The Finnerty Gardens Rhododendron Collection – A History

The rhododendrons in Finnerty Gardens have a fascinating history that began in part at Lake Cowichan. Dr. Richard Stoker, a retired Lieutenant-Colonel with the British Army Medical Corps and his wife Susan settled at the lake prior to 1900 and built a summer home. As amateur botanists, they had collected rhododendrons seeds from the mountain regions in Afghanistan and India during his postings there and found the climate to be ideal for growing exotic species.

George Simpson and his wife Suzanne, an accomplished botanist, arrived at the lake in 1912. They settled on a small parcel of land purchased from the Stokers and developed a nursery that included as many as 200 species rhododendron plants.

By 1966, a frail Mrs. Simpson arranged to move her collection to the University of Victoria and was content in the knowledge of her legacy when other significant plant donations evolved into the University of Victoria's Finnerty Gardens.

A related fact:
- Dr. Stoker was the brother of Beam Stoker, author of Dracula.
- Dr. Stoker died in 1931 and their property was sold.
- The Simpsons decided to return to Europe and sold their nursery to Ted and Mary Greg of Royston. In 1937, the Simpsons resumed and purchased the Stoker property and for the next 20 years, a garden flourished. When George died in 1958, the collection had grown to about 200 varieties of Rhododendrons, many of them species.

While walking around the Gardens, note the varieties of groundcover and groups of low growing native and ornamental plantings, like the many Hostas and Hellebore varieties for winter interest. Spring bulbs include Narcissi, Tulipa, Anemone, bluebell, Muscari, Camass, Fritillaria, marsh marigolds and many varieties of fern.

Note the red oak as a background tree, with the many magnolia, maple, birch and spruce species. As well, note the changes in environment with stands of Garry oak, Douglas fir system, and wetter areas, where once there were old sloughs but now are ponds. Regular composting from the university campus is used as soil conditioner and mulch.

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By 1966, a frail Mrs. Simpson arranged to move her collection to the University of Victoria and was content in the knowledge of her legacy when she died in 1973. This initial transfer along with other significant plant donations evolved into the University of Victoria's Finnerty Gardens.
**Timber Bamboo**  
Spring/summer  
Magnolia x veitchii  
Canna  'Donation'  
Fraxinus excelsior  
Caltha palustris  
(giant timber bamboo)  
Sasa veitchii

**Spring/summer**  
Bambusa oldhamii

**Magnolia x veitchii**  
Rubrum  
Camellia  'Donation'

**Fraxinus excelsior**  
Pendula

**Caltha palustris**  
(marsh marigold)

**Fall/winter**  
Bambusa oldhamii

**G**  
Alpine, Metasequoia Beds  
Spring/summer  
Acer palmatum  'Koshimino'

**Beds**  
Collection of alpine Rhodos  
(smaller leaved low growth, sun tolerant)

**Cotinus coggygria**

**Romneya coulterii**

**Osmanthu delanyi**

**R. Buchanan Simpson**

**Fall/winter**  
Collection of dwarf conifers

**Cercidiphyllum japonicum**  
'Pendula'

**Cornus kousa**  
(fruits)

**Robinia Frisia**

**Sequoia Bed, Ring Road Entrance**  
Spring/summer  
Anemone nemerosa  
On the pergola  
Jasminum x stephanense  
and  
Rose  'Madame Alfred Carriere'

**Koelreuteria paniculata**  
R.  'Hummingbird'

**Fall/winter**  
Picea orientalis  
Sequoia sempervirens  
(Japanese anemone)

**H**  
Henderson Beds  
Spring/summer  
Alnus glutinosa  'imperialis'  
(cutleaf alder)

**Brunnera**  
'Jack Frost, 'Lantrees', 'Variegata'

**Hydrangea macrophylla**  
'Bluebird'

**Persicaria**  
'Red Dragon'

**Rodgersia paeoniflora**

**Acer collection in the lawn**

**Anemone x hybrida**

**Bergenia**

**G**  
Alpine, Metasequoia Beds  
Spring/summer  
Acer palmatum  'Koshimino'

**Camellia**  
'Colonel Frey'

**R. 'Etta Burrows'**  
(early red)

**R. 'Miss Josephine Firth'**  
(layer from the mother plant)

**Schizophragma hydrangeoides**

**Fall/winter**  
Bambusa oldhamii

**Drewsia pendulum**

**Picea orientalis**

**Sequoiadendron 'Pendulum'**

**J**  
Salix, Dry Creek Beds  
Spring/fall  
Hedycium coccineum  
'Tara' (hardy ginger)

**Hybiscus syriacus**

**Polemonium hybridum**  
(Solomon's Seal)

**R. calophytum**

**Salix contorta**

**Sambucus nigra**

**Fall/winter**  
Abies balsamea  
(balsam fir)

**Bettia sacraumontisi**  
on the berm

**Calochlora autumnale**

**Ilex verticillata**  
(red berries)

**Pseudotsuga menziesii**  
(Douglas fir)

**M**  
Stumpery  
Spring/summer  
Darmera peltata  
(Indian rhubarb)

**Fern collection**  
Ligularia  
Quebec garrya  
(architectural garry oak)

**R. sutchuenense**

**R. sinogrande**

**Rose 'Frances E. Lester'**

**Fall/winter**  
Evergreen fern collection

**Bettia sacraumontisi**  
(Douglas fir)

For further information  
on the Finnerty Gardens  
please contact Facilities  
Management reception  
at 250-721-7591  
http://external.uvic.ca/gardens/
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An all season self-guided walk.

Finnerty Gardens

Dr. Stoker died in 1931 and their property was sold. For the next 20 years, a garden flourished. When George died in 1958, the collection had grown. His widow, Suzanne, had the collection divided. She donated some of her collection to the University of Victoria and was content in the knowledge of her legacy when she died in 1972.

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Dr Richard Stoker, a retired Lieutenant-Colonel with the British Army, settled on a small parcel of land purchased from the Simpsons. They settled on a small parcel of land purchased from the Simpsons and built a summer home. As plants. While walking around the Gardens, note the many varieties of fern.

Getting to the Gardens: The entrance to the Finnerty Gardens is near the University Chapel, on the south-west edge of the campus. The Gardens encompass an area north of Cedar Hill Cross Road and west of Henderson Road. Proceed around the Ring Road to parking lot 6.

Visitor Information: The Finnerty Gardens are open to the public every day during daylight hours and are wheelchair accessible. Allow at least one hour to tour the Gardens. There is NO admission charge.

User-pay parking is available in all main campus lots Monday to Saturday.

Pricing:
• Day and hourly parking permits are available from dispensers at a rate of $1.25/hour to a maximum of $7/day.
• Dispensers for day permits are conveniently located in all numbered lots outside Ring Road, including the Ian Stewart Complex lot. They accept quarters, $1 coins, $2 coins, VISA and Mastercard.
• Day permit holders can park in any General Parking stall indicated by the blue signs.
• Parking meters are available in most lots. They accept $1 and $2 coins and quarters.
• No charge for parking on Sundays: all lots except the Ian Stewart Complex and University Centre Parkade.

Free parking on statutory holidays: all lots.

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 Finnerty Gardens which would not be possible otherwise.

Membership Information:
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