



University
of Victoria

University Finnerty Garden Friends

April 2010

DEAR FRIENDS,

Have you visited the Finnerty Gardens recently? If not, then I hope you make it very soon since the Gardens are unbelievably beautiful. There are many rhododendrons in bloom and the spring bulbs are also showing their finery. I know you won't read this until April, so I hope you get the powerful thought waves I am sending out urging a visit soon!

What a spring—perhaps we should all bless El Niño. I find that this last week of superlative weather has made it very difficult to remember that there are still some four weeks of winter remaining before the equinox and the return of the hummingbirds. I have profited from the superlative weather to get the raised beds in the vegetable garden ready for the next crops. The potatoes are in—they were sprouting happily—and I have just bought the rest of the seeds, many of which I shall plant during the coming week. And each day, I wander through the rest of the garden, admiring the dozens of flowers and enjoying the scent, first of the *Hamamelis* and now of the *Daphne odora*. I think the blooms have enjoyed the weather too—so often they are hit by heavy rains and wind. The gold of the *Cornus mas* and of the hundreds of daffodils makes the whole garden seem full of light. And the early rhododendrons are at their best.

Speaking of wind—we were hit by the severe wind storm (gusts of 120 kilometers/hour at East Point on Saturna Island) and two trees were knocked over near the house. They ripped the power line out of the house, broke glass and caused a fair amount of plant damage. My neighbors rallied around and helped cut the trees up so I could get out of the house. There were many other trees down on the hydro lines, and the whole island was without power for at least three days. I blessed my generator. It is the worst wind we have had since the hurricane force winds in 1972 when we had over 40 large firs uprooted.

In Finnerty, the rabbits and deer are still a problem, and the

number of rabbits on campus is still very large. Our fence helps protect the Gardens, but people still leave the gates open, inviting the unwanted animals inside. Carmen and her committee have surveyed the Gardens and have identified the areas needing plants replaced. Truly the university and all plant lovers in Victoria owe them a great big thank you for all the work they do. And all of those who bought plants at the plant sale have contributed also, providing the money that lets us buy new plants, open new areas and develop new plantings. Thank you all. And speaking of the plant sale—don't forget that volunteers are needed and purchasers also. Have a great spring.

Betty Kennedy



photo: Beth Doman

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Goldilocks and the Three Ferns

M.J. Harvey

I don't have many ferns but there are three I am growing at the moment, all native to British Columbia, but which are seldom if ever offered for sale. All three are fascinating and deserving of more publicity.

After I started writing this I realized that one fern was too small for most people, one was far too big and difficult to fit into quite the right garden habitat, but that one was of medium size and would be just right. So here is their story, starting with little bear—I mean fern.

1 *Polypodium scoleri*—Leatherleaf fern

I got this while hiking in Metchosin. It was growing near the shore among some twisted firs, on the side of a boulder away from the sea. It should be called Scouler's Polypody but, like Rodney Dangerfield, Scouler don't get no respect so we call it leatherleaf instead. This fern is a tough little thing with creeping, surface rhizomes looking like little hairy feet (to people with a vivid imagination). From this we get the generic name, poly—many, pod—feet.

On the hike I broke off a one inch piece of rhizome, put it in my pocket and when back home placed it into a pot of soil with a small pebble on top to keep it in contact with the soil. It rooted and has multiplied a hundred times since.

This is not a fern you just plant in your garden among the petunias. It is easily overwhelmed by taller plants and lost to sight. Where it can survive is on the north side of a fieldstone wall or, better, in a pot kept in the shade. I grow mine in a shal-

low pot (something ornamental is nice), in a mixture high in peat and Perlite. The pot stays on our porch by the front door much of the year or when there is nothing brighter to display. The individual fronds are evergreen and last for several years. The rhizomes will eventually creep over the edge of the pot.

Leatherleaf fern is drought-proof. It is adapted to drought in its shoreline habitat so if you are going away for a month it will greet you unchanged when you return. Just don't leave it in the sun. Readers will be familiar with the related but more common licorice fern. This can also make a good pot plant but is seldom grown except in the cut-leaf cultivar '*Malahatensis*' discovered by our early, local nursery owner Ed Lohbrunner.

Licorice fern's survival strategy is the opposite of that of leatherleaf in that instead of producing tough, long-lasting fronds, it produces thin ones that dry off at the first sign of approaching summer drought. For this reason it is not favoured, but the new crop of leaves bursts out a vivid emerald green with the late summer rains. You can see this on north-facing cliffs and road cuts and in my opinion makes it a very attractive fern.

As an inveterate hybridizer, it is my ambition to produce the hybrid between these two polypodies. To do this one mixes the dry spores of the two, dusts them on a damp, sterile medium (peat-Perlite), covers with plastic film and keeps in the shade to allow the prothalli to grow. Hybrid sporophytes are produced when sperm from one species fertilise the eggs of the other. This is a random process but often one can distinguish the hybrid plantlets from the mass of parental forms. The resulting



Photo: Daphne Donaldson

hybrid plants may be wonderful or they may be a dissonant combination of the parents. That is the excitement of making hybrids; you never know what you are going to get.

2 *Woodwardia fimbriata*

This is so rare that it has no common name—‘frilly Woodwardia’ doesn’t quite cut it. There are only three locations known for it in British Columbia: two on the Gulf Islands and one on the Saanich Inlet where it is accessible by canoe and a scramble up a ravine. This was recently confirmed by a group of naturalists. This is BC’s largest fern. Agnes Lynn, who was on the trip, tells me there were fronds up to six feet long. Its habitat is in shade and in ravines so anyone wanting to cultivate it has to provide both space and a sheltered location. But it is spectacular.

I saw it in a location less strenuous to reach, namely the Abkhazi Garden. Valerie Murray showed me where it was growing in dappled shade under rhododendrons and permitted me to take a scraping of spores which germinated enthusiastically. If you want BIG, this is for you, but it takes time.

3 *Polystichum andersonii*—Anderson’s fern

This is the just-right fern, moderate in size, non-creeping, with fairly narrow fronds to about 70 cm/2 ft. I would not have known this fern if it had not already been planted in the garden of our recently purchased house. It did not thrill me at first sight and I dug one up and potted it with a view to selling or donating it. However in spring 2009 it grew a neat ring of new fronds (it is semi-evergreen and I had trimmed off the old ones), so I stuck it on our porch as temporary decoration and it stayed there for the rest of the year. It makes an excellent specimen pot plant for a shady location but requires conspicuously more water than leatherleaf fern.

By early summer Anderson’s fern started to form little galls or knots towards the ends of the fronds. These gradually enlarged and proved not to be a disease but plantlets since each produced small leaves. I had not known it was viviparous but by year’s end they were ready to be pulled off and grown on in their own pots. I found this most intriguing. Curiously the plant left out in the garden produced few plantlets.

We have a new family on our street, they introduced themselves including young son Anderson. Surprised I said, “Oh, I have Anderson’s fern growing on our porch. I’ll have to give you a plant.” They were tickled pink. So Anderson, you will get your fern.

Originally written for the Victoria Rhododendron Society newsletter. Reprinted with permission.



Photo: Beth Doman

Winter in the Finnerty Gardens

Karen Grose, Groundswoker II

Winter in the Finnerty Gardens most years is rather cold and sometimes gloomy. Not many visitors come by except for the regulars, of which there are about ten. They walk regardless of the weather and some of them even pretend Finnerty Gardens is part of their estate.

Jeremy moved to a different crew in December to become more familiar with new equipment, which has been purchased in the last couple of years because of all the construction. Before Jeremy left, we managed to clean the reflective pond. We drained it completely and removed all of the sludge. Hopefully the duckweed will be easier to control so that it remains the reflective pond that we admire.

I, in turn, was fortunate to inherit Chris Wick. Chris has been with the university for the last four seasons and is a horticulture graduate from Camosun College. Introducing someone new to the garden has given me a good chance to review some of the plant materials and what a winter we've had! It has been unbelievably warm with no wind storms, snow, or freezing cold and as a result everything is a month ahead of time.

In January we had the scents of the *Chimonanthus praecox*, *Hamamelis mollis* 'Palida' and *Lonicera fragrantissima*. I was able to propagate quite a few *Lonicera fragrantissima* for the garden and for UVic's upcoming plant sale. I think every garden should have one of these to remind us that spring is coming! The *Helleborus*, of course, have been flowering for two

months now. We also have a variety of primroses in varying colors and have room for more because the deer don't seem to bother them. And yes, the deer continue to jump the gates and fence to get in and destroy what they can.

In early February, the rhododendrons began to bloom. The *Rhododendron calophytum*, *Rhododendron ririei* and *Rhododendron 'Irene'* were the first. Most years they come out only to be frozen later on. So far so good this year. And now, at the beginning of March, many are in bloom and the camellias are also putting on a show.

Chris and I continue to mulch, weed and prune. Peter Roberts, the gardener who coordinated the planting of the West Coast Bed, has cleared an area for the new fernery which the Friends are designing in the Salix Bed.

We have also been propagating scented geraniums, fuschias, a variety of succulents and *Tibouchina* for the plant sale. This winter has been so beautiful that when we are working in the warm greenhouse, Chris asks why we aren't in the garden! We have cleaned one of the two ponds in the stream bed and wish we could recirculate the water to give us the feeling of running water.

If you plan on visiting the gardens this spring to see the rhododendrons, you will have to come early or you will miss them.

It is an unusual year.



"Introducing someone new to the garden has given me a good chance to review some of the plant materials and what a winter we've had!" Karen Grose

Left, Chris Wick, horticulture grad from Camosun

Photo: UVic Photo Services

Measuring Up

Carmen Varcoe

Recently, after visiting three botanic gardens on Kauai, Hawaii, I thought of Finnerty Gardens and wondered if it could ever become a botanic garden. Collection, curation, propagation and restoration are the four main components of a botanic garden.

Under collection here in Finnerty, we endeavour to gather a variety of plants to add more interest throughout the growing year. Finnerty began as a collection of rhododendrons; now we can say categorically that Finnerty far exceeds the original genera. During the past year we have managed to catalogue and GPS all relevant shrubs and trees. This is a very important part of any developing botanic garden. Ongoing archiving and recording will enhance further collections.

Under curation, we have a group of committed management people. Bentley Sly, our present curator, Tony James, past curator, and Rhonda Rose, Grounds Supervisor for Campus Horticulture, are notable. Also the work of the gardeners and input of the Advisory Board members ensures that Finnerty Gardens is cared for with dedication and forethought. A curator of a botanic garden must also connect with other botanic gardens around the world. This is a worthy endeavour but currently not quite within the means and management of Finnerty Gardens. Perhaps, in the future, we could connect with UBC Botanical Gardens in order to access some of the rarer plants that abound in that garden. Thirdly, propagation is an essential part of a botanic garden. A full-fledged botanic garden has propagation facilities and skilled staff to manage them. This is where we can say that Finnerty Gardens is not equipped to propagate some of the rarer rhododendrons on site. However, thanks to the Propagators' Group of the Victoria Rhododendron Society, some of the rarer rhododendrons are being propagated and given back to the gardens. In view of our present limitations, I feel that for the time being this is the best possible arrangement.

The final strand of a botanic garden is restoration. In a very small way Finnerty has "saved" some rhodos from the developers' backhoes. Case in point recently was moving a large number of rare species rhododendrons from the Kreiss property out in Sooke. Perhaps restoration is not really what the Finnerty has achieved here, but nevertheless this has proved a worthy objective. We could also look at the Garry Oak Meadow that has been attempted on the Henderson Road area of Finnerty. However, this was not a restoration project as initially it was a swampy area with lots of standing water. The area is now being reconsidered and a proposal for development is in the planning stages. The groups involved are the

Restoration of Natural Systems, Environmental Studies, and Campus Planning. Whatever the outcome, it will hopefully add to the already existing gardens in a pleasing and manageable way. So how do we measure up? In spite of our limitations, I feel strongly that we are doing a wonderful job of keeping this garden intact and beautiful. May the work continue. In this year of biodiversity let's hope botanic gardens are here to stay all over our world. They are the receptacles of plants that are often rare and even endangered and they allow future generations to see what has been already lost in the growing need for using up wild land habitats. These institutions are invaluable and will only continue to grow in importance for future generations. Interestingly enough, on Kauai, it was often noted in each botanic garden that there are very few native plants, most have been introduced.

Limahuli Botanic Gardens on the north of the island is endeavouring to nurture and grow the truly native species of the islands—a most noble goal for any garden. In Finnerty Gardens, we use *Polystichum munitum*, the Western Sword Fern with great success. Also, Western Red Cedars and Douglas Firs provide a necessary canopy to shade the many rhododendrons from hot sun and wind damage. We could then say that as a result, we have continued to keep native species wherever feasible and for the enhancement of the gardens as a whole. The major element we cannot overlook when having a garden such as Finnerty or a botanic garden is funding.

We are so very fortunate to have the yearly plant sale to help with ongoing costs of maintenance and plant acquisition. So, if you are reading this article and have yet to attend the plant sale in May (May 2, 10:00 am-1:00 pm), please come out either as a volunteer to help with the set up and marking of the many plants or helping with the sale on the Sunday. We hope to see you all there.



Editor's Note

fifty

Please celebrate with me a jubilee of sorts. Since I started editing this newsletter, I have been numbering consecutively each edition on my computer and with the present copy have somewhat surprisingly arrived at the magical Number Fifty. This seems therefore an appropriate time to thank some of the many people who have contributed to our publication. I begin with Betty Kennedy who has provided a relevant introductory article for every newsletter and through whose encouragement I was introduced to the job. And I continue with Shirley Lyon who has taken over the printing and distribution in addition to her usual administrative support and Carmen Varcoe who has been a continuing help with bringing in our contributions each quarter.

Our contributors have, of course, been the mainstay of this publication. Without them there would be no newsletter. Though it might be invidious to single anyone out, I feel that I must mention in particular the many interesting contributions from Margaret de Weese and the late Alec McCarter. But no special mentions can in any way detract from the wide range of varied and valuable articles that over many years have fascinated this editor and one hopes have also pleased the Friends of Finnerty Gardens and the wider university whose cultural needs we serve.



Photo: Daphne Donaldson

An Invitation

Submit articles for the Finnerty Gardens Newsletter

All Friends of Finnerty Gardens—including present and past Members of the Advisory Board—are invited to submit articles of interest to horticulturists for publication in the Newsletter. The purpose is to maintain the eclectic range of horticultural interests that the Newsletter has espoused in recent years.

Ideally, articles should be of 500–1,000 words in length, and should be emailed to the editor as soon as they are ready. When articles are accepted, they will be published as quickly as space becomes available. Since the editor is an English professor rather than a horticulturist, authors must hold themselves responsible for the accuracy of the horticultural content.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

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Membership

Membership in the Friends of Finnerty Gardens is \$10 per year (single or couple). Membership includes an informative newsletter published four times a year. Funds raised through membership support enhancements within the Gardens which would not be possible otherwise.

This newsletter is also available on the University of Victoria's website at: <http://www.external.uvic.ca/gardens/>. If you would prefer to view it electronically rather than in hard copy, please let us know and we'll update our mailing list accordingly.

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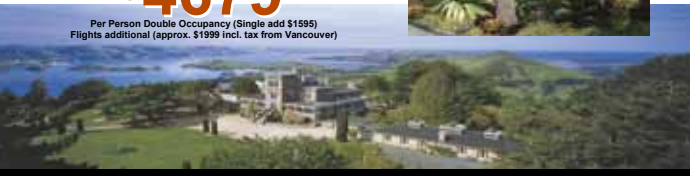
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Upcoming Events

University of Victoria's Annual Plant Sale

Sunday, May 2, 2010—10:00 am to 1:00 pm

McKinnon Gym on the UVic campus

Come join us at the ever-popular UVic Plant Sale in support of Finnerty Gardens. You will find almost everything for your garden: alpines, annuals, perennials, aquatics, exotics, native plants, geraniums, fuschias, hanging baskets, shrubs, trees, herbs, vegetables, berries and much more. We also have an entire sale table dedicated to plants which have been propagated from the Finnerty Gardens including rhododendrons, scented geraniums, fuschias, succulents, shrubs, bamboo and more.

For more information, contact Shirley Lyon at:

Phone: (250) 721-7014 or email: slyon@uvic.ca

Call for volunteers

We are looking for volunteers to assist with the plant sale on Friday, April 30, Saturday, May 1 or Sunday, May 2. Plant sale volunteers are invited to a pre-sale on Saturday, May 1 at 12:00 noon as a thank you.

For more information, contact Kathleen Bellows at:

Phone: (250) 472-5045 or email: bellowsk@uvic.ca

Victoria Rhododendron Society show and sale

Saturday, May 8, 2010—11:00 am to 3:00 pm

Admission by donation

First 200 people receive a free rhododendron

Cadboro Bay United Church at 2626 Arbutus Road

Native plant sale Spring 2010

Presented by The Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary

Sat. and Sun., April 17 and 18, 2010—9:00 am to 3:00 pm

Admission: \$2/day; Friends Members Free

University of Victoria Finnerty Garden Friends

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