

GARDEN CLIPPINGS

“Spring is nature's way of saying, ‘Let's party!’” — ROBIN WILLIAMS



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.

WORDS FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

From the Desk of Lee Bolton Robinson

I'm just about done with skeletal, black tree branches etched artfully across skim-milky skies!

Of course, having spent most of January visiting family in Toronto, I have to remind myself that I chose the grey-green of the West Coast over the eye-freezing white of southern Ontario. Both have those mordant trees, waiting for spring, I must admit.

By the time this rant reaches you, it will be spring. One hopes. The garden cycle will continue and we can look forward to our part in it, once the snow reveals the snowdrops.

We can also look forward to the opportunities that our club provides in the way of speakers, tours, workshops, and friendships. What a delight to know that like-minds and friendly faces are available at meetings and events. Those of you who have been long-time members have likely made deep friendships through the club. It is an added perk of the club that gardeners, who are often shy and self-effacing, can find others to share interests, time, and resources.

In my role as facilitator of the meetings of the club, I have noticed that with a jam-packed agenda, there is little time to make authentic contact with even someone you know slightly, let alone someone that you might like to know. There is always business around the agenda to be dealt with.

This energy is what makes the club run and what gives life to our organization. However, for new and more tentative members, a large, bright room, with over one hundred industrious, chatty people who all seem to know each other, can be intimidating.

For that reason, and the changing needs of the club that inspires us to seek new members, we are making efforts to grow our

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SSGC EXECUTIVE 2017-18

Lee Bolton Robinson

President

Karen Ewing

Vice President

Melodie Brandon

Past President

Brenda Woosnam

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Treasurer

Gillian Davis

Program Coordinator

Vacant

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**Communications &
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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

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membership. Consequently, we will need to be more attentive to the opportunities that the general meeting provides before, after, and during the break. This also applies to the activities and workshops, which are great places to make new connections.

Always sporting your name badge, as a courtesy to current and potential members, it might take just a few minutes to introduce yourself to someone new. Just, "Hi! I'm ----. How's your garden doing?" Sounds simple, but speaking in public, even one-to-one, does not come easily to many people. Perhaps making one new contact per meeting might be a good target, or even one per year, could raise our "welcoming quotient" considerably.

And then there are those of us who can never stop talking by 7 pm. That is another matter that the gavel has to mediate . . .

PLANT SALES OF INTEREST

Alpine Garden Club of BC 2018 Spring Plant Show & Plant Sale

Saturday, April 7th, 12-4 pm, free admission

Floral Hall, VanDusen Gardens, 37th & Oak Street, Vancouver

The juried show features exhibits in dozens of categories—many alpine, woodland, and other rare species, as well as unique trough presentations and bonsai. The sale includes not only alpines and woodland plants, but many more from our members' gardens and from some small BC nurseries—rhodos, trees, ground covers, perennials, and of course a great collection of seeds from our members around the world. (Cash and cheques only please.)

Lynn Valley Garden Club Plant Sale

Saturday, May 12th, 10 am-1 pm

St. Clements Anglican Church, 3400 Institute Road, North Van

Wide variety of perennials, shrubs, trees, vines, and ground covers. Hundreds of veggie plants grown by our members.

West Coast Bonsai Society Show & Sale

Saturday, June 9th and Sunday, June 10th, 10-4 pm, free admission

Harry Jerome Rec Centre, 123 23rd Street, North Vancouver

One of the finest collections of bonsai in the Pacific Northwest, cultivated by our bonsai artists, many of whom have studied under bonsai masters in California and Japan. Hands-on demonstrations of training/pruning trees; plants, pots, books, and soil for sale.

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 Karen.

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

MARCH Newsletter Team:
Linda Stanley Wilson,
Marilyn Bryson, Pam
Robertson, Joan Galloway,
Lucina Perkin

SSGC PLANT SALE NEWS

By Anna Ludwinowski

PLANT SALE CHAIRPERSON

Though spring is not quite here, it is time to start preparing for the **Plant Sale**. As we do each year, we will be having a propagating day where donated plants will be divided and prepared for the **Plant Sale**. If you haven't had a chance to participate before, this is an excellent opportunity to come out, meet some members, and learn something new!

We will be holding our propagating day on Wednesday, March 21st. It will be held at Gwen and Paul Odermatt's house, from 9:30 am until the afternoon. This is weather-permitting, but do dress warmly, as it may still be cool. Please bring clean pots, secateurs, gloves, and a snack. (Sharing snacks are always welcome!)

Also, this is a good time to have a look and see if there's anything in your garden that could use some division. And while we would love to give every plant their new "forever home," some plants just aren't that easy to place! For example daylilies and iris—especially unnamed/no specified colour ones—don't sell well.

Keep in mind that variety and uniqueness make good sellers! We would ask that your plant donations be kept to about 8-10 pots worth of any given plant—best not to have too much of a good thing!

As I'm currently away, please contact Gwen directly if you wish to donate any plants or volunteer (petalsandbutterflies@shaw.ca). Thank you all for your participation and contributions.

DARTS HILL WEEDERS

By Carol Wong

The Darts Hill Garden weeder group will be starting up at the end of March. It's an amazing opportunity to contribute to this world-class garden, which is right here in South Surrey. New members to the weeding group are always welcome and this is a great place to meet new garden friends. If you would like to join us, but haven't had a chance to sign up, or if you have any questions, please email Carol Wong at cmillerwong@gmail.com.

OUR SPEAKERS

MARCH 21: JAMES SPEARS TOPIC: THE KITSILANO KITCHEN GARDEN A 12-MONTH LARDER

James loves talking about veggies. Like many gardeners, after 40-plus years of gardening, he finds it difficult to not talk about veggies.

James has a unique background, which includes teaching multimedia and photography at two universities, one in Caracas and the other in Washington, DC—two very diverse locations. He was also a newspaper columnist in the 1970s, had a CBC radio spot as a movie critic for two years, and as a lawyer, he taught or led roughly 50 legal education events. After retiring from law, he is happily speaking about vegetable gardening.

James reports that he has harvested insufficient amounts of Spanish saffron, wasabi, olives, kiwi fruit from his 33-foot wide Kitsilano garden.

But he is happy to boast about an abundance of mint, arugula, runner beans, peas, lovage, Jerusalem artichoke, plain old artichoke, cabbage, figs, chives, yellow beans, tomatoes, onions, chard, lettuce, daikon, peppers, grapes, Italian parsley, mizuna and mibuna greens, dill, garlic and regular chives, winter savoury, thyme, myrtle, potatoes, eggplant, leek, radish, Brussels sprouts, carrot, garlic, beet, cuke and zuchinni, French and dry-style beans, winter (or perennial) arugula, kale, leeks, cilantro, wild celery (par-cel), raspberries, sorrel, salad burnet, rue, red sage, blue sage, pineapple sage, rosemary, curry plant, chives, nasturtium flowers (to eat) and seeds (to pickle), oregano, marjoram, Cuban oregano, and a few herbs or veggies that he has forgotten. He eats ripe tomatoes in early June (from a hoop enclosure). And he grew corn, many *ears ago, on a Langley acre, where he persuaded his wife to marry him, serving her popcorn from his garden.



Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden

APRIL 25: HAYNE WAI AND BOB WILMOTT TOPIC: INTRODUCING THE DR. SUN YAT-SEN CLASSICAL CHINESE GARDEN

Master Gardeners Hayne Wai and Bob Wilmott will provide a presentation on the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden in Vancouver's Chinatown. This Ming dynasty-style garden, which opened in 1986, was the first full Chinese garden ever built outside of China. Their 45-minute presentation will introduce the essential elements of a Chinese garden and walk through the halls, courtyards, and corridors—with particular reference to plants, shrubs, and trees, and their appropriate maintenance to reflect a classical Ming dynasty elegance.

Bob is a veteran Master Gardener (1999), garden designer, and board member of the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden Society. Hayne is a more recent Master Gardener (2013), served on the garden's board, and continues as a docent. He is a past president of the Chinese Canadian Historical Society of BC.

TRUE CONFESSIONS OF A GARDENER

By Joan Galloway

Editor's Note: *In each issue, we share Joan's tips as she presented them at our meeting.*

Maybe it's because of the white collar I was wearing at the last meeting but suddenly gardeners have been confessing their sins to me. I want to emphasize that it was NOT me who committed these crimes, but the names of the perpetrators are protected by the seal of the confessional. My tips for today stem from these stories of woe.

Our first gardener had a neighbour who was a wonderful gardener. There was this clump of lilies in her garden that our gardener particularly lusted after. The neighbour's house came to be sold to new owners who were thrilled with the lovely garden. Before she left, the neighbour generously told our gardener that she could dig up some of the lilies. Our gardener was busy and didn't get to it right away, and soon the neighbour's house was vacant as the new owners were not moving in immediately. Suddenly our gardener realized that, despite the rain, she'd better get on with it or she'd miss her chance. So there she was armed with rain slicker, muddy gumboots, and bucket and trowel with mud on her nose and bedraggled hair, when from behind her she heard, "Excuse me—just what do you think you're doing?" I don't think I need to tell you what the tip from this story is.

Our second gardener tells a similar story. She sold her house and moved to a new one late in the year. There wasn't much of a garden at the new house so she was looking forward to making a beautiful new garden and had taken some of her favourite plants with her. But then she realized that Christmas was coming and she missed the

lovely holly tree in her old yard that had furnished her with branches and berries for her festive arrangements. She should have taken some cuttings to grow a new holly before she left. The new owners had not yet moved in. You can see where this is going. The gardener felt a little guilty about going onto the property to take cuttings so she decided to go at night. Armed with her secateurs and a flashlight, she set off the next evening. It was dark and the house was on a quiet street so she should have been fine. She crept up the driveway and there was the holly tree. Just as she reached for her secateurs, headlights appeared down the street. "I'll just crouch down till that car goes past so no one will see me." But instead of carrying on down the street, the lights suddenly raked around into the driveway and there she was, crouching at the foot of the tree, pinned by the lights with the new owners saying, "What on earth are you doing?" Again, the tip from this story is pretty obvious.

Our third gardener was a very earnest woman who was concerned about the state of the environment and the declining populations of pollinators. She decided to raise mason bees to pollinate her fruit trees and, after careful research and purchasing an appropriate mason bee house and cardboard tubes, she bought some cocoons to hatch in the spring.

She was informed by the mason bee expert that if she kept the cocoons in too warm a place they could hatch prematurely, so she should keep them in the fridge until the appropriate time. She had a second fridge in the basement of her home so she put them in there—carefully on the door of the fridge so they wouldn't get lost and maybe crushed in between other things. Then she forgot about them. Several months later there was company coming to stay. She was rushing around getting organized and getting in extra food, some of which she went to put in the second fridge. When she opened the fridge door, she was

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horrified when a cloud of flies came crawling out and started flying around the house. "Oh my God, something must be rotten and full of maggots in my fridge!" She raced around with a fly swatter and killed every one of those flies. Then it dawned on her.

So the tip from this story is that mason bees don't look like bees—they are smaller than a honeybee and look like flies with slightly fuzzy, shiny blue-black bodies. That's why their other common name is blue orchard bee. And the door is warmer than the rest of your fridge, so tuck them in the back!

NEWS BITS

SSGC CONSTITUTION

A dedicated group of volunteers are currently working on updating our constitution to better reflect the current nature of our organization. Lorna Fraser began this project last year and the team of seasoned garden club members is continuing with updates now. It is anticipated that a revised constitution will be presented at our July AGM. Our commercial policy and any other relevant policy items are being reviewed at the same time, so as to ensure consistency of intent. You may be interested in our current commercial policy, which can be found on page 9.

GREETERS

To welcome new members and guests, we hope to have two to three greeters at each meeting. Greeters will stand by the front door to welcome our guests and introduce them to a few other members of the club. We hope that this will make our guests feel welcome so that they will join our club. Would you like to be a greeter? Please contact Lorna Fraser (lornafrazer@beansrus.ca) to sign up. You do not need to commit to each meeting—we hope to have a pool of volunteers who will be able to take turns during the year. Lori

Ross developed a helpful set of guidelines for new greeters to review. You will also receive a name tag for easy identification.

NEW BROCHURE

In an effort to grow our membership, the executive is looking at a number of new initiatives to promote our club. Recently, we put together a brochure that can be made available at outside events, the city libraries, and other venues to advertise our club. This new brochure made its debut at the recent BCCGC meeting where it was very well-received. Further enhancements will be made and we hope to have it available at a variety of events during the upcoming City of Surrey's Environmental Extravaganza.

REACHING OUT

Our social media efforts are growing! In an additional effort to reach new potential members, our Communication Team has developed an Instagram feed and we have started to post our meeting information on a variety of local Facebook pages. Our Seize the Spade Facebook page has also been made public, so that we can further entice garden lovers to come visit the club.

Our website, primarily for continuing members, is under review. This is partially due to increasing costs by our current vendor (Wild Apricot) and also so that we can develop an easier interface to enable members to find information quickly. Many of you know that we also have an active discussion group where members can ask other members for advice. Go to: tinyurl.com/yctdo8ej for details.

Here are some web addresses that you might find helpful when looking for SSGC content. On the last page, you'll find a few of the photos recently featured on the Instagram feed.

SSGC website: southsurreygardenclub.ca

Facebook page:
facebook.com/groups/southsurreygardenclub

SSGC Instagram page:
www.instagram.com/southsurreygardenclub

LIBERATE YOUR SHRUB MAKE IT A TREE

By Joan Galloway

Is your garden too small to truly accommodate a full-size tree? Do you have a thriving shrub that initially looked lovely in your planting plan but has now transformed into a hulking malignancy devouring everything in its path, leaving no room for your carefully planned progression of blooming plants in front of it? Or has it grown into a big amorphous blob of green lurking in the corner except for its two weeks of glory when it blooms? Or have you sheared it into twiggy oblivion in an attempt to control its size? Well, before you lose your temper and pull it out or whack it down to the ground, consider arborizing it—which means turning it into a small tree.

Not all shrubs are candidates for this treatment. Shrubs with multiple canes like forsythia, red-twig dogwoods, or spirea won't do—there are different techniques for them. But consider the rhododendron or pieris that has grown too tall and dense. Or shrubby star magnolias, lilacs, hollies, Rose of Sharon, and large yews—they all make lovely small trees. Even some bushy Japanese maples can benefit from this treatment. Have a look at the trunk structure of the shrub—there are usually a number of main trunks arising from the base. For rhodos and pieris simply removing some of the lower branches to reveal the trunks succeeds in “lifting” the shrub's structure and it may even take on an appearance similar to a bonsai. This is considerably more interesting than a dense green blob and leaves room for other plants to grow beneath and in front of it. Another shrub that is an excellent candidate for this is Harry Lauder's Walking Stick (*Corylus avellana* 'Contorta'). These contorted shrubs have a beautiful structure that is strikingly displayed in the winter, but in summer, they

become blobs covered with coarse, contorted leaves—not strikingly attractive. Remove the lower branches from a multi-stemmed Harry Lauder's and the lovely twisted trunks are exposed, transforming it into a graceful, oriental-appearing focal point for your garden all year round.

Before you embark on any major surgery on your shrub do the basic three D's. That is, you need to remove any dead, diseased, or damaged material first. Sometimes after you've done that, the shrub looks so much better you don't need to do anything else. If you decide to “lift” your shrub you may need to begin by crawling inside the shrub to see what its trunk and branch structure actually is like so you can plan what to remove. Start with the lowest branches arising from the trunk, but first grab the branch and bend it down gently to see what will be left if you remove it. Then cut it off right at the branch collar arising from the trunk, not leaving any ugly stubs. Re-evaluate after every cut until you're pleased with the look. You can do this either by employing an artistic director to watch and direct your cuts or by crawling out of the shrub, assessing, and then crawling back in to cut some more. It's not a speedy process, it's an artistic one. Remember, you can always remove more later. A good rule of thumb is that the exposed trunk shouldn't be more than a third of the total height of the shrub/tree. Another general rule of pruning is that you shouldn't remove more than a third of the plant's material per year (not counting the three D stuff), so a total renovation of a shrub may take three or four years.

When should you do this? Traditionally pruning is done in either winter or the summer. In winter it's easier to see the structure of the shrub. But remember that in winter, when the plant is dormant, all the energy the shrub produced last season has been stored in the roots. In spring

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OP SEED LIBRARY

Have you ever taken out a book at the library? We have another option for you to consider: borrow seeds, and return them at the end of the growing season. You get to enjoy the produce or flowers, and all that we ask is that you plant one plant for the library and bring us back the seed. This simple idea works to keep varieties of vegetables that grow and thrive here available to gardeners.

We often have varieties that are not in the local stores. We are a living seed exchange, currently sharing 60 varieties of regionally adapted, open-pollinated, and self-fertile seed. Some are heritage seeds, some are valued family seeds passed on through generations, and some are common. Their importance is that they have all grown in the area and all are fresh seed.

Volunteers take your name and you can choose up to six different packages from the list of donated seed available. Your only obligation is to return some seed. If the slugs eat your plants or if they don't grow, we understand; we are gardeners too. We have a list of what is donated each year, so we may have what you want, or we may not. If you grow something unusual, you can always bring us seed for others to try. We do get some packages donated by West Coast Seeds, but hand out only a small amount so that several gardeners can try the same seed.

There are demonstrations on how to save your seeds and information pamphlets are available to take home.

The Seed Library is run by volunteers, including local Master Gardeners, at the Ocean Park Library on the third Saturday of each month from February to November, from 10:30 am to 3:30 pm. The next two dates are March 17th and April 21st. Please come by and visit us. For more information, contact us at: surreyseedlibrary@gmail.com.

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there will be more energy than there are branches to fill with leaves, so the excess energy will go into producing new growth. On some plants that growth takes the form of masses of "water sprouts," those new branches that grow straight up from the cut areas—not pretty. Pruning in summer—preferably during a dry, but not excessively hot spell in about July—will reduce the leaf canopy that produces all the energy for winter storage, so less vigorous new growth should take place.

SHOW WHAT YOU GROW

By Cindy Tataryn and Gillian Roberts

These are only suggestions; if you have something that you have grown that you would like to share, please bring it to the meeting. Please remember to label your treasures.

MARCH

1. Flowering bulbs, primroses, or violas
2. Flowering branches (max. 18")
3. Any other spring-flowering exhibit
4. Floral Design: **Easter Treasure**—a design of your choice

APRIL

1. Camellia, rhododendron, or azalea
2. Any other flowering shrub, tree, or branch (max. 18")
3. Spring bulbs or corms: *Anemone*, *Narcissus* (daffodil), *hyacinth*, *Muscari*, tulip, etc.
4. Any other spring-flowering exhibit
5. Floral Design: **Spring has Sprung**—a design of your choice.

This year, the **Flower and Garden Show** will be June 27th, so while you are flipping through the seed catalogues, remember to plant something you can enter into the show!

SSGC COMMERCIAL CONTENT POLICY

Editor's Note: *The policy below can be found on our website. It is reprinted here as a reminder to our members.*

- Commercial content is meant to include the advertising, promoting, and/or selling of products or services to SSGC members.
- This could take place at meetings, the plant sale, via the newsletter, website, Yahoo discussion group, or the Seize the Spade Facebook page.
- The aim of a policy regarding commercial content is to provide information, goods, and services that are of benefit to members and which "advance horticulture in all its branches," as per the SSGC constitution.
- A disclaimer should be included in the newsletter and on the website that SSGC does not endorse any product or service mentioned.

MEETINGS

Speakers are encouraged to bring plants, products, or books related to their talk for sale to members (within the limits of the space available).

The Program Committee should liaise with the Logistics Chairperson regarding requirements of the speaker. The Program Committee is responsible for coordinating any such sales and the loading and unloading of product.

Members who wish to sell plants or other garden-related materials or items must contact the Logistics Chairperson several days prior to the meeting and request a table. Tables are available to members on a first-come-first-served basis and as space allows. A flat fee of \$5 will be charged, to be paid to the treasurer at the meeting.

If the sale is to take place in the parking lot, the same conditions apply, i.e. the vendor is a

member, a request is made to the Logistics Chairperson, and payment of the \$5 fee.

Announcements at meetings: A member wishing to make a "commercial" announcement (e.g. sale of Christmas trees, apples) must contact the President prior to the meeting to ensure that there is time available on the agenda and must keep the announcement brief.

Distribution of handouts or notices: Appropriate handouts that are of benefit to members and no cost to the club must be cleared first with the President, who will use his/her discretion

Posting of notices at meetings: The President should be contacted for approval prior to a general meeting and the notice given to the secretary for posting.

PLANT SALE

Anyone wishing to sell plants or plant-related items at the Plant Sale must be a club member and must adhere to Plant Sale guidelines. A member can choose to give 25% of the sale price of a plant to the club (member keeps 75%) or can donate the full proceeds to SSGC.

NEWSLETTER

There is no advertising of commercial products, services, or events in the newsletter.

Articles should provide gardening, not product or business-specific, information. If any products are mentioned, there should be links to reputable sources, such as a university extension program, for more information.

WEBSITE

The resources page lists, at no charge, local nurseries in Surrey/Delta/Langley and specialty nurseries in the Lower Mainland. The upcoming events page, due to data-entry time constraints, lists only non-profit and community events. Workshops sponsored by commercial nurseries are not listed.

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SHOW & TELL

By Anna Burian

JANUARY

Bergenia cordifolia 'Winter Glow' ('Winterglut')

- Common name pigs squeak, in reference to the sound the leaf makes when rubbed between two fingers.
- Thick, glossy, dark green leaves take on a deep red colour in the fall.
- Blooms March-May with rose pink flowers.
- Prefers well-drained, sunny location.
- 'Red Beauty' has more rounded smaller leaves with deep purplish red flowers

Heuchera villosa 'Magnum'

- Likes well-drained soil (heavy clay soils and winter wet are the death knell to many a *Heuchera*). This can be rectified by using raised beds or planting in containers.
- The plants must be divided every two to four years. One method is to dig the entire plant and just bury the whole crown of it in a deeper hole.
- Most should be pruned in mid to late March so winter-damaged leaves don't take away from the plant when the new leaves emerge.
- They need good air circulation.
- Depending on the species or the cultivar, they fit into a wide range of situations, from full sun, part shade to full shade.
- The cultivar 'Magnum' is a very sturdy plant with a velvety appearance. It also tolerates more sun and heat than many *Heuchera*.

Galanthus elwesii

- Giant snowdrop.
- Much larger than normal *Galanthus* and blooms earlier.
- Much larger bulbs.

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YAHOO DISCUSSION GROUP AND FACEBOOK

The discussion group has its own guidelines, available on the website. While the discussion group and the Facebook page are not commercial conduits, personal sales of garden-related items are acceptable. Recommendations for gardening services are personal opinion and can be posted, but are not endorsed by the club.

EMAIL

Email solicitations received through the SSGC email address will be dealt with according to these guidelines by the Communications Coordinator and brought to the attention of the Executive.

MASON BEES

MASON BEES/BLUE ORCHARD BEES/ *OSMIA LIGNARIA PROPINQUA*

Editor's Note: *The following information comes from an article submitted by SSGC member Bryan Williams. The Program Committee recently offered a mason bee workshop by Roger Phillips (photos on our last page) and this information may be of interest to members.*

In the city and suburbs, we have depended on honeybees to pollinate our fruit trees. However, wild honeybee colonies are no longer present, since they have been decimated by two parasitic mites, and some municipalities have bylaws against keeping honeybees in backyards. If you live in an area where there are beekeepers who manage their colonies, you should see lots of honeybees. Generally, backyard gardeners have noticed a decrease in fruit production in their backyards over the last three to four years. This is because there are not enough wild honeybees or other wild bees around to pollinate your flowers.

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If you provide nests for mason bees, they will reproduce and pollinate your fruit trees in return.

Mason bees are solitary bees and create a series of rooms in a tunnel (7.5 mm diameter, 5/16"), one room at a time, starting at the back and working forward. Pollen and nectar is collected and formed into a pillow. The female lays her egg on top of the pillow and seals the room with clay. The last room is capped with an extra cap of mud. In spring, the outer room empties first, by bees digging their way through the mud plug. (If bees in the front of the tunnel are unable to break out, bees die in that nesting tunnel.) Optimum tube length for increasing your population is 15-20 cm (6-8"). If it is shorter, a larger proportion of males are produced.

Bees in the outer chambers are usually males and they emerge first, and hang around the next tunnel entrance. There is very little flight and you may think they are sick. These males are waiting for females. A few days later, females emerge and are mated. After mating the females go to work collecting pollen and nectar and begin laying eggs to produce offspring for the following spring. Note: If woodpeckers find your nest, you can protect your bees by crimping chicken wire over the nest openings, about 1.5 cm (3") from the openings.

Emergence of the bees happens from mid-March to mid-June. Longevity of the bees is increased with continuous flower bloom in your garden. If there are not sufficient flowers that provide food for bees, the bees die. Insecticide sprayed on blooming flowers will also kill your bees. After June, other insects such as flies, beetles, and butterflies, as well as other bee species, including other mason bee species, do the pollinating.

I have not heard of anyone being stung by these bees, although they have a stinger. Some say that their sting is milder than a mosquito bite.

STEPS FOR PLACING NEST INTO YOUR BACKYARD

DOs

1. Attach nest (about chest height) to a warm and south facing wall of a shed or house within 70 m (225') of flowers.
2. Provide bees with an easy place to gather mud. Dig a hole about 1' x 2' long x 1'+ deep through to the mineral soil layer. Bees need mineral soil (not organic soil) to create dividers between eggs and the final outer plugs.

DON'Ts

1. Do not place nests in the shade since bees need sun to warm up and begin pollinating work.
2. Do not move nest during the summer. Jarring bees inside the nest can damage and kill the bees.

Mason Bee Lifecycle



SEEDY SATURDAY

The South Surrey Garden Club will be at the Stewart Farmhouse Seedy Saturday on April 7th, 11-3. One of our goals is to let the community know about our club and encourage new memberships. We will have an information table with information about the upcoming Plant Sale, club pamphlets, membership forms, and two club members to answer questions. Our secretary,

Woosnam, and vice president, Karen Ewing, have volunteered to attend. Activities include heirloom seeds and plants from local vendors for sale, and a seed swap and exchange. Whether you're a budding green thumb or expert seed saver, there's something for everyone! Come celebrate National Tartan Day with Scottish-themed crafts, goodies, and activities.

SSGC INSTAGRAM PHOTOS



MASON BEE WORKSHOP



Roger Phillips providing guidance during his workshop



Workshop participants

Photos by Kathy Starke