

OVER THE GARDEN GATE



The Newsletter of the Valley Gardeners Club

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UPCOMING EVENTS

September 4, 2018 - 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm, Rhododendron Society Annual Steele Lecture. "New Hydrangeas for Cold Climate Gardens" with Maurice Foster, Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, 1747 Summer St. Halifax.

September 10, 2018 - Valley Gardeners Pot Luck for members and guests. Bring a hot or cold dish or dessert. Celebrate our fall harvest in the Annapolis Valley. Please come for 5:30 pm to The Wolfville Farm Market. Cutlery and dishes will be provided but bring your own if you want to save on unrecycleable plastic. Our speaker at 7:30 pm is Jackie Bezanson from Blomidon Nurseries on "Grasses". If you can help with set-up please come at about 4:30. Don't forget...you are welcome to bring a friend. Lots of chance to chat gardening over supper. Perennial exchange. If anyone has surplus produce they want to share, bring it along too.

September 10, 2018 - The Honey Harvest Festival, Newport Landing waterfront, 17 Belmont Rd, Newport Landing, 10am - 4 pm.

September 15, 2018 - Avondale Garlic Fest 10am to 5 pm. Avondale Sky Winery grounds. More info at <http://www.avondalegarlicfest.com/>

October 15, 2018 - Joint meeting with Blomidon Naturalists. Room 241, BAC, Acadia. The speaker is Doug Hickman on Water and Wildlife in the Backyard.

June 7/8, 2019 - NSAGC Convention, Louis Millet Centre, New Minas.

MURDER AND MAYHEM IN THE PLANT WORLD

Lately there has been a great interest in native plants. We see them in the woods, along the roadside and in our gardens. But have you stopped to think how we got those other wonderful plants found in our gardens? They were a native plant also, but from other countries. How did they come to be available at our local nursery?

We can thank those whose passion for plants sent them all over the world; a passion so great that they were willing to lose their lives in search for that next great plant. Their names are remembered in those Latin plant titles we have such trouble learning - *farreri*, *banksii*, *davidii*, *souliei*, *forrestii*, etc. The search for new plants dates far back in time. John Tradescant the Younger (1608–1662) travelled three times to the swamps and thickets of Virginia.

From the time of Sir Joseph Banks, who had accompanied Captain Cook on HMS Endeavour's voyage to the South Pacific and became head of Kew Gardens in 1773, plant hunters radiated out across the globe, but China and India held the greatest attraction at this time. Reginald Farrer was among the early British plant-hunters who risked death to explore the botanically rich interior of China in the name of science. Travelling through northern China with William Purdom in 1914, the party was only a few days ahead of a notorious bandit army.

That lovely little *Gentiana sino-ornata* was one of over 31,000 plant specimens brought back by George Forrest who survived although most of his party were killed outright or tortured to death by lamas in Yunnan in 1905. Over 30 genera bear his name as *forrestii*.

Many priests who went to China took up the hobby of plant collecting. Among them were Père Armand David, whose discoveries in Sichuan included the Giant Panda, the common Butterfly Bush *Buddleja davidii*, and Handkerchief Tree *Davidia involucreta*. Père Jean Marie Delavay, who went to China in 1867, became the pre-eminent missionary botanist, and died there peacefully in 1895. Not all were so lucky. Père Soulié, who brought us many rhododendrons including *R. souliei*, was tortured for 5 days by Tibetan monks and then shot. His assistants, who tried to escape with George Forrest, Père Bourdonnec, Jules Dubernard and Montbeig, were also murdered.

One of the greatest of plant collectors in the Far East was Robert Fortune. Three times he was attacked by river pirates. His most valuable introduction was *Rhododendron fortunei* from Chekiang in 1855; he also introduced the tea plant from China to India.

Lilium regale were introduced to the UK by the great plant hunter Ernest "Chinese" Wilson in 1910. He found them growing in the Min Valley in south-west China and as he was collecting them, he was caught in a landslide and broke his leg in two places. The injury left him with a limp for the rest of his life.

Frank Kingdon-Ward (1885-1958) made over 20 plant hunting trips. His greatest find was the blue poppy *Meconopsis speciosa* which he found and wrote about in *The Land of the Blue Poppy* published in 1913. Disappointing because it failed to survive in England. *Meconopsis betonicifolia* did survive in its stead, being a perennial, and became known as the Himalayan Blue Poppy.

Lupins, California poppies and many of the conifers that are now staples of our arboretums and suburban gardens were introduced by David Douglas who paid for his discoveries with his life: he was killed in the Sandwich Islands at the age of 35 in a pit dug to trap wild bullocks.

People suffered and died so we could have a few pretty plants in our gardens. And it was not just in Victorian times. Tom Hart-Dyke and Paul Winder were kidnapped by FARC guerillas while hunting for rare orchids on the border between Panama and Colombia in 2000. They were held for nine months and threatened with death, an experience they describe in their book, *The Cloud Garden*. Just this year Rod and Rachael Saunders, rare seed hunters, were killed by bandits in South Africa.

The story of plant hunters is too long and complex to go into here in detail, but I encourage you to look into their stories at your nearest library. They are some of the greatest adventure stories, vying with the adventures of Indiana Jones. I hope you have a greater appreciation of how that little plant, which you are admiring in the peace and tranquillity of your garden, came to be available to you..

For a good outline of plant hunters see

<http://www.rhododendron.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/A-Brief-History-of-the-British-Plant-Hunters-v2-sml.pdf>

SUMMER READING

As promised, here is a member's favourite non-how-to reading list. Thank you Janet Alsop.

1. **Elsie's Paradise:** The Reford Gardens - Alexander Reford (2004)
2. **Sissinghurst:** A Castle's Unfinished History, Restoring Vita Sackville-West's Celebrated Estate - Adam Nicolson (2008)
3. **Churchill & Chartwell:** The Untold Story of Churchill's Houses and Gardens - Stefan Buczacki (2007)
4. **Gertrude Jeckyll at Munstead Wood** - Judith Tankard & Martin Wood (2015)
5. **A Plank Bridge by a Pool** - Norman Thelwell (1978)
6. **A Garden Lost in Time:** The Mystery of the Ancient Gardens of Aberglasney - Penny David (1999)
7. **The Greater Perfection:** the Story of the Gardens at Les Quatre Vents - Francis H. Cabot (2001)
8. **The Garden at Chatsworth** - The Duchess of Devonshire (1999)
9. **The Garden at Highgrove** - H.R.H. The Prince of Wales and Candida Lycett Green (2000)
10. **Garden Voices:** Two Centuries of Canadian Garden Writing - eds. Edwinna von Baeyer and Pleasance Crawford (1995)

I have read many of these and it is a great list (Donna)

HORTICULTURAL SHOW

Our 2018 Horticultural Show is history. Thanks to Sandi Carroll and her Committee for all their hard work. Allison entertained everyone with his talk on ear worms. As usual the tea, looked after by Adeline Blatt, was a great success. Members went all out to provide the goodies. And thanks to those who entered each of the show categories. There were 228 entries, down somewhat from previous years, understandable with the lack of moisture and incessant heat of the summer. There was a noticeable lack of arrangements, again probably due in a large part to a lack of flowers, but also a diminishing interest in flower arranging in general.

The Best in the Show plaque was awarded to Wendy Raeside of Wolfville for her spectacular *Fuscia thalia*, which also won the plaque for Best Houseplant. Wendy also took the prize for the Best Cut Flower with her multi-coloured gladiolus entry.

Other plaques were won by Rosaleen McDonald for Best Floral Design for her horizontal pavé floral design. Rosaleen also won the Best Vegetable plaque with her zucchini squash.

Kelly Stevens of Kingsport won the plaque for the Best Culinary Entry with her beautiful three-tiered vanilla bean cake with lemon curd.

Jean Gibson Collins dominated the photography section, winning all four classes.

Suzie Blatt's herbaceous hibiscus was awarded the People's Choice.

Well done everyone. Now to start preparing for next year....start reading your books on flower arranging ...

LEAVES

"It dawned on me, also at this precise moment, that I had become one of those highly eccentric, rather recherché species - a plantaholic: usually quite normal people except for their one weakness - which is luckily only a spasmodic affliction, the symptoms of which appear when a totally irresistible, deeply desirable plant flies into sight and you know instantly, that to satisfy this passionate need you may have to sell your house, your soul, even your grandmother." Christian Lamb, *From the Ends of the Earth*. 2004.

DID YOU KNOW

The Dominion Atlantic Railway (DAR) operated a greenhouse in Kentville from 1920 to 1958 to provide flowers to the Grand Pre Park station gardens and to grow pine seedlings for windbreaks. It was built in 1920 after the DAR bought the Grand Pre park. The greenhouse was located just north of the Kentville Station between the British Canadian fruit warehouse and the DAR employee tennis courts. It was 75 feet long and included an attached potting shed facing River Street.

By the late 1930s, it was producing 20,615 plants a year in 81 varieties, supplying the Grand Pre park and ten station gardens. The DAR's Gardener in the 1940s, Roscoe Fillmore, became a regional celebrity hosting a CBC Radio show called "The Maritime Gardener". However after the DAR sold the Grand Pre park and downgraded its stations in the face of dwindling passenger traffic, there was less justification for flowers and plants. The greenhouse was demolished and replaced by a parking lot in 1959 two years after the DAR sold the Grand Pre Park to the federal government. (Dominion Atlantic Railway Digital Preservation Initiative - Wiki) Thanks to Roni Fenwick, Acadia Library.

HORTICULTURAL SOCIETIES CAN HELP!!

Charles Branas, Chair, Department of Epidemiology, Columbia U., was invited to discuss his research at a conference in Philadelphia. During his presentation, he briefly mentioned his interest in running an experiment on the physical factors related to gun violence. "When I finished, someone from the **Pennsylvania Horticultural Society** approached me," Branas recalled. That person was convinced that vacant properties—Philadelphia had tens of thousands of empty lots—were driving up violent crime in poor neighborhoods. The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, or P.H.S., had incredible data, and offered to help.

According to the team's research, there were 49,690 such lots in Philadelphia. P.H.S. had remediated at least 4,436 of them, which meant it had cleared trash and debris, graded the land, planted grass and trees to create a park-like setting, and installed low fences with walk-in openings to facilitate recreational use and deter illegal dumping.

- *Excerpted from The New Yorker, August 23, 2018*

IN THE GARDEN

- Bring summer vacationing houseplants back indoors while the windows are still open. Check carefully for hitchhiking pests.
- September is a good time to plant new perennials as the soil is still warm but there is generally more rainfall.
- Start to divide herbaceous perennials as the weather cools. Make sure you water in the new divisions well.
- Think about which bulbs you would like for next spring - now is the time to order for autumn planting.
- It's the ideal time to order trees and shrubs. They will grow vigorously next spring if planted this autumn and watered well.
- Pull or cut off the foliage of main crop potatoes at ground level 3 weeks before lifting them to prevent blight spores infecting the tubers as you lift them. This will also help to firm the skins of the potatoes.

- When beans and peas finish cropping simply cut the plant away at ground level, leaving the roots in the soil. These crops fix nitrogen which is slowly released into the soil as the roots break down.
- Place pumpkins and squashes on a piece of slate or wood to raise them off the wet soil and prevent rotting.
- Start the autumn cleanup. Remove any old crops that have finished and clear away weeds to leave your plot clean and tidy for the winter.
- The end of this month is the perfect time to start planting garlic bulbs for cropping next year.
- If you haven't already, cut back the fruited canes of your summer raspberries, leaving the new green canes for next year's crop. Tie in next year's raspberry canes to support wires or fencing.
- Sow green manures such as rye grass on uncultivated areas to improve soil and keep weeds down over winter.
- See to your compost bins in preparation for all the fallen leaves and dead plant material which you'll be collecting over the coming months. Autumn leaves make a great addition to compost bins and are ideal for making leaf mould.
- Dispose of diseased plant material by burning it or putting it in with your household waste. Don't compost it as the spores may remain in the compost and reinfect your plants.
- You can feed your lawn with an autumn fertiliser now, which is rich in potassium and low in nitrogen.
- Make notes in your garden journal of what you want to change next year. Your ideas will be totally forgotten by spring.

FROM THE GARDEN RECIPE BOX

Something that I have developed a taste for are green tomatoes. Of course everyone loves Chow but I now have a bit of a list of favourite recipes using them in different ways. I offer one for you to try. Be brave - you might like it!

GREEN TOMATO QUICK BREAD (makes 2 loaves - one for you and one for the freezer)

3 cups flour

1/4 teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 cup granulated sugar

1 cup packed light brown sugar

1 tablespoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon salt

2 large eggs, lightly beaten

1 cup vegetable oil

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

2 cups grated or very finely chopped green tomato (from about 2 medium tomatoes), skin, seeds and pulp included

1 1/2 cups toasted pecans, chopped (see NOTE)

Confectioners' sugar, for dusting (optional)

DIRECTIONS

Position a rack in the bottom third of the oven; preheat to 350 degrees. Grease the loaf pans with bakers' spray (oil and flour).

Whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, granulated sugar, brown sugar, cinnamon and salt in a mixing bowl, breaking up any lumps of brown sugar. Make a well at the centre.

Combine the eggs, oil and vanilla extract in a liquid measuring cup, stirring well. Add this mixture to the dry ingredients and stir just until moistened. The batter may look dry; that's okay. Fold in the tomato flesh and pecans.

Turn the mixture into the prepared baking pans. Bake for 55 minutes to an hour, turning the pans front to back halfway through, or until a tester inserted into the centre comes out clean.

Transfer to a wire rack; cool (in the pans) for 10 minutes, then remove from the pans and cool completely before serving or storing.

Dust with confectioners' sugar, if desired.

NOTE: To toast the pecans, preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Spread the pecans on a rimmed baking sheet; toast in the oven for 6 to 8 minutes, until lightly browned and fragrant

RECIPE FROM THE HORT SHOW TEA TABLE

I was asked to include this in the newsletter:

PECAN CHEESE CRACKERS

This recipe makes a lot. You may want to half it or freeze it. It freezes well both before and after baking.

1 pound sharp Cheddar cheese

1 cup butter

Cayenne pepper to taste (I put in a couple of good shakes.)

3 cups flour, sifted

1 cup chopped pecans

Combine cheese and butter; cream in food processor. Add cayenne pepper. Add flour and pecans and process until well mixed (will be stiff and crumbly)

Take up hands full of the dough and form into 1 ½ " logs, wrap in waxed paper and refrigerate overnight. This takes a little manipulating and squeezing, but it works. Slice into 1/4 " slices and bake in 350°F oven for 12 - 15 minutes. Do not brown. Stores well in an air tight container for about a week or freeze.

GOT NEWS???

Send to: Editor: Donna Crawford, sparrowsong@eastlink.ca.

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Valley Gardener's Club. There are purposely no coloured pictures in the newsletters to allow for less expensive black and white printing. The Valley Gardeners is a member of the Nova Scotia Association of Garden Clubs. <http://www.nsagc.com>

