

THE NEW WESTMINSTER HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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March 2005

CLUB CALENDAR:

MARCH MEETING: Tonight: Wed. Mar 16, SCOTT HAMMOND, of Solar Greenhouse & Garden Supply, on "PROPAGATION". Learn how to get those cuttings to take root and prosper. Follow-up work shop scheduled for Sat. April 2.

APRIL MEETING: Tues, Apr 12, 7:45pm. Centennial Lodge, Queens Park (back to our regular meeting spot!). DARREN SILCOX, of Arbour Care, "PRUNING QUESTIONS & ANSWERS". Get your pruning questions answered first by submitting them in advance to Audrey—at the meeting tonight, via email at sgbarnes@telus.net, by phone 604-526-8284 (before 8pm) or while potting in the yard. Again we will be having a follow-up workshop—on Apr 16.

CLUB OUTINGS:

Plant a Row, Grow a Row Gardener's Party: Thurs, Mar 31, St. Aidan's Church. The party runs from 6 to 9pm. Speakers include Brian Minter, Conway Lum, Mary Ballon (West Coast Seeds) and Alan Reid. They've also invited representatives from Gardenwise magazine and Lee Valley Tools. There will be refreshments and goodies and lots of information about growing vegetables and how you can get involved in this worthwhile program. All this for a donation of non-perishable food for the New Westminster Food Bank. See you there!

Hands-on Propagation Workshop: Sat. Apr 2. There will be 4 workshops on this day—each 30 minutes long. Starting times are 1:00, 1:30, 2:00, 2:30pm. There is a maximum of 10 persons per workshop. The fewer the number of members in a workshop, the more individual attention you will get. Some materials are supplied; some for sale at a nominal price. At this point, the workshop is for club members only. Your non-member friends are welcome if the workshops are not full. (Why not get them to become members?) Tell Audrey to put them on the waiting list. Deadline for signing up is Tuesday, March 29th at 5pm via Audrey. On the next day, it will be known if spots are available. Scott Hammond will give more information at tonight's meeting. Workshops will be held at Stellar Wholesale, #301-5980 Arbroath St., Burnaby. Please mark your calendars if you have signed up—it is quite a few weeks away and experience has told us that many members are forgetful. Sign up at the head table—and pick up a map there as well.

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 Westminster 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. Sign up and map available next month.

OUR ANNUAL PLANT SALE: Sun May 1, 10am to 4pm, inside Royal Square Mall.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER: by Audrey

Just to fake everyone out, I am not going to talk about the Plant Sale in my column tonight. How about PARLOUR SHOW? Ah, you say, that boring old hat stuff! She's going to yak about how it used to be so important in the club! Who cares about that now! If you think that, you are missing what I feel the true value of the parlour show is. Sure, there is competition involved and that's good because challenge is good. Each of us needs the challenges to get us to grow as a person. But that's not it either. Next month, at our inaugural 2005 showbench, look at the exhibits (no talking or touching while you do) and stay to listen to the review. It may be the start of you really looking at your plants. It may be the start of you just slowing your life pace down enough that you stop and look (really look!) at the plants in your garden. You will look at your garden in a different perspective—not as a setting for your family's activities but as groupings of living things individually fascinating and beautiful. Your life will be enhanced by the experience. And soon you'll be thinking, "Gee, these look pretty good—it wouldn't take much effort to cut a few and enter in that show"

As for plant sale: see plant sale article. (Still managed to get "plant sale" in the column 4 times!)

PLANT SALE UPDATE:

Wow, in less than 2 months (in 6 1/2 weeks!!) the sale will be over and hopefully we will be gloating over the profits! But those profits just won't happen if plants are not dropped off to the back yard. We drastically need you to donate plants. We are way behind schedule—mainly because the plants just have not been arriving. Please, get out into your gardens and divide those perennials, dig up those seedlings, move that unwanted bush from your yard to the carport. Don't worry about the any holes left behind. The club has purchased 4 yards of soil for the potting-up and will gladly give you enough to fill those divots. When it was so gorgeous this past weekend, I thought for sure there would be loads dropped off. But—NO! Virtually none!! We are willing to collect plants from your gardens but need to know the plants are there to collect!

What plants needed: Almost anything at this point. The only things we seem to have a bit of variety in are daylilies and bearded iris (but if you have some, bring them over!). Even the common plants have not come in. Can you believe: only one kind of campanula, no lady's mantle, zilch in hostas? Please, please drop off *any* plants! Don't assume that we already have it because we probably don't have. Although it shouldn't need to be said, I'll say it again: Please drop the plants off as soon as possible—first, if we get them potted before the top growth is lush, they will be better plants and, just as important for our sale, look like better plants. Curb appeal is everything.

(Plant sale update continues on last page)

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT: a review of our last meeting. Even if you did not understand Joe Wai's explanation of how within the classical Chinese garden, the hierachal ordered philosophy of Confucius coexists with the "all is part of nature" beliefs of Taoism, you came away with a appreciation of the beauty of the gardens. He followed the evolution of the development of the Scholar's Garden (of which the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Garden is an example). It is a place of contemplation. Beautiful slides and a presentation by a very knowledgeable person. In August, we hope to arrange a guided tour of the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Garden to learn and appreciate further.

WHERE SEEDS COME FROM: Part 1: by David Tamblin

If you missed it, Seedy Saturday was celebrated Feb. 26th at VanDusen Gardens. Not to worry, it's the oldest Seedy Saturday around and it will be back again next year. One of the presenters this year was Sharon Hanna and her topic "Where do seeds come from?" struck a chord.

We are lead to assume Mackenzie, Mr. Fothergill, Stokes, Burpee's, etc produce the seeds they are selling. Not so. They're only re-packagers. Seed growing is part of a world-wide bio-agri-business. Like many businesses these days it is international and it is big.

Hanna toured the Christianson operation in Washington State, which among other things, produces 90% of all beet seeds sold in North America (50% of the world's useage). Sharon Hanna nostalgically recounts that every beet she had encountered in her life was there. The selection of which seeds are to be produced each year is decided at a "Pinning Date"—an annual meeting of the local growers that Christianson manages. (The operation is spread among isolated pockets of the Skagit Valley.) Ripe seed is harvested, cleaned, graded and tested (for purity, viability, germination rate, etc.) in giant crates weighing up to a ton. Then it all goes into the distribution system and finally arrives at the seedhouse retailers in relatively small packages. The retailers' employees are almost literally bean counters, splitting shipments into the individual packages for redistribution to store shelves.

Alf Christianson is the name of both the grandfather who started the family seed business back in the twenties and now the name of a branch of a multinational company based in Japan—Sakata Seeds. They own operations in several third world countries. Most of the seeds you buy at garden stores originate in similar operations. The situation is similar for flower seeds. Hanna found Thompson & Morgan grow a percentage of their own seed (in New Jersey, not England), but most comes from "the trade".

Oddly there are a couple of Italian producers, selling traditional varieties of beans, herbs, radicchio, etc who still grow their own. Their generous packages of viable seed is usually found in Italian markets. Luckily, for seed diversity, there are several small (often one man operations), local seed marketers and non-profit organizations endeavouring to preserve and supply seed from old varieties.

(Part 2 coming in April)

E-MAIL UPDATE: Don't forget, notify Lesley if you want to receive email notification of the meetings or you have a change in your email address. lslywood@telus.net.

PARLOUR SHOW NEWS: by Ellen Berg

One month to go. April is our first Parlour Show month so if you plan on exhibiting and haven't got an exhibitor number please see Julia or myself tonight. Members wanting an introduction to the Parlour Show, please see me for a copy of the Rules—and prizes offered. These are pages 2 and 3 taken from our Parlour Show Schedule. Members who will be exhibiting, *please read the Schedule carefully*. There are some changes in the schedule from last year. They are highlighted on the cover page and incorporated into the schedule itself.

In April, please allow yourself ample time to set up. The 7:40 deadline means 7:40! All setting up must be completed by that time! Our judge is once again Jennifer Zuk. Please do not disturb her while she is judging. And please ask questions during the review time. The idea of the review is to learn. To ask questions is to learn. Julia and I are available for assisting you in setting up. Ask us questions such as "which category should and exhibit go in". Avoid N.A.S. ("Not as scheduled") scores (equal to zero points) by having us help you. We will initial those exhibits for which we are consulted—if it seems ambiguous, and our decision is the wrong one, you will not get an N.A.S.

If you want to research what are the key points in deterring perfection, we do have a few Judge's Manuals left available to purchase from me at a mere \$10. This book is where to look when you are in doubt about the size the showbench requires of an exhibit whether it be flower, fruit or vegetable. Don't have a manual when you need it? Feel free to call me at home (604-525-7827) and I'll be happy to look it up for you.

Regarding the 2004 photo contest: I'm still holding pictures from December's meeting. Please pick them up from me as soon as possible. Thanks.

A CHAFER RESISTANT LAWN: Yes, it is possible. "Chafers free" is near impossible, "chafers resistant"—YES! You can do it! Make your lawn healthy through continued good lawn maintenance practices. You want those roots to go deep so if the chafers is there, he will be deep (and not discovered by bird or beast) and if he does eat the roots, there are plenty more roots above him to support your lawn. Also, the healthy roots will hold your turf together, making it much harder for creatures to do damage. Remove the moss—it is competing with your grass for nutrients. Power rake it away. Even, if you use moss killer, still physically remove the moss. If you don't, when you water, the moss acts as a sponge holding the water at the surface instead of letting it seep deep into the soil. Apply lime at the best time—in the fall and winter. Think, when do you usually see the moss forming—in the spring! You want to lime to prevent the growth of the moss—not after it has already grown. If your soil is compacted, aerate and if possible, top dress with very coarse sand. Rake and hose the sand down into the aeration holes. These filled holes will not collapse back in and remain as avenues for the water to flow deep into the soil. Finally, when you do water your lawn, let the sprinkler run for 2 hours once a week instead of a light sprinkle daily. The latter entices root growth just at the surface. You want deep watering. When you fertilize (slow release is best), water that in well as well—get it to the deep roots. One final suggestion: If you are reseeding your lawn, look at the type of grass seeds in your mix. If possible avoid, Kentucky Blue Grass seed. Research has shown that the chafers finds the roots of this grass more delectable than those of other seeds. Don't baby that bug!

EUROPEAN CHAFER UPDATE: By Joan Miller

(Joan would be delighted to “talk chafer” with you.)

As you may know, in February the Sun published a remarkably inaccurate article which claimed that the spread of the European Chafer could have been prevented if the insecticide Merit had been used when the pest was first discovered in New Westminster. Audrey and I awarded the author, Steve Wysall, the Golden Chafer Award for Poor Horticultural Reporting, as those of you who were fortunate enough to hear Joe Wai’s excellent talk on Chinese Gardens at last month’s meeting were also treated to a brief, but satisfying, rant on the subject.

Earlier this month Evergro Canada, a company that distributes Merit, held a forum on the European Chafer. There were two speakers, one representing the manufacturer of Merit and the other speaking about the work done by the European Chafer Committee, a group looking into other methods of control.

After covering the identification and life cycle of the chafer, Darcey Olds, a sales manager for Bayer Environmental Science, described how Merit works. Chafers go through 3 larval stages, or instars. Merit will kill 90% of the first, or earliest, instar larvae if it is correctly applied before or just after the eggs are hatched. In other words, it should be applied in June or early July, before there is any damage to your lawn. Merit is much less effective against second and third instars, and is not at all effective against the adult chafer. Merit is less toxic to mammals than other insecticides, though it is harmful to aquatic organisms and to insects, including bees. It is registered for use only by licensed applicators. You will not be able to buy it at garden centres.

Peter Issacson coordinates IPM (Integrated Pest Management) research projects for the Canadian Nursery and Landscape Association. As he reminded us, the European Chafer Committee did a preliminary study in 2001 that indicated that the nematode *Heterorhabditis bacteriophora* might be able to control second instar chafer larvae. In 2004, a more detailed study concluded that *H. bacteriophora* was effective against both first and second instar chafer larvae, and that another species of nematode also showed promise. The researchers concluded that good lawn care practices and the application of *H. bacteriophora* in July can reduce chafer damage.

Neither Merit or nematodes will give instant relief from the digging of birds and animals. The chafers on which they are feeding are past the age to be effectively killed. The timing is off. Like Merit, nematodes must be before the chafer grows to the size delectable to the animals—before this year’s damage is apparent. Both Merit and nematodes are relatively expensive, through the nematodes can be applied by homeowners while Merit must be applied by licensed applicators. Both must be watered in well in order to be effective. Lawn care, which appears to help in the control of the chafers, is an appealing, though time consuming, solution to many people and watering restrictions may make this difficult. I asked Alan Reid, who spoke to the club last year, what he thought is the best solution. If you attended his talk, you probably can predict his response—“get rid of your lawn!”

Oh, just in case you’re wondering, I asked both speakers if Merit could have controlled the spread of chafers from New Westminster. Both said that it could not have done so, and that it has not prevented chafers spreading in Ontario. For one thing, Merit was not registered for use on turf pests in BC until last year. Darcy Olds told me that it was “fast tracked” in order to make it available for this year. Both speakers agreed that Merit could be very effective in controlling chafers on the lawn of a homeowner or on a city playing field, but since not all homeowners would wish to use insecticides, it could not prevent the spread of this pest. In addition, many municipalities have, or are contemplating, anti-pesticide bylaws. So Steve Wysall’s comments remain a mystery...and a stellar example of irresponsible journalism.

(In 2004, NWHS donated \$500 to the European Chafer Committee’s IPM study. Well spent money!)

IN YOUR VEGE PATCH: by the Urban

Gardener also known as Roy Pegler. Roy (604-520-6467) welcomes your vegetable gardening questions.

Everything in life is timing—so resist that urge to start everything too early, just to see something young and green. If you start seed too soon, the plant may languish inside, waiting for settled warmer weather. Check your last date of frost and group your seeds accordingly to starting date. Generally the last date of frost in our area is considered to be the May long weekend. Label your varieties and their starting dates and remember that some seeds take longer to germinate than others. Here’s a rough estimate of the lead time for popular seeds.

Onions: 8 to 12 weeks before the set out date of 4 to 6 weeks before the last frost.

Lettuce: 5 to 6 weeks before the safe planting out date, which is 4 to 5 weeks before the last frost.

Cabbage, broccoli, collards: 5 to 6 weeks before planting out.

Peppers: 8 to 12 weeks before last frost.

Tomatoes, eggplant: 6 to 8 weeks before last frost.

Cucumbers, melons: 2 to 4 weeks before last frost

Wait until the weather is warm and settled to plant out your peppers, eggplant, tomatoes, cucumbers, melons and squash.

When starting seedlings, remember the following precautions:

1. Must keep planting medium moist and warm.
2. Light is necessary once the seedling emerge and often necessary for germination.
3. Seedlings need room to develop healthy roots and stems. Don’t crowd them.
4. Harden off seedlings. Your seedlings should be ready once they have two or three leaves beyond the seed leaves.
5. Lastly, keep records, or at least label seedlings properly.

GardenWorks Appreciation Day (at all locations, including Mandeville): Thursday, March 17th. Get 15% off almost everything in the store, including sale items.

NAME TAG/MEMBERSHIP CARD?

Hopefully this will clear up the confusion. There are two pieces of identification issued to club members. You are issued a “membership card” when you pay your annual fees. This has an expiry date. If you have been awarded Life Member status, there is no expiry date but a notation that you are a life member. This card is your receipt showing that you have paid your yearly dues. Present this card when asking for a club discount at a nursery. Your “name tag” is for you to wear at our meetings. It too is an important piece of identification. It tells other members who you are. Please wear your name tag at the meetings. It makes socializing just so much easier. So easy.

PLANT SALE UPDATE continued:

Plant tags: Another reason to get the plants in early is to help eliminate the rush to make our plant tags. Our hand written tags are noted for their durability. If you insert one of our tags completely into the ground so that the lettering is not exposed to sunlight, it can last for years. That is why, for our perennials, we have not converted to computer generated tags. For our annuals and vegetables that need identification but not the durability, we do create them on the computer. Making the tags does take time and ALL the tags must be completed before we can start the pricing. It is so nice to have the plants in early, those tags made early and have time to take a huge breath of air before the **April 17th deadline for plant material.** (Look at your calendar—that is only one month away!) Immediately after April 17th, we want to get to the sorting, grooming and pricing of the plants.

There are plant tags available tonight for members to take home and work on if they wish. Brand new pens too. Use the pens provided. We have found that they stand up the best. Printing done with ultra-fine nibs almost fades before it gets into the plant pot. On the back of each master tag, there is a number. That indicates the total number of tags required, including the master tag. In each bundle there are more blank labels than you need, in case you make a mistake. If you cannot read the printing on the master tag, see Audrey tonight for her to clarify her pitiful printing. If possible, return the tags within 2 weeks to Audrey (just drop them in the mailbox or at the backdoor if nobody is home). She will have a master sheet of who has which tags. It eases her mind to know they are complete.

Growing from Seed: If you are growing plants from seeds in a controlled environment, they must be processed through the yard but repotting will not be part of that process. Keep in touch with Audrey about what tags need to be produced for your plants and about the shipping. Speak to her as early as possible so she has a handle as to what to expect.

Mall Lay-out Changes: At the plant sale meeting, extensive discussion was how we could eliminate the massive crush experienced last year when people were lining up to pay at the cashier at the same time (and same place) that people were attempting to select perennials. The solution (we hope!) was really quite simple in the end. Move the location of the perennials. Brace yourselves—after years of having our different plant types in the same locations, we are moving things about. The cashiers will still remain at the liquor store end and the line-up to cash (with additional talliers) will form as normal from the left. Looking down at the floor plan, starting at the cashier, the plant types will be arranged clockwise in this sequence: Herbs & Veges; Perennials including trees & shrubs (in a huge horseshoe around the totem); Annuals and Hanging Baskets; and finally the Raffle just before the Cashiers. Folks will have all sorts of time to drool over our raffle prizes while in the line-up to pay. It should work well.

Sign-up sheets: This month, the only sale sign-up sheets will be for the “Calendar for Back Yard Work” and “I have plants” sheet. All the sheets related to the day of sale will be available at the April meeting.

Things we can use: As you have heard many times, our sale absorbs pots, trays and Venetian blinds. It is time to think about the cardboard trays to be used by our customers to take their plants home. Collect them when you see them. If possible keep them at your homes to be taken directly to the mall. *If* you don't have space, drop them at the carport but Audrey, too, tends to run out of that commodity at this time of year.

THIS ‘N’ THAT:

•What a nice way to start the new year—by welcoming new members to the club: MARNEY EDGE, TED LEATHLEY, JACQUELINE SHEPHERD, JOHN SIMMER and CARL WHITNEY.

•Happy Birthday to JOAN MILLER, This coming Friday she is eligible to take part in Century House activities and vows to make the most of the privileges entailed.

•JOY MAKEPEACE-SMITH has approx 40sq ft of sod to give away, weed and chafer free, newly dug, rolled and ready to load. Talk to her tonight or call her at 604-433-5869.

•Around Christmas craft time, Audrey asked several members if they would act as recipients for LED Christmas Light rebates as she drastically over-purchased the per-household limit. She has forgotten in whose names she submitted forms—tsk, terrible bookkeeping! If you are one of the surprised people who received a \$9 “Led light strings rebate” cheque but didn't purchase them, she could use the money. Thanks.

•New West Parks are looking for 3 or 4 volunteers to help out with the BIG Hanging Basket Class that is scheduled for the morning of Sat April 16th. You must have taken the hanging basket course from Claude. If you are interested, JOAN MILLER (604-540-1929) is collecting names until Mar 31. It is expected that there will be quite a few on the list. Final selection will be up to Claude.

•Speaking of New West Parks Hanging Basket Classes, all the “Re-Do” classes except the large one on April 16th are now full. There is room in the “New” classes. See the list on the bulletin board for available dates and contact the arena office ASAP if you are interested.

•A most interesting presentation is coming up at our public library “Garden Bugs: Friend or Foe” by Jennifer Heron of the Bug Lab. Wed Mar 30, 2005, 7pm. No charge to attend but as space is limited, you must pre-register. Phone the library at 604-527-4660 to do so.

•Lee Valley Tools is once again hosting some good garden-related seminars. At the Coquitlam store, “Herb Gardens” is scheduled for Apr 7; “Watering Systems”, Apr 21. Drop into or phone the store to register. Do you find that as soon as you hear of their seminars, they seem to be already filled? Log onto www.leevalley.com and send them your email address for instant notification of the new listings—be first in line, instead of last.

•The Richard McBride PAC are in the midst of a huge fundraising drive to replace the school's playground. It's a huge fundraiser. The Safeway at Royal Square Mall has selected them to be their chosen charity. One upcoming event, April 16th, is a Garden Theme Hot Dog Sale. As representative of New Westminster's gardening community, NWHS has agreed to participate. (The executive did so on behalf of the membership.) We will be hosting a gardening question table from 11:30 to 12:30 or 1pm. The club has an alternative reason to participate—we'll be inviting everyone back to the mall for our sale in two weeks. We would like some of our experienced and knowledgeable gardeners to come forward to volunteer. Please do—come talk to Audrey. She would do it but with only two weeks before the sale...