



# Spring is here!

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## Chris Woods and “A Passion for Plants” by Jean Hurst

“A Passion for Plants” was the title Chris chose for his talk, given at the combined meeting of Guides and Master Gardeners on February 8<sup>th</sup>.

He began by saying that he’d like to use his career to express some thoughts about romance, and told the story of the Romance of the Rose, one of the first illustrations used in garden imagery, to show the continuous prominence of the theme of romance throughout the history of gardens.

The Royal Botanic Garden at Kew was his introduction to this core theme. It was Kew which served as his University of Horticulture, where his career apprenticeship began and where he came to love his work, where he first learned to read the emotional impact of garden design and how to approach them as compositions.

Chris was fortunate to have had a series of mentors, including Clough Williams-Ellis, at Portmeirion, who believed that “the development of a naturally beautiful site need not lead to its defilement”. Under his tutelage, Chris learned a lot about being a curator, about taxonomy and about nomenclature.

Chris went on to work for the National Trust in Sussex and then at Cliveden, where Graham Stuart Thomas taught him a great deal about colour association, its similarity to painting, but with more subtle colours, as a contrast to garden design.

Illustrating his career with slides, Chris demonstrated visually his knowledge of interpretation and his embrace of the historical and romantic. His slides also evidenced that he travels a great deal and looks at gardens at every stop and at every opportunity.

One of his favourite gardens is Villa D’Este, which used to be extremely floral, but is now mainly boxwood. Italian gardens like these had an enormous impact on garden design.

Chris then went on to show us the emotional impact of each garden he worked in or photographed. He took us, among others, to Longwood in Pennsylvania, Getty in California, and Chanticleer in Philadelphia, as well as gardens in Thailand and Japan.

Some more of his thoughts:

“I wanted to create a garden for pleasure”.

“What we are trying to do in public gardens is sensitize people.”

“Go and worship plants”

“Without plant conservation, we don’t breathe, we don’t eat.”



His talk and illustrations were a testament to his taste, to his commitment and desire to bringing an aesthetic to the garden as a place where the utilitarian can be made beautiful, where gardening is about passion and fun, and where we can express the joy of living through horticulture.



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**Notes from the Guide Chair & Volunteer Services Director**

Since our very beginning we have prided ourselves on the quality of training, on-going education and the variety of volunteer possibilities for VanDusen Guides. This year is no exception.

The Guide Education Working Group, that was formed in the fall of 2006, began the new year by reviewing what would support and meet the interests of active Guides in our existing education programs and how VanDusen's educational theme (Conservation) might be incorporated.

Next, Guide leaders participated in the annual volunteer leadership workshop which was held in mid-January. In this stimulating session we explored why we volunteer and what motivates us. Once again we identified what we already know so well - we are here to learn and to share. We also looked at succession planning to ensure that the efforts and accomplishments of long term Guides which have greatly enriched our guiding traditions will carry on into the future.

As we write this, plans are well underway for two additional learning opportunities for existing Guides: the re-introduction of Roving Guide Interpretation training and the initiation of Driving Guide Interpretation for existing Guides.

The Roving Guide Interpretation workshop will be offered on Thursday March 15th as part of the Guide Continuing Education program. This 2-hour program will be facilitated by Interpretation Canada facilitator, Lisa MacIntosh, and will be designed to augment individual conversations in the Garden with our visitors. While all Guides are invited to participate, those new Guides who took initial Guide training in 2004, 2005 and 2006 are asked to make every effort to attend.

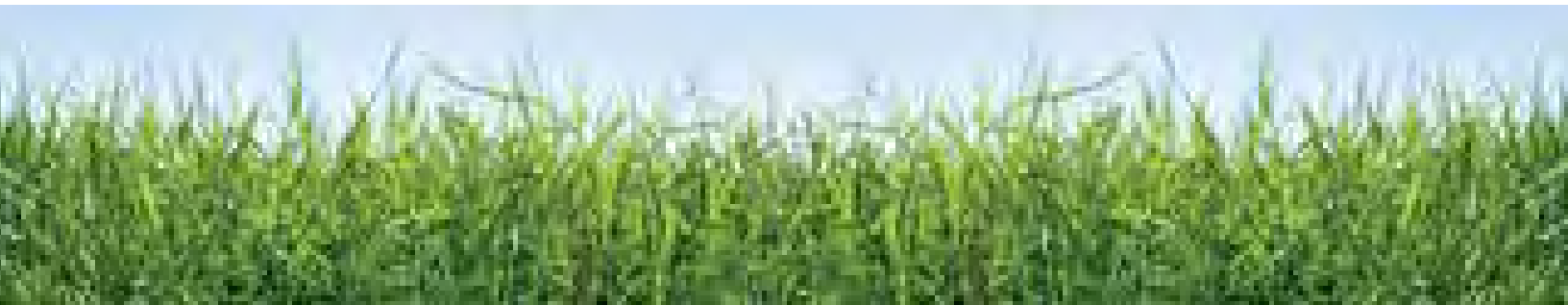
Driving Guide Interpretation draws special attention to the distinctive differences between the styles of interpretation when driving a cart as opposed to walking in the Garden. Two experienced Guides and dedicated drivers, Dick Mackenzie and Jean Hurst are working together to prepare what promises to be a meaningful adjunct to our guide training. Please be sure to mark Wednesday April 25th from 10am to noon on your calendars. Walking Guides who would like to expand their guiding repertoire are encouraged to attend.

In addition to the above two learning opportunities, we want to recognize the vital role of Guides in welcoming visitors. To this end, in April we will initiate the position of "Garden Greeter". At their March meeting, Captains and Vice Captains will develop guidelines to help Guides in fulfilling this primary welcoming function. The new role will provide another distinct opportunity for Guides, while at the same time enhancing the visitors' experience of the Garden.

The VGBA works to acknowledge the significant contribution of Guides in furthering the Association's mission by supporting these new Guide educational initiatives through investment of money and other resources. The Guide Council, and in particular the Guide Education Working Group, are working to coordinate learning opportunities that are fluid, flexible and fun. We invite and encourage you to participate. You will assist to put fresh energy into what is already an excellent service to our Garden visitors.



*Judy Aird & Claire Kermacks*





## Winter Blues! by Cindy Swoveland

After the January 10<sup>th</sup> snowstorm, I took a walk in the garden to take some photos. In the Southern Hemisphere area, I came across the group of Tasmanian Tree Ferns, which epitomized how I felt about this winter. Don't they look cold and dejected?!! Fortunately, they are likely to survive. Other plants were not so lucky.

Garden Director Chris Woods had this to say about the damage:

*"A total of 412 trees were affected by the snowstorms of December 2006. Of that 412, 211 (150 distinct taxa) were destroyed completely. 201 (106 distinct taxa) were damaged and will need further evaluation to determine whether they should remain as specimens in the garden. A total of 144 shrubs were damaged by the storm. 123 shrubs (63 distinct taxa) will need to be replaced. 21 shrubs (17 distinct taxa) were damaged but should survive.*

*The tree ferns were wrapped before the storm and while there may be some structural damage, I expect them to survive. The storm now enables us to evaluate the collections, edit where appropriate, and acquire new plants that will enhance the collections. Gardens, as in life, are about adaptation, flexibility and dynamism. While the damage was most unfortunate, in the long run, the garden will be stronger for it."*

*Cindy Swoveland is a retired S.F.U librarian and completed her guide training last April. Other photos are taken by Claire Kermacks, who has been Guide Chair since last April.*





## A Minimal Urban Vegetable Garden by Beatrice Carlani

Spring is the right season to discover the Back yards of the City especially on the East side. If you take a leisurely tour of the side streets, you will see that the front gardens are full of very beautiful ornamental flowers but are, strangely, almost completely deserted while extremely busy people inhabit the back yards!

These are the places where the Vancouverites, especially the ones with Italian or Portuguese backgrounds, grow their vegetables. Some plots are almost like small farms. Others are minuscule like a doll garden but all of them are able to produce enough vegetables to feed the owners.

Being of Italian upbringing and nuts about fresh good organic produce, I too have my little urban vegetable garden. And I have to confess that being able to eat my own salad, whilst living in a metropolis, is always amazing to me!

To be successful in growing a vegetable garden we must understand that the exposure of it and the quality of its soil are of primary importance. Size is not an issue. You can have a large lot or only some containers, but the soil must be good (top soil, compost, manure in equal parts) and the sun should shine on it at least 5-6 hours daily.

My vegetable garden was moved last year from the back to a raised bed at the front of the house, and now enjoys a southern exposure. The raised bed, much more comfortable to look after, is 6m long and less than a meter deep.

I divided it into parcels of approximately 80cm each, and in each one of them I seeded a different kind of vegetable. I have a "mixed green", an Arugola cultivar, a Wild Arugola, a chicory from Trieste, mixed chicories and a mix of oriental greens. At the end of the bed are the herbs: the Nepitella vulgaris with its gentle flavor of mint that is so good in seasoning artichokes or fish; the oregano with white flowers, especially for fresh tomatoes sauce or pizza; the marjoram for the minestrone and the tomatoes sauce. The flat leaved Italian parsley, the rosemary and the sage are in containers by themselves because, being Mediterranean herbs, they do not like too much water. They are very aromatic and without them it would be almost impossible to cook many of the Italian recipes!

All the seeds must be planted during Holy week because that is the time when the moon is in the right face, according to ancient tradition.

If the different kinds of salad are looked after properly, watered daily with only the right amount of water, they will keep growing into tender plants which can be harvested as many as five times. My little parcels not only provide my daily side dish but almost all the friends that visit me go home with a nice bag of fresh goodies!

During the summer, when a plot starts looking old and tired, I resow it with new seeds trying to rotate the different varieties. At the end of the growing season any Chicory that is left is transplanted in neat rows and grows into bunches that will last during the winter. In September I plant broccoli and rapine so that, even during winter, as a good gardener I can enjoy fresh, organic veggies.

The seeds for the veggies in the article can be found at "West coast Seeds" [wwwinfo@westcoastseeds.com](mailto:wwwinfo@westcoastseeds.com); [www.italianseedandtool.com](http://www.italianseedandtool.com) or in many of the groceries on East Hastings Street or on Commercial Drive.

*Beatrice Carlani is a former Guide Chair, retired physiotherapist and a superb cook. You can find some great recipes in her recently published Italian cookbook. Vegetable garden photo taken by Beatrice.*





## The Role Of Botanic Gardens In Conservation by Rosemary Murray

### The role of botanic gardens in conservation

*This article aims to introduce you to what we mean by conservation, both the big picture of what botanic gardens are doing in global terms and also what specifically is being done at VanDusen Botanical Garden.*

From the time of the first 'physic gardens' in the 1600s to this new millennium, botanic gardens globally have responded to the changing needs of society. If the mission of earlier gardens was to exploit plants - either for medicine or other profitable means, the focus in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has shifted to a range of different concerns including conservation.

### What do we mean by conservation?

The B.C Ministry of Forests and Range defines conservation as



*"Management of the human use of the biosphere so that it may yield the greatest sustainable benefit to present generations while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations. It includes the preservation, maintenance, sustainable utilization, restoration and enhancement of the environment".*



### What are botanic gardens doing globally?

Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) [www.bgci.org](http://www.bgci.org) was first established in 1987 and now links over 800 botanic gardens and botanical institutions in more than 120 countries in the world's largest network for plant conservation, environmental education and sustainable development.

The International Agenda for Botanic Gardens in Conservation (2000) to which VanDusen is a signatory, set objectives for botanic gardens so that our global mission in conservation can be summarized as to:

- Stem the loss of plant species and their genetic diversity
- Focus on preventing further degradation of the world's natural environment.
- Raise public understanding of the value of plant diversity and the threats its faces
- Implement practical action for the benefit and improvement of the natural environment
- Promote and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources for present and future generations.



### The "how, what and why" of conservation at VanDusen

In the context of conservation, we can look at the how - our horticultural practices, ensuring that we are using sustainable methods in the way we garden, the what - our plant collections and the why - education of our visitors through engagement with our plants and our interpretive material.



### The how - horticultural practices

Our horticultural practices are an important issue to address if we are to have credibility within the community. We must practice what we preach.

More specifically VanDusen has a focus on Water Conservation. Although water is plentiful for much of the year, in the summer months it is important to have in place waterwise gardening practices. These incorporate the collection and storage of rainwater, the improvement of soil health, the establishment of proper maintenance techniques and the selection of suitable plant species to create healthy, beautiful gardens. Recently a water conservation study was conducted and there is phased implementation of its findings. There are plans to restore and use the reservoir under the stone garden for storage of storm water and to install circulation pumps in water bodies and features to allow movement of water from one body to another.

The use of compost and surface mulch helps the soil retain moisture and the choice of plants and the way they are planted helps conserve water. As a botanic garden we display plants from around the world but our displays of native BC plants also fall into the category of "water-wise" because they are adapted to both our wet winters and dry summers, and have little dependence on supplemental water during dry weather.

There is also a focus on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in the Garden including alternative methods of pest control and mulch for moisture retention and weed control. Wherever possible chemical pesticides are not used. The plastic wrap and cotton wool around the trunks of some of large deciduous trees to control the winter moth is a great conversation starter!

Other sustainable practices include new electrical transformers for the Garden's electrical supply that use vegetable oil instead of oil containing PCBs, recycling of paper, cans, bottles and increased use of LED lights at the Festival of Lights to limit power consumption.

#### The what...plant collections

The BGCI targets for 2010 for botanic gardens strongly emphasize the need to conserve plant biodiversity and in particular threatened plants, preferably in the country of origin - in other words our native plants. Our plant collections are fully documented and plant taxa that are endangered or provincially at risk are tagged in the database. We are conserving them *ex situ*.

At VanDusen we showcase native plants to encourage other gardeners to do the same. Under the Douglas firs at our entrance we have drought tolerant native ground covers and low growing shrubs. The Western North America section presents our main collection of B.C. natives and in 2006 was managed and enhanced with new plantings by gardener Egan Davies. The Canadian Heritage Garden allows visitors to be aware of the wide ranging habitats and plants of Canada.

There is also emphasis in the BGCI targets on managing and protecting natural habitats. Invasive exotic plant species are a serious threat to natural and managed ecosystems worldwide. Botanic gardens contribute to this problem by displaying potentially invasive plants. It is clear that we must demonstrate a strong environmental ethic and therefore re-assess our existing collection in terms of invasive weed potential. Such policy is currently under discussion and decisions will be made about de-accessioning plants that no longer meet the criteria for display.

#### The how...talk the walk

The thing that sets botanic gardens apart from other parks and gardens is the use we make of our plant collections. With our attractiveness to the public for recreation and learning, we have the opportunity to raise environmental awareness to a large number of people.

How we can "talk the walk" and have conversations about conservation with our visitors will form part of an article by Rosemary Murray in the next newsletter *Being informative, being interpretive...*

*Rosemary Murray has a PhD in Botany and, from 1997-2003, was manager of visitor services at the Brisbane Botanic Gardens. She came to Vancouver in January 2006 and is now a Volunteer Guide, Board member and Trainer at VDG.*



## My Garden Roots by Erica Dunn

Spring is coming, replacing the dark, dreary days of winter which are a good time to reflect on one's gardening roots. I was born more years ago than I care to remember, in the Weald of Kent, south of London - a county full of history and host to many foreign invasions over the centuries.

The County was aptly named "The Garden of England" and was, as VanDusen soon will be, the home to orchards awash with cherry and apple blossom. Unlike VanDusen, it was also awash with lambs and hopfields in the spring!

My father, a locally born solicitor, was fascinated by history, encouraging my brother and I to help him dig up various Roman roads in our area. He had a passion for growing dessert fruit and I can still remember the tremendous variety of pears and gooseberries he grew. As children, we had the task of putting muslin bags on the pears to prevent the wasps from spoiling them. We walked with him on Sundays in the woods, listening to local history stories of smugglers bringing contraband from France and hiding them in the local caves. This was a time I would also pick flowers to press and show at kindergarten the next morning.

It wasn't until later, as a guide at VanDusen, that I realized how lucky I was to have a mother who was a very keen gardener. I have early memories of bowls of moss filled with chimonanthus blossoms, perfuming the old oak-beamed house built in 1450.

My mother had many gardening friends, including Collingwood Ingram of Japanese fame, who at ninety-nine years of age, won yet another award at the Chelsea Show. Sir Harold and Lady Nicholson of Sissinghurst were also gardening friends and my brother and I used to be roped in to show these, and other visitors around our garden - using botanical names, of course! This came in very useful when I became a VanDusen guide.

My mother had a passion for two plants in particular - the sixty different varieties of pompom dahlias and the bearded irises. She loved crossing these irises and each June, we would wait with bated breath to see, after six long years from seed, the new FLOWER!

In September, we would help in the local hop gardens, picking those scratchy green flowers with helpers from the East End of London, who were escaping the grime of the big city and having a country 'holiday'. How lucky I was to grow up in the country in spring amongst farmlands, feeding orphaned lambs, collecting eggs, able to explore bluebell woods and meadows, going tadpoling with my best friend or riding horseback to visit family and friends.

The war came, and everything for me changed, from carefree childhood to serious adult. Being in VanDusen Botanical Garden reminds me each time of the lessons I learned as a child.

*Erica Dunn has been a volunteer guide at VanDusen Garden since 1975. She is the keeper of the archives and an invaluable source of information new guides. Photos are from Erica's family album*





## GUIDE EDUCATION

The newly formed [Guide Education Working Group](#) met for the first time in early November and again in early January. The Group members and their roles are:

- Sheila Veuger(chair), Sally Maclachlan (vice-chair): [General Meeting Speakers](#)
- Sue Abzinger, Anne Roburn: [Continuing Guide Education](#) (formerly Advanced Guide Training)
- Peggy Heath: Liaison with James Warkentin to arrange [Walks with the Gardeners](#)

If you have any comments, (positive or negative - we want to know what you think) or suggestions for topics or speakers, please contact one of the Working Group members:

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### [General Meeting Speakers](#)

*"The Galapagos Islands - A Natural History Treasure"*

March 8<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am

Speaker: [Michael LeGeyt](#)

*TBA*

April 12<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm

Speaker:

*"Shade Plants"*

May 10<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am

Speaker: [Judy Newton](#)

*"From Garden to Table"*

June 13<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm

Speaker: [Audrey Ostrom](#)

Summary of January 11<sup>th</sup> Talk: Ian Lai, chef and instructor at Northwest Culinary Academy of Vancouver, is the founder of the Terra Nova Schoolyard Project. This is a school gardening project he organizes and runs on 5000 square feet of land provided by the City of Richmond. The children come from five schools and child care organizations, from kindergarten to grade 12. They work in the garden in the spring and fall, and have classroom activities indoors in the winter. They learn about the food cycle from seed to table and back again via composting. They learn to grow, monitor, harvest, prepare and eat nutritious food on a weekly basis. Ian showed delightful slides of children involved at all stages of the project. His talk was very well received with such enthusiastic comments as "What a fantastic speaker!", "What a huge project!", "He's a gem!" Some Guides volunteered to help with the project. Because there was so much interest we will try to organize an outing to Ian's garden later in the summer.

Continuing Guide Education All sessions commence in the Floral Hall at 10:00 am.

*Roving Guide Training*

March 15<sup>th</sup>

[Lisa McIntosh](#), Interpretations Canada, will lead the 2-hr session

*"Invasive Plants"*

April 19<sup>th</sup>

Dawn Hanna

*"A Tour of the Alpine Area at UBC Botanical Garden"*

May 17<sup>th</sup>

Dana Cromie

Summary of January 18<sup>th</sup> Session: Penny Koch talked about hollies. They are native to every continent except Antarctica and come in a wide variety of forms and sizes - evergreen and deciduous shrubs, climbers and full-sized trees. Most hollies are dioecious (i.e. with ♂ and ♀ flowers on separate trees - only the ♀ bears berries). Berries can be red, black, orange or yellow. Leaves may be variegated or not, prickly or not, and range in length from 2 - 15 cm. Penny showed us living examples on the Holly Lawn and along the Holly Trail. We all enjoyed this interesting and informative *"Walk Through the Hollies"*.

N.B. Penny has agreed to repeat her presentation for those who were unable to attend due to the bad weather conditions.

### [Walks with the Gardeners](#)

These take place the first Thursday of each month from March until October. The first walk of 2007 is Thursday, March 1st. Meet in the volunteer lounge.

