

GARDEN CLIPPINGS

"To read a poem in January is as lovely as to go for a walk in June." — JEAN-PAUL SARTRE



MONTHLY MEETINGS

St. Mark's Anglican Church

12953 20th Avenue

7:00 pm, 4th Wednesday of each month, except December and August

NEWSLETTER

The *Garden Clippings* newsletter is published six times during the year:

January 15	July 15
March 15	September 15
May 15	November 15

Submissions from the membership are welcome and subject to editing. Submissions must be non-commercial in nature and must be word-processed. A style guide is available upon request. The deadline is the 1st of the month, 2 weeks prior to publication. Send inquiries to: owg@shaw.ca.

THE WINTER GARDEN

(OR OMG! I NEED TO GO TO HAWAII)

By Joan Galloway

What does your garden look like right now? Some gardeners tell me that they like to sit by the fire and look out at the bare earth of their garden beds and feel contented because all is done; the garden has been taken care of and is asleep. They look forward to the exhilaration of watching plants bursting from the bare black earth in spring. Other gardeners look out at the remains of plants and grasses hunkering down in a layer of last fall's leaves and feel contented because the garden is asleep under its insulating blanket, waiting for spring to bring forth new green growth that emerges from the debris of the previous year like a phoenix rising from the ashes. Other gardeners look out at the bare earth or the debris left from fall and say, "OMG! This is so bare or messy [depending on which type of gardener you are—see my fall cleanup rant] and drab and depressing! I need to go to Hawaii!"

Well if Hawaii isn't in your budget, consider making your garden into a winter garden. Now, most of us don't have enough space to design specific areas for specific seasons, so we have to depend on workhorse plants that provide interest in multiple seasons. For me, a plant has to be really special if it is only interesting in one season, or else it has to flaunt its glory and then, like spring bulbs, go dormant and get the heck out of the way for other plants that will overtake it and shine for the rest of the year. It's not hard to make your garden interesting in the winter, especially here on the Coast, where true winter is really a very short season. You can compress the winter season into a shorter time span by planting late-flowering perennials and grasses and early-flowering bulbs so, in a mild year, you may have one or the other blooming pretty well all year. But eventually winter will close in and what will you have to look at then?

The rain, damp, cold, fog, and lack of light discourage us from being
CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

SSGC EXECUTIVE 2017-18

Lee Bolton Robinson

President

Karen Ewing

Vice President

Melodie Brandon

Past President

Brenda Woosnam

Secretary

Dorothy Brown

Treasurer

Gillian Davis

Program Coordinator

Vacant

Asst. Program Coordinator

Susan Lockhart

**Communications &
Webmaster**

Lorna Fraser

Darts Hill Representative

Cindy Tataryn

Flower & Garden Show

Sharon Lawson

Library

Claude Hewitt

Logistics

Dale Kastanis

Membership

Marilyn Bryson

Newsletter Liaison

Linda Stanley Wilson

Newsletter Editor

Anna Ludwinowski

Plant Sale Chair

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

outside much; we feel soggy, frosted, and lethargic in response, so views from windows, driveways, and front walks are what we notice, and those are the spots that we need to focus on for winter interest. What we need in winter is light, colour, texture, interesting form, and some hope for spring. Winter light is quite different from other seasons. It's pale and watery and is low on the horizon, so it filters through the landscape differently, emphasizing the solidity and darkness of conifers and the structure and texture of broadleaf evergreens. Except when they flower (e.g. rhodos), these plants form the dark background of the garden for most of the year, but once herbaceous plants dive for cover underground, the evergreens become features. With deciduous foliage gone, lovely long views of streets, greenbelts, or neighbouring properties may emerge and give us pleasure.

The bones of the garden also become exposed. Hardscape features like walls, fences, arbours, lattices, rocks, and statuary emerge from the foliage and become features. The forms of bare trees like Japanese maples, weeping trees, vase-shaped shrubs, or contorted trees like 'Harry Lauder's Walking Stick,' with its dangling catkins, are beautiful, especially when frilled by frost. Interesting bark on trees like *Parrotia*, varieties of *Stewartia*, or snakebark maples suddenly becomes prominent. Bark can also provide dramatic colour. The white bark of birches is striking; coral-bark maples and the new variety of our native vine maple 'Pacific Fire' glow red, and weeping willows and the yellow-caned varieties of shrub dogwoods like *Cornus sericea* 'Flaviramea' provide sunny accents. There are many other excellent and very tough varieties of shrub dogwoods that provide flaming red, orange, and yellow branches in winter and some of the newer varieties have quite interesting foliage, flowers, and even berries in summer as well. Evergreens can also provide a range of colours from the blues of Blue Star juniper and blue spruce to the golds of many pine and cypress varieties. Gold or variegated broadleaf evergreens also bring light to dark corners on dull days. Some evergreen plants like bergenias, mahonias, azaleas, and leucothoes turn dark red or purple in the cold.

Texture is also important—consider big, bold foliage like *Fatsia* or evergreen magnolias, fine foliage like box or azara shrubs, feathery textures like *Nandina* and evergreen ferns, lacy like *Choisya ternata* 'Sundance' or Himalayan maidenhair fern, spiny like holly and mahonia or spikey like yucca. Evergreen ground covers like

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Kathy Starke

Open Gardens Coordinator

Carole Wood

Door Prize

Claude Hewitt

Monthly Plant Sale

(Table Reservations)

Christine Deagle

Master Gardeners' Desk

Carol Wong

Sunshine Gardeners & Darts Hill Weeders

Claude Hewitt

Lost & Found

Karen Ewing

Phoning Committee Sunshine Greetings

Note: If you know someone in need of a little sunshine, please contact Lee.

Melodie Brandon

Awards

Dick Logie, Ernie Gray, & Bryan Williams

Set-up

Parents, Peace Arch Cubs

Clean-up

Melodie Brandon

Nominating Committee

Ruth Sebastian

Goodies Coordinator

January Newsletter Team:

Linda Stanley Wilson,
Marilyn Bryson, Pam
Robertson, Joan Galloway,
Roger Phillips, Lucina Perkin

CONTINUED FROM PAGE TWO

Pachysandra, shiny *Asarum* or *Beesia*. *Epimedium* suddenly shows up more and contrasts with bare stems and trunks.

Once you've got some structure, form, and texture interest going in your garden, you can add crowning touches. Winter seems a very static time of year so it's nice to have some movement. Grasses add a sense of movement even if they are winter-dead. *Hakonechloa* fades to a pleasant blond colour and retains its lovely flowing form. Late-flowering warm-season grasses like *Miscanthus*, *Panicum*, and *Pennisetum* retain their form and their plumes for much of the winter, and the evergreen cool-season grasses like *Carex*, *Festuca*, and *Helictotrichon* (blue oat grass) retain both colour and form. Birds also provide movement and life to the winter garden, so providing seed heads like rudbeckia, echinacea, and rose hips, berried plants and shrubs, and feeders will encourage them to frequent your garden. They still need to drink and to bathe to keep their feathers clean in winter, so keeping your water features going will attract them as well.

Finally, there is bling for the winter garden. Fragrance is always unexpected and wonderful in the dead of winter. Probably my favourite source is *Sarcococca* (sweet box)—the low growing *hookeriana* species or the taller *ruscifolia* and *confusa*. Their dark shiny leaves and black berries are lovely and they will grow in the darkest shade, but it is the powerful fragrance coming from their tiny inconspicuous flowers in January and February that stops people in their tracks as they come to my front door. *Daphne odora* is more demanding to grow but equally lovely, and its fragrance usually follows on the heels of the *Sarcococca*.

Then there are the winter flowers. I am very fond of these because I like to phone my relatives in Edmonton when they are having a blizzard and tell them what is blooming (my sister won't take my calls until at least April). My current favourite is *Helleborus niger* 'Jacob.' It has neat, attractive evergreen leaves all year, begins to produce large, slightly fragrant, upward-facing pure white flowers with yellow stamens in late November or early December, and blooms its heart out until the end of February, when other hellebores take over. I have it planted where it lifts my heart when I see it from the breakfast table, and it is also planted out by the sidewalk where passersby stop dead, amazed to see such a mass of flowers in the dead of winter. There are also the winter flowering shrubs like *Viburnum bodnantense* 'Dawn,' *Cornus mas* (Cornelian

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE THREE

cherry), *Azara microphylla*, and the various lovely witch hazels (*Hamamelis*). Most of these winter flowering shrubs have the bonus of also being quite fragrant. All of these winter jewels tide us over until the very early spring flowers like snowdrops and aconites bring us that wonderful sense that spring is truly at the starting gate. The blood begins to rush and passion stirs the gardener's soul for another year.

DARTS HILL

By Lorna Fraser

DARTS HILL REPRESENTATIVE

Although January and February are quiet months at Darts Hill, on Saturday, January 14, and then again on Saturday, February 11, the garden will be open from 11 am to 3 pm for members and their guests. New members are always welcome.

The year really begins again with the Annual General Meeting, this year scheduled for Saturday, March 3, from 10 am -to noon. Current and new members are invited to attend this popular function. The agenda includes a brief meeting, volunteer recognition, election of one new board member, and a showcase of plants from the garden. Susan Murray, chair of the DHGCTS, will be the featured speaker, with a presentation on *Fabulous Gardens and Unusual Plants of South Africa*.

Following the meeting, there will be a door prize draw, light refreshments, and a garden tour, starting at 1pm, with Douglas Justice, curator of collections at the UBC Botanical Garden, and longtime friend of Mr. and Mrs. Darts. If you plan to attend, please come early to sign up as a member or renew your membership. The cost of the event is covered by your membership fee. Doors will be open at 9:30.

SHOW WHAT YOU GROW

By Cindy Tataryn and Gillian Roberts

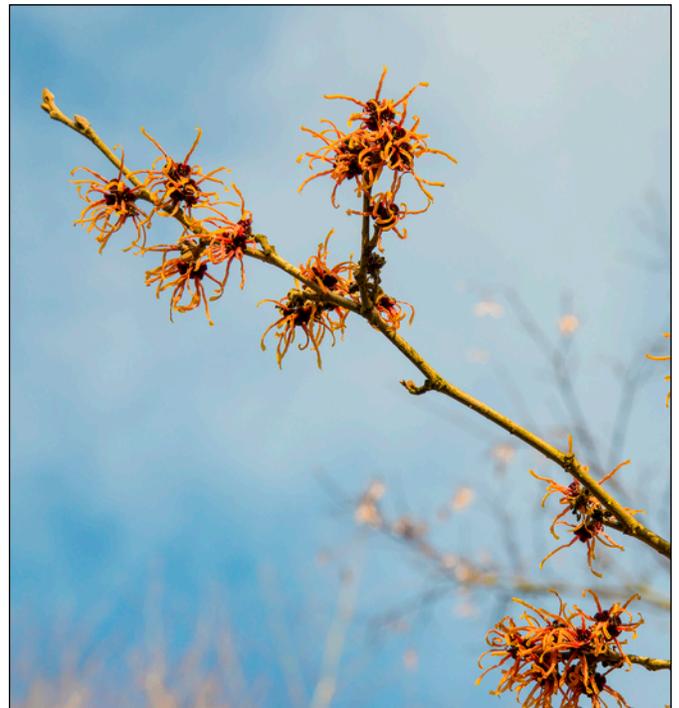
JANUARY-FEBRUARY

1. Witch hazel
2. Interesting branches
3. Bonsai
4. Favourite photos from the garden
5. Anything of interest from your garden
6. Floral design of your choice, theme: *Jack Frost*

These are only suggestions. Please look through your garden and bring something that appeals to you.

This may be the perfect time for some of our members who have flowering bonsai to show off their efforts.

To inspire you to get out in the garden looking for colour, see Joan's article earlier in this issue. You may also be interested in reading this older, but still relevant, article from David Tarrant: "Hardy Flowers for the Winter Garden." You can find it online at: www.bcliving.ca/hardy-flowers-for-the-winter-garden.



OUR SPEAKERS

JANUARY 24

TASHA MURRAY

TOPIC: INVASIVE SPECIES

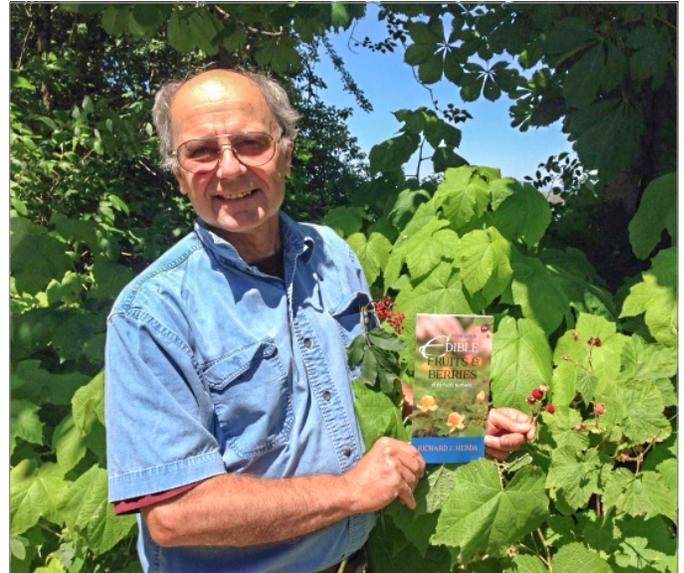
Tasha Murray has been involved in conservation in the Pacific Northwest for nearly 20 years with a focus on invasive species management, volunteer engagement, and education. She has worked for the Invasive Species Council of Metro Vancouver since 2008 and is currently the senior manager.

She lives in Burnaby with her husband and three young daughters, who also love to garden and tackle invasive plants.

The title of Tasha's talk is, *Beyond Plant Invaders*. There are many alien invasive plants in the region, but there are other species such as fire ants and European chafer beetles that are wreaking havoc in our gardens and natural spaces. Learn how to recognize our worst local invaders, what is being done in the region to minimize their impact, and how you can be part of the solution.



JANUARY 15, 2018



FEBRUARY 28

RICHARD HEBDA

TOPIC: NATIVE PLANTS

Richard Hebda has a PhD in botany from the University of British Columbia and recently retired as curator at the Royal British Columbia Museum (Botany and Earth History) after 37 years. He is also an adjunct faculty member at the University of Victoria (Biology, Earth, and Ocean Sciences). Dr. Hebda serves as the Province of B.C.'s science advisor in Paleontology. He was the first faculty coordinator of the Restoration of Natural Systems Program at the University of Victoria and the Province of B.C.'s expert advisor on Burns Bog (purchased as a globally unique ecosystem). He studies the vegetation and climate history of British Columbia, ethnobotany of B.C. First Nations, climate change and its impacts, restoration of natural systems and processes, ecology and origins of Garry oak and alpine ecosystems, and botany of grasses. Dr. Hebda, with his graduate students, is author of 130+ scientific papers and 250+ popular articles, mainly on bulbs, native plants, and climate change, co-author of four books and major reports, and co-editor of three books.

NOVEMBER TIPS

By Joan Galloway

ABOUT NOVEMBER: TIPS, A RANT, AND VODKA

First, a repeat tip for the Christmas season. Many of us like to grow Paperwhite Narcissi for Christmas. They are fragrant and lovely and easy to force just sitting on pebbles in a bowl. Their only downside is that they grow too tall and flop over. To prevent this, wait until the leaves are up and the buds are showing. Then drain out the water from your bed of pebbles and replace it with a solution of vodka and water: 1 oz of vodka or gin to 7-10 oz water. The alcohol impedes the plant's growth, but it will still flower just as well. Don't use beer or wine—the sugar content fosters rotting. Other kinds of hard liquor will also work but will colour the water.

Hellebores are in flower at Christmas and it is nice to use them as cut flowers, but they are notorious for flopping within hours of cutting. To prevent this, the most important thing is to select flowers that have lost their stamens. The petals (actually bracts) are thicker and waxier by then and stand up better. You can cut the flowers with only a 1 inch stem and float them in a bowl. Or they may be conditioned by first re-cutting the stem, immersing the stem in boiling water for 30 seconds (angle it so the steam doesn't wilt the flower), and then plunging the stem into cold water containing one tablespoon of vodka per quart of water. Vodka saves the day again! Or you can buy a small *Helleborus niger* in a little pot, use the whole plant in your Christmas arrangement, and later plant it out in the garden after hardening it off.

THE RANT

My rant is about fall cleanup. We have all listened attentively to the fungus expert (remember the "Fun Guy"?) and other plant disease experts who tell us to be meticulous with plant and garden

and plant debris to reduce overwintering fungal spores and hiding places for pests. Then we listen to talks by current gardening and soil gurus who are arguing for more natural gardening methods and tell us, "Don't clean up your gardens so much. Leave dead perennials up to provide food and shelter for wildlife and to protect the crowns of plants. Don't remove the leaves from your beds. They will decompose and enrich the soil, feed soil organisms and worms, and provide mulch that will suppress weeds, decrease compaction of soil by pounding winter rains, and prevent the freeze-thaw cycles, which damage and heave plants." We are scolded about being too tidy, are told we are being environmentally incorrect, and that we need to learn "to love the natural look" (i.e. mess) of gardens in winter.

No matter what we do we are doing wrong and are consumed with guilt! How is a poor gardener to reconcile all this conflicting advice?

Well, I decided to become a more natural gardener. I left dead plants and grasses up and raked the leaves onto my garden beds. And I discovered: every time we had wind, the leaves blew all over and I was out raking and fishing leaves out of the pool and pond on Boxing Day when I should have been out shopping and on New Year's Eve when I should have been in front of a nice fire with a glass of champagne. And I was out raking in January, and in February, and in March. And my normally friendly neighbours were also out raking up MY leaves and crankily muttering things about "letting things go..." and "neighbourhood property values" and "bylaw officers." By the time the weather got to seriously freezing, all the exposed areas of my garden beds were bare from the wind and they froze and heaved anyway. I was unhappy.

So I decided I would shred the leaves, which would make them into a lovely mulch and hopefully keep them in place. And I discovered:

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE SIX

when I piled them in the driveway and ran over them with the lawnmower, it did a lousy job. So, I piled them on the grass and ran over them with the lawnmower, which worked a bit better, but come spring there was grass sprouting everywhere in my garden and I was burning my husband's ears with bad words as I crawled around on my hands and knees pulling it all out. So then I tried the weedeater-in-a-garbage can shredding method. Do you have any idea how long it takes to shred the 20 bags of leaves I get from my *Parrotia* tree alone? It's a two-person job and my husband went on strike after the first bag. So I looked into electric shredders and discovered that the ones designed for home use only really work on dry leaves. Seriously? Where do they think we live? The commercial ones would break my Visa and displace my car from the garage, so that idea got nixed.

And I discovered: I had more slugs, more rats, fewer birds (because the ground feeders couldn't find the seed under the mounds of leaves), and more fungal diseases. By the second year an impenetrable layer had built up so that the rhodos began to rot and die because their roots were buried, and the irises and peonies refused to bloom for the same reason. So the leaves I raked into my garden in the fall needed to be raked out again in the spring. Too much time raking, not enough time gardening!

So what I do now: I leave a thin layer of Japanese maple leaves (which are small and soft so they stick to the soil when they get wet, don't blow around, and quickly rot and disappear) in my frost-pocket areas that are prone to heaving. On some perennials and grasses I leave about 6-8 inches of the dead stems; these trap some leaves to protect the crowns and get cut down in the spring. Plants like grasses, echinacea, and rudbeckia I leave up if they have attractive forms or seed heads or berries that will feed the birds, and if they don't self-seed all over the place

(producing more bad words as I crawl around pulling out the seedlings come spring). These plants add interest to my winter garden. But as soon as they start collapsing, breaking up and blowing around, or otherwise being a pain, I cut them down. I try to have some winter interest plants such as conifers and broadleaf evergreens, or trees and shrubs with interesting bark or structure. The rest I clean up. What do I do with it all? I live on a city lot and don't have room for a botanically correct composting operation. The compost from my black composting bins doesn't get hot enough so when I spread it, millions of weeds sprout (producing more bad words), so I've secretly given that up too. Don't tell any of the politically correct garden gurus about that please! Now all the fall cleanup stuff goes to the city green collection and I happily pay to get the compost back next year. And I now have more time to put my feet up and drink vodka.

So the message is:

1. Consider the upsides and the downsides of your fall cleanup practices, whatever they are.
2. Decide what works best for YOU and YOUR garden.
3. Don't let anyone make you feel guilty about how you've chosen to do things. We garden for pleasure so no guilt is allowed.

Last and most important: Put your feet up once in a while and drink vodka!

WREATH WORKSHOP

The Program Committee planned a couple of very successful wreath workshops in December at Darts Hill Garden. Be sure to listen carefully for your chance to sign up for the 2018 workshops. Sign-ups are usually in the back of the hall at our meetings. Photo highlights from the wreath workshop appear on the last page.

LIBRARY SHELVES

By Sharon Lawson

Happy new year to all from your library volunteers. In this issue, we would like to highlight one of the shelves in the library. Many may not know that we have books organized by category. One of the categories is *Specific Plant*. This is located on the right hand side of the bookcase just below the middle. These books have a white tab on the bottom of the spine along with the South Surrey Garden Club label.

We have books on many plants, starting with Alliums, through Epimediums, Euphorbias, Ferns, Geraniums (Hardy), Grasses, Hostas, Primulas, and Salvias, to Tulips. In fact there are books on 37 different plants. January, February, and March are the perfect months to spend looking through books to see what you might want to add to your garden this year.

For a complete list of all the *Specific Plants* books, you can access the library website through the SSGC website without even logging in. A link is also sent out with the meeting reminders. Either way, you can just click on the link and voila—you're there! The library is open an hour before the meeting, during the break, and for ten or so minutes after the meeting. Happy reading!

BCCGC

By Lorna Fraser

PRESIDENT, BC COUNCIL OF GARDEN CLUBS

The Annual General Meeting for the BC Council of Garden Clubs is on Saturday, March 10 from 9 am to 3:30 pm. While the SSGC always sponsors two club members to attend this meeting, all club members are invited to come on their own accord. The cost for the day is \$40 and includes

guest speakers, a hot buffet lunch, an opportunity to network with other garden clubs and garden club members, access to garden-related vendors, and the possibility of going home with a door prize. For more information look online at <https://bcgardenclubs.com/wp/council-meetings-2/2018-agm> or contact Lorna Fraser at president@bcgardenclubs.com.

A GARDEN FESTIVAL

By Roger Phillips

A visit to a SSGC Open Garden? . . . Yes!

A weekend tour further afield to see the gardens on Vancouver Island or the Okanagan? . . . Yes, again!

A cross-Pacific trip to New Zealand to attend a garden festival? . . . Why not?!

It was impressive to take part in the Taranaki Festival celebrated by the communities around New Plymouth in the southwest of the North Island. And what a festival! Forty-seven gardens opened to visitors over a 10-day period in springtime (October-November for New Zealand). Seven SSGC members were on the tour seeing eight gardens in two days: from rainforest gardens featuring native plants to exotic spreads with ponds, flowering shrubs, and sculptures in stone and metal.

The lasting memory we will all have is of the personalities of the owners who welcomed us and shared their visions and efforts in creating their gardens.

Now, if the Lower Mainland were to offer a similar Festival, what gardens would be on your list??? . . . Dart's Hill . . . The Glades . . . Van Dusen . . . Sun Yat-Sen . . . Stanley Park . . . Thomas Hobbs . . . ???

Enjoy our photo highlights on the next pages.

NEW ZEALAND ADVENTURE



Rustic archway: Pukherata Garden Roger Phillips photo



Waterfall: Pukekura Garden Roger Phillips photo



Holland Garden: spiral stone herb garden Roger Phillips photo



Te Kainga Marire Garden David Broomhead photo



Stanleigh Roger Phillips photo



More from New Zealand: Anne and Vince's Garden and Cairnhill Garden

David Broomhead photos

DECEMBER WREATH WORKSHOPS

