not be proud to belong to NWHS. Lori is open for suggestions from any members—check out the site and use the link there to send her your ideas. She’s been playing with new colors as well.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT: a review of last month’s

presentation. The combination of a talk on the theory of PROPAGATION BY CUTTINGS followed by the hands on workshop was very, very informative. Many thanks to SCOTT HAMMOND for sharing his knowledge and expertise with us and for Stellar Wholesale who treated us like royalty for the workshop. Scott Hammond is the General Manager of Solar Greenhouse & Garden Supply at 4752 Imperial in Burnaby (Imperial at Central Blvd)—park at the rear and show your membership card for 15% off. Lots of useful stuff in stock.

WHERE SEEDS COME FROM: part 2: by David Tamblin.

Last month's article briefly explored, through the eyes of Sharon Hanna, the international bio-agro-businesses who supply most of the seeds sold in local nursery operations and those supplied by their customers by seed-houses through the mail.

Let me digress—to explain F1 hybrids. If you have a plant with high productivity and disease resistance and another with excellent flavour that stores well, you might be able to cross-breed them for one generation and get all the desired qualities. That is a “F1 hybrid”. Like you and me, it combines the good qualities of both our parents. The next generation is the snag; by the laws of genetics it may come true, it may have a few of the desired qualities, it may be a throwback, or it may be just a failure that doesn't even grow. Many of the seeds available commercially are F1 hybrids. You can save seed from them (if you like) but most won't “come true” to the parent plant. It takes many generations to arrive at a genetically stable plant. The difference between open pollinated (heritage, heirloom) seeds and F1 hybrids is one comes true and the other doesn't.

F1 hybrids suit commercial producers; it almost guarantees return business year after year. It also allows the genetic parents, the cross pollination process, etc. to remain in the producer's hands. This could lead to other advantages such as control of supply and control of price. This isn't to claim that seed suppliers are profiteers—a \$3.00 package of tomato seeds is still quite a bargain when you consider how expensive it is to obtain a hundred pounds of tomatoes in any other form. But we lose control of which tomatoes we plant.

The gardener may find some drawbacks in the seed supply system as these articles describe it. Being a gardener is a bit like being the lowest rung of the ladder; the guys at the top may hardly notice who's down there, let alone value his/her opinions. Rather than ask what we want, their sales honchos may trumpet what they prefer to sell. Have you ever compared seed catalogues? Notice that the varieties available tend to be quite similar and all described in the same superlatives.

Many people are concerned that a basic ingredient of our food production has fallen into corporate hands (and we all know what ingredients go into corporate decision making). If a seed grower (such as Christianson) decides to rationalize business and produce seed for only the most popular varieties, no one else is likely to want to grow the seed for the less marketable varieties. There is a trend to uniformity and a loss of diversity. The economic clout and sheer size of today's growing operations makes GM (genetically modified) seed a distinct future possibility.

A partial alternative is to keep as much control as possible ourselves. If you start with open pollinated varieties you can save your own seed with little trouble and no cost. While not comprehensive, NWHS offers free seed for several species at the club's Seed Exchange. Remember to save your seeds and check out the free table at meetings. If you save seeds from 3 or 4 plants and share them with ten individuals who do the same, there are seeds for 30-40 plants available for you to grow.

There are organizations who grow seed for the heritage/heirloom varieties or who make unusual species available as seed. Many members will have encountered “Seeds of Diversity” which endeavors to grow and preserve heritage varieties. Botanical gardens often offer seeds from some of the diverse plants in their collections. VanDusen has volunteer seed collectors that sell to the public at \$2.00 a package. Internet aficionados will find over nine hundred catalogue sources at www.canadiangardening.ca/catalogues. For an adventure in diversity try iludsonseeds.net

IN YOUR VEGE PATCH: by the Urban Gardener also known as Roy Pegler. Roy (604-520-6467) welcomes your vegetable gardening questions.

April is a reasonably safe month to sow peas, broad beans, brassicas, Swiss chard, spinach, lettuce, radishes and early potatoes. Later in the month, leeks, onions & shallots can be planted.

Indoors, start sowing your early tomato seeds. It's important to have stocky, sturdy seedlings with good root systems and healthy leaves. Have enough hours of light at an adequate intensity and feed the young plant enough but not too much. Another trick is to regularly disturb the plantlets by brushing their tops gently, or by shaking them to stimulate breezes. When it's time to transplant, find a spot with adequate sun—at least six hours or more of direct sun a day. A soil test can go a long way in helping you determine how much fertilizer to apply to your plants. Tomatoes require ample amounts of phosphorus, potassium and calcium and even though you shouldn't overdo the nitrogen, it is also needed for healthy plants. A good side dressing of well rotted manure will work wonders. To bring more light and heat to the fruit: stake, trellis or cage your plants. Excess water can affect flavour, so don't overwater once the tomato fruits have reached full size and beginning to change colour. Lack of sufficient heat and light can weaken tomato flavour. Once the plants are established, water deeply and keep the soil moisture even. Mulching will reduce water loss. When soil moisture fluctuates, blossom end rot may develop in susceptible plants. This is commonly caused by a calcium deficiency and moisture fluctuations can interfere with the uptake of calcium. A calcium imbalance can also occur if the soil has too much magnesium, so don't use dolomite lime which is high in magnesium. Have a good tomato season!

GardenWorks Appreciation Day (at all locations, including Mandeville): Thursday, April 21.

PARLOUR SHOW NEWS: by Ellen Berg

Welcome to our first Parlour Show showbench for 2005. As temperatures vary from one garden to the next, it's always interesting to see what plants will appear on the tables. We often have sprays of forsythia exhibited on April's showbench but as my bushes were finished by the 3rd week of March, I'll be very surprised to see any show up for tonight's show. Many items will be early this year which no doubt will play havoc with our monthly category selections. Remember if your exhibit does not have a category, you must place it in the “any other perennial, annual or shrub spray” category. These categories often require 3 specimens not 1. If you don't have 3, don't forget about our “Decorative Category”. When you find you have a surplus of picked flowers, combine them into an arrangement or design (the schedule specifies which for each category) and you not only have an exhibit but a centerpiece to take home after judging.

With Des Kennedy being May's guest speaker, the Parlour Show's table space will be needed to accommodate seating for the above average attendance. The executive decided the next best place for us would be the kitchen with the counters acting as our May showbenches. Needless to say, it will be a tight fit but I'm sure a feasible one. Hey, after all it's for Des! I'm therefore requesting all exhibitors to please do the bulk of your preparation at home as counterspace will be very limited and also PLEASE arrive early to lessen the confusion.

Good Luck on the Showbench and let's hope we see some 5's tonight.

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