

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; sgbarnes@telus.net

April, 2007

CLUB MEETING CALENDAR:

APRIL MEETING: Tonight, Tues, April 10th, 7:45, FRED WEIN Sr. on "GROWING VERTICAL WITH CLIMBING PLANTS". The spring "Bring to Share"—sounds like there will be some interesting exhibits to look at and leave your feedback on. The participation draws will be done just before tea. A couple of deadlines tonight: renewing your membership or ordering a club T-shirt. You can complete both of these transactions at the treasurer's table before the meeting or during tea.

MAY MEETING: Tues, May 8th, 7:45, MARGARET NAKAHARA, president of the BC Council of Garden Clubs and qualified show judge, on "HOW TO SHOW". Margaret is a fantastic speaker. You'll enjoy Margaret's enthusiasm. She will certainly stir up enthusiasm for the June Show. The show schedule will be distributed in May as part of the newsletter. Of course, also at this meeting, the question "How much did we take in at the sale?" will be answered.

JUNE MEETING, Tues, June 12th, 7:45. Our JUNE IN-CLUB SHOW! Plus a GARDENING QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION WITH A PANEL OF NWHS EXPERTS. A great opportunity to share knowledge—want to be on the panel? Speak with Audrey.

CLUB OUTINGS:

Plant Sale Preparation on-going in Audrey's yard. Full speed ahead! Deadline to get plants into the yard is Mon, April 16th. It has just been extended one day so that all of you, who will be working until dark on Sun digging up your offerings, can deliver your offerings the next day. Then one week to finish up all the potting and plant labels. Then the fun starts—the grooming & pricing of all the plants. Many people needed in the yard during these final two weeks. You will be working in teams. Pricing is done by consensus. Hectic work but quite exciting because you know that the big climax is near. Did you know that if you work in the yard during this time period, you can purchase plants after they have been priced as long as you did not decide on the price.

Earth Day Queens Park Blackberry Removal: Sun, April 22nd (Earth Day) 1pm to 3(or 4)pm. Claude leDoux is gathering together volunteers to attack and remove the dreaded Himalayan blackberries from the park. Meet at 1pm in front of the Arena. Claude will be there to explain things further. Thorn-proof gloves and pruning equipment (secateurs, loppers) strongly suggested. Dress appropriately. Audrey will have more details closer to the time. Give her a call. There is no sign-up sheet. Just show-up and help improve the park we all love. Great community event!

Our Plant Sale: Sun, May 6, 10am-4pm, Glenbrook Middle School Gymnasium! Definitely a not-to-be-missed event!!!

A Visit to City Farmer and Southlands Nursery. Sat, May 12. After a guided tour (starting at 1:30pm) of the City Farmer site in Kitsilano (expect to see such things as a cobshed, cold frames, permeable driveways, a greenroof, worm & other composting systems), we will be heading to Thomas Hobb's nursery for some serious plant inspection and selection. Sign-up next month. We plan to car-pool. www.cityfarmer.org

PRESIDENT'S CORNER: by Audrey *One month from now the plant sale is over!!! Yippee! er... Yikes! There is still so much to do!!! And time is running out!*

Many thanks to the keen members who have come to the yard to help—and to those who have given plants from your gardens. The club is very indebted to you. But... It is not enough. We need many more of you to check your gardens to see what needs to be divided and get it done and the plants to the yard. Our plant tally is even behind last year's which turned out to be a frantic last-minute panic. Even my neighbours are saying to me "It doesn't look like you have many plants this year". Hmmmm, not very good—especially with our very spacious new location. Every time we had a nice couple of days, I would expect to see a car or truck pull up to the carport—but it just wasn't happening. You have just until next Monday to please drop off the plants.

Sale publicity: The blitz starts now and will build until sale time. If, by chance, you have not yet posted one of our large signs on that public bulletin board you know about, get one tonight and get it up there. Going to a meeting tomorrow, grab enough small posters for distribution to each person in attendance. Meeting someone for lunch on Friday, take along a small poster or two. The neat thing about this is that people feel grateful to you for telling them of the sale and of the important change in venue. Over the years our sale has achieved the status of a community event! Regarding posting the signs outdoors on telephone poles and such: It is a good idea to hold off until the final two weeks before the sale as inclement weather can make short work of our posters. If you are putting up a poster on a glass window, before you do so tape two posters back-to-back so once in place, it can be read from two sides. Please after the sale, take down any posters. We don't want to litter the city—besides they all have my contact info on them!

Cardboard Boxes: Hopefully you have been collecting cardboard boxes—remember all those plants going in on our black trays will be leaving the gymnasium in cardboard boxes. We need hundreds! Costco and liquor stores are two fantastic sources. Please store your boxes at home until the sale. Do not bring to Audrey's!—she will have absolutely no extra space in house or yard (hopefully!). See the Extravaganza for more.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: This is a new feature, mainly because it is new to actually receive a letter. If you would like to send Audrey written feedback about an outing, please do. Give other members an idea of what happened.

Two emails were received regarding working in the yard.

Christine Dacre wrote: “Message to new members and members who have not yet gotten involved with the plant sale. This is an excellent opportunity to meet other members and get to know more about our club. I have worked with Audrey for 2 Saturdays in the “yard” and have learnt a lot about the various plants that have come in. I am a “beginner” gardener and always felt that I did not have much to offer at the various events we have held because my knowledge of plants is not that great. There is a lot to do and every bit of help is welcome and needed. Potting plants is not difficult and you don’t need to know everything about them to help out. Audrey is more than willing to share her knowledge and she tells you exactly what to do. I encourage all members to put their names down to help out for our plant sale and for other events throughout the year. There is so much more to our club than just coming to the Tuesday night meetings.

The more you get involved, the more you will get out of being a member. Also, our plant sale is one of the major events we hold and it is a lot of work and it takes so many hours and so many volunteers to pull it off. The more people get involved, the better. It is a great way to meet members and learn from each other. After all, isn’t that why we are here?”

Meighan Scott wrote: “Dear Audrey: Just wanted to let you know how much fun I had volunteering in the yard doing preparation for the plant sale. I didn’t think I was knowledgeable enough to help out. I learned a lot, enjoyed getting to know you better and felt great about making a contribution to the sale. Thanks for making it a great experience. I think that other members, who may think “they are not worthy” should give it a try. They will be surprised at how much they can help out and accomplish in an afternoon, with good company! Thanks.”

Editor’s (Audrey’s) note: *Thank you Christine & Meighan for the positive feedback. Obviously, you worked in the yard when the group was small. 3 or 4 volunteers at a time works great when doing the potting. Anymore than that can get harried—as some of you well know. For our plant preparation, we are very specific in how the plants are to be potted and keeping track of that with a large group is frantic. Every year we learn more about the plants—how much to expect another plant to grow in 6 weeks, in a month—which plants get rootbound quickly—which plants actually get a boost in growth with “harsh” treatment. Every year we figure out how something should be done at this stage to make the steps down the road smoother. Something, which may seem trivial at the point in time of the potting, can make a big difference latter. With a large group, it is hard to explain all the nuances. Hopefully this will not discourage your volunteering. We need your help badly in the yard. The frequency of the yard shifts will be dramatically increased until all plants are potted—hopefully keeping the groups the most efficient sizes. After that, it is a whole new scene of non-stop work preparing those plants.*

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT: A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF LAST MONTH’S PRESENTATION.

By Debra Halbig.

New ideas and fresh inspiration were the topics in March when Brian Minter came to share the New Trends in Gardening that he collected during his travels and preparation for this year’s season. The overall message was to break out from doing the same thing every year and look at your garden with fresh eyes and a willingness to try something really new. Key was not buying the newest hybrids—although Brian brought several to view—but in taking any plants you use and combining them in a new and different way. He urged us to use concepts shown in art and advertising to help create a “Wow” factor in our own backyards. Use contrasts: complimentary colours, dark foliage to bring out lighter leaves, plants with round leaves to accent grasses or spiked leaves, “neutral” colours such as white, silver, and the hot, new, “must-have” lime green to unify your garden and make all the other colours pop! He challenged us to combine different styles of plants: miniature vegetables in our patio containers, fruits and vegetables in our flower gardens, climbing plants as ground cover or left to sprawl up and around shrubs. When planning, he left these tips: Everything needs a companion. Consider all season viewing. Use all your senses—think of fragrance and texture along with colour. Overall, remember that your garden is about you. Remember a place to sit, or other avenue for you to actively enjoy your garden once you relax from the work! Brian urged you not to settle for “good enough”, but to design yourself a personal escape and plan for the “remarkable”!

E-MAIL NOTIFICATION OF MEETINGS:

Anna Camporese would just love to hear of any updates you have to your email address (or if you want to be added to the list!). Reach her at Anna_Camporese@telus.net. Please preface your email subject with “nwhs”. Thanks

WEBSITE NEWS:

Changes are happening! Progress has been made! Lori Jenvey updated much of the information on the old site (thanks Lori) and Bob Santarossa has burned some mid-night oil and redesigned the home page (thanks Bob). It should be up. Check out www.newwesthortsociety.org and tell us what you think.

DESPERATELY SEEKING: Normally we do not use compartmentized trays for our plant sale EXCEPT for those which hold the small basket stuffer size pots (32 pots per tray). We are in drastic need of a large number. Please drop any off at the yard. Thx.

IN YOUR VEGETABLE PATCH: by the Urban Gardener, also known as Roy Pegler (604-520-6467), He would love talk “grow’n veges” with you.

Welcome to Spring! Hopefully it will be a better month than March. This month is time to get serious about sowing & planting summer crops like early potatoes, green peas, broad beans, brassicas, Swiss chard, spinach, lettuce & radishes. Later in the month, leeks, onions & shallots can be planted. Indoors: sow tomato seeds to be ready for transplanting in mid May (weather permitting).

This is the time to make improvements to your soil. A healthy soil with crumbly texture and well-enriched with organic matter is at the heart of organic gardening. Only in such a soil will you find the wide range of life forms needed to create the natural fertility that produces superbly flavoured health-giving crops. The soil can be transformed in only a few seasons by adding compost and leaf mould plus some garden lime for some of the veges. Every garden should have a compost heap. The best compost is made in bigger heaps which heats up better & cooks the ingredients more thoroughly. Once the heap is full, unpack it and turn it for quicker, more evenly composted results. Mixing it is beneficial because it lets the air in and speeds up decomposition. Do this twice, a few weeks apart. Keep the top covered but expose the sides.

If you’re growing crops that are known for their susceptibility to disease, choose resistant varieties that are less likely to fall prey to pests & diseases. Plants should never be over-fertilized as this encourages soft sappy growth that’s prone to attack by pests, etc. All manure and most organic fertilizers work best if they are mixed into the compost heap first and left for six months.

A good plan is to collect rainwater to water the veges. Water is a natural resource. Why waste tap water.

GardenWorks Appreciation Day: Thurs, April 19th

A RHETORIC ON RHUBARB: by David Tamblin

A couple of weeks ago we attended the Plant A Row, Grow a Row Kickoff. One of the presenters was Conway Lum from GardenWorks at Mandeville who choose to talk about rhubarb. Conway looked startled by all the questions he got on what appeared a simple and safe topic. Our curiosity was spiked.

My first encounter with rhubarb was on the farm. We had a small plot that received a couple of wheelbarrows of rotted cow manure in early spring and very little other attention. In return we harvested stems for the first three months—a season when little fresh fruit was available. The standard fare was rhubarb tart. Each portion contained about seven calories, until the mandatory sugar, flaky pie crust and clotted cream were added to the equation.

My family was carrying on a tradition that started in the early 19th century. Although the succulent stems of rhubarb were first eaten by the French, spring rhubarb became a venerable tradition in Victorian England.

(cont’d on next column)

RHUBARB CONT’D:

In the squire’s big garden clay pot cloches, like those used for sea kale, were used to force and blanch rhubarb for the table. Fresh manure warmed the soil nearby to secure even earlier growth. Several cultivars, each with its own qualities, were known and named.

Rhubarb was introduced to Europe three hundred years before it was considered food. It was used as a medicinal herb. One use for dried rhubarb root was as a treatment for venereal disease, then a common problem. The rhubarb imported to Elizabethan England in 1573 was *Rheum rhabarbarum*, which came from Mongolia via Russian trade on the Volga.

Two centuries before Marco Polo had brought dried roots from China but that was *Rheum officinale*. Both *R. officinale* and *R. palmatum* had long been used by Chinese herbalists as a laxative—as early as 2,700 BC. There is evidence the Greeks, Romans and arabs knew and used both of these plants.

There are about fifty species of Rheum, but only a few well known in gardens. *Rheum officinale* is grown in medicinal herb gardens. *Rheum palmatum* has handsome dissected leaves sometimes with red tones and tall flowers from cream to cerise pink; named varieties are often found in perennial borders. *Rheum rhabarbarum* is consigned to the vegetable patch although it, too, can be a handsome plant. Some of the varieties grown today may well be adulterated by unknown crosses.

Uses: Most obviously as food, as a substitute for fruit. While it was sometimes used for medicinal purposes *R. rhabarbarum* is relatively mild. Tender young stalks can be eaten raw like its relative, sorrel. Calcium oxalate found in mature leaves is poisonous. I have seen it listed as an ingredient in an organic insecticide. I also read that Ukraine immigrants were sometimes reduced to using young leaves for a cabbage roll substitute. I found no reliable information about the consequences.

The Chinese rhubarbs (*R. officinale* and *R. palmatum*) pack a real punch. They contain anthroglycosides (a laxative) and tannins (astringents which have the opposite binding effect). By varying the dosage and manner, the knowledgeable herbalist could treat both constipation and diarrhea with the same yellow powder derived from the dried rhizome. Extracts are apparently still available as a laxative, but rhubarb is no longer considered medicinally.

Cultivation: Given rich, moist soil in plenty of sunshine rhubarb is easy to cultivate. A two inch mulch of compost (and/or well rotted manure) should be about all the attention required. One authority recommends division every five years; another recommends leaving well enough alone. Propagation by divided rhizome with a bud is easy; get the new plant off to a good start by preparing an enriched bed. Seed and cuttings are possible but tricky.

VANCOUVER SUN GARDEN SHOW at

VANDUSEN: June 7-10th.

Check out: www.vancouvergardenshow.com

It is so nice to have the show back. It looks good!

Advance tickets: We will *not* be doing a group purchase for advance tickets. They will be available mid-April at most local garden centers. By purchasing an advance ticket, the adult admission of \$15 is reduced to \$13 (plus GST). You can save \$2 and avoid a wait in that sometimes very long line. Regular entrance (non-advance) fees are Adult \$15, Senior \$13, VanDusen Member \$12, Youth (13-18) \$13, Under 12 Free with GST added to all.

Container Contest: It has returned—actually it has morphed into several contests as there are many categories to enter. A winner and runner-up will be selected for each. (Miracle-Gro prize packs as prizes). Also there will be a cash prize of \$100 for the judged overall show winner; a \$50 cash prize for the People's Choice winner.

1. Most Colourful Container
2. Most Outstanding Use of Foliage in a Container
3. Most Unusual Planter
4. Best Contemporary Design
5. Best Use of Edibles in a Container
6. Best Incorporation of the Show Theme "Windows on the World"

Each category includes all types of containers (i.e. urns, hanging baskets, window baskets, etc)

At our last executive meeting, it was suggested that NWHS enter more than one category. We have not yet determined how much we want to spend on each of our creations. Get your thinking caps on! Please talk over your ideas with Audrey or Carole. Since we would have to register before May 25th, we would like at least the ideas by the May general meeting. We urge all members to think about entering on their own. (Who knows, maybe your VanDusen container could win our own NWHS container contest.) The entry fee is \$15 but that also includes one complimentary show ticket. Check the website for other details.

THIS 'N' THAT:

■ It's always gratifying to see some past members on the new member list—there were 2 last month. We must be doing something right! Let's welcome: **Norah Findlay, Carol Forcier, Gerrit Keizer, Maria MacKenzie, Marya McLellan, Yvonne Pont & Craig Sobering.**

■ **Lesia Godja's** garden is a pin-up! Look again at the "Beauty in Your Own Backyard" New Westminster City 2007 Calendar. (The calendar we all refer to when trying to remember which day is garbage day.) January is Lesia's yard. Are there any other club member's gardens featured?

■ Who made the mouth-watering **Cranberry Cookies** served at our Feb meeting? We would like the recipe for the newsletter. Thanks.

THE NWHS JUNE SHOW:

We have the show schedule drawn up but are holding off on publishing it just in case the weather does another weird turn on us that eliminates a large number of the classes. As it stands now, for cut materials it is very similar to the 2006 schedule.

However, there is no need not inform you of the details of the floral art classes. You can start thinking now of what you can create. Remember, for these classes, you do not have to grow the plant material. Need a perfect flower, go shopping! The classes are:

"Let's Cook": A design incorporating kitchen utensils (one or more) and fresh vegetables and/or fresh flowers. i.e. besides the container it must include the utensils but can use both or either flowers or vegetables.

"Tea Time": A miniature arrangement in a teacup or mug. Maximum size is 5" in all directions. Use fresh cut materials only.

"Light-Up My Life": A romantic composition suitable as a table center. Must include one or more candles and fresh cut materials (refer to the definition of "composition" for other ideas of what to include). Must be no taller than 12". (*Note: Definition of Composition: May consist of dried, weathered or treated materials and/or accessories with or without fresh cut plant material*)

"Get it Done!": A masculine design incorporating a "to do list" plus one or more tools necessary for at least one of the jobs. Use dried or fresh vegetative materials

"Best in Show" Awards: Instead of one award for all entries as we had last year, there will be two "Best of Show" awards: one for all the cut materials classes (such as the single stems of a flower) and one for the all the floral art classes listed above. As with last year, winners will be determined by popular choice of all in attendance at the meeting—each person will be given two ballots of distinctively different colors.

We have a problem: Last year we had a super prize which was very nicely donated by GardenWorks Design Services. This year we would like to give prizes of similar quality (and of course, of similar cash outlay) So far we have come up with no ideas. Think! What would you like to win?—and tell Sharon or Audrey. If you have an idea how we could get it cheap, all the better! Thanks.

THAT 'n' THIS:

■ Looking for a couple of camelias—cheap! Free, you dig! If you have a strong back, we have a couple that will be demolished if not saved. Drive by 324 - 4th St. They are big ones 8' high x 5' wide. If you like what you see, phone Vayla at 604-526-5980. If there is no interest by April 15, her husband will be attacking them.

■ We're still looking for the date of the **New West Senior Secondary's Manure Sale**. Anyone know it?

■ **Black plastic plant saucers:** Yep, we still have lots for sale but won't have after the sale when the offer is extended to the public. Only \$1 each (retail \$4 to \$9), 12, 14 & 18" available through Audrey. Check samples at head table.