

# University Finnerty Garden Friends

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NEWSLETTER ● OCTOBER 2004



Dear Friends,

Weather! weather! weather! What an extraordinary summer we have had. On Galiano, we had two weeks of "Extreme" in fire hazard, and even had a neighborhood meeting to determine where we would go for evacuation in the event that we were cut off by forest fires. Since the drought and high temperatures occurred in tourist season, we were even more worried because some visitors are not careful enough in smoking. Then August arrived with its rains. We were all so relieved to see them, but the early rains have caused the grass to grow once again so I am back to mowing and admiring the weeds, which have done very well. The pond and the water storage tanks are filling up nicely. The pond is now about 18 months old and I have been fascinated by the amount of animal and plant life that it has attracted. There are two kinds of frogs (red-legged and tree frogs), rough legged newts and a variety of aquatic insects. One day during July's heat, some guests and I counted about 40 tree frogs in and around the pond. The clay that was moved out to make the pond has sprouted a great variety of vegetation and no longer looks new. The few goldfish I put in to control the

mosquitoes have done a good job and no larvae are visible. The pond is regularly visited by deer, raccoons, red squirrels and a multitude of birds.

The Finnerty Gardens are looking especially good this year with a fine showing of perennials. The newly-planted beds, particularly on Henderson Road, are now much more attractive—Carmen and her committee have chosen some delightful plants. They are now working on a collection of hydrangeas which add fall colour and charm to many areas. The cyclamen are presently in bloom and are adding a delightful patch of colour in many areas. Do plan to visit the Gardens soon to see the new perennials, shrubs and trees. And in a few weeks, the fall colours will be spectacular. Tony, Rhonda and their team are to be thanked for the care they give the Gardens. You will usually find Rhonda in the Gardens and she is only too willing to answer your questions or to identify a particular plant. She is very knowledgeable. The fenced area on Cedar Hill Cross Road adjacent to the Gardens is in the process of being restored as a Garry Oak meadow. Do watch the workers' progress as they proceed with the plantings. The low split rail fence is

most attractive and has defined the area beautifully. This new development has made the Cedar Hill entrance to the Gardens much more attractive. The addition of a large new sign has helped also. A day of tours of the Gardens was held on Mothers' Day and was very well attended. It is always good to welcome old Friends and to sign up new ones. I would like to thank the many members who served as tour guides.

The **Finnerty Calendar** is now ready and can be purchased at the Uvic bookstore. Daphne Donaldson has once again taken hundreds of photographs and has selected a magnificent collection for the 2005 edition. The calendar will be available in commercial outlets shortly. Do plan to buy some for gifts for your friends.

This is the last issue of the Newsletter before Christmas so I would like to wish you all a wonderful Christmas with family and friends and a prosperous New Year.

Betty Kennedy



### **Garry Oak Meadow Trials**

**Tony James**  
**Curator, Finnerty Gardens**

Many people may have noticed the work proceeding in the meadow between Cedar Hill X Rd and the south side of Finnerty Gardens where a grove of Magnolias were originally planted. They will have seen a cedar snake fence bounding an irregular area and inside this will notice rectangular plots with plastic sheeting, mulch or rototilled areas. Despite a small notice on site explaining the work, I am sure that there will be a great deal of puzzlement especially as to how this fits into the Gardens.

Some years ago the University's Master Plan was developed with a great deal of input from the local community. This had a decidedly green or environmental slant to it. Some of the actions that have resulted are to

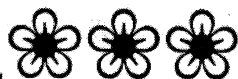
restore and enhance the natural areas within the University and to liaise more closely with students and academic groups to carry this out.

Although there may be some argument as to the original use or designation of the meadow adjacent to the Gardens, the whole area from Mt Tolmie through to Henderson Rd was identified as a Garry oak environment with the lands inside the University boundaries as just a part of this. In fact a major part of Finnerty Gardens itself belongs in that ecological system, even if it was not an actual meadow due to the more invasive nature of some of the native material itself, such as snowberry, rose.

Facilities Management together with Environmental Studies and other interested parties got together to come up with a proposal to recreate a Garry Oak meadow on this open space. The earliest photos show it as a bare meadow so it was unclear if any shrubby plants had ever been established and survived on it. Soil tests and observations showed that the ground was poorly drained with an impacted layer at a shallow depth. This environment did not seem to be suited to a Garry oak system although the land may have been one of vernal pools with outcrops of oaks. A similar situation exists near Maple Bay. The grasses and forbs on the site were mainly introduced and there was little native material. This is a fairly unique project. Garry oak restoration is in its infancy but as far as we could tell, Garry Oak recreation had not been tried in any formal way anywhere. That is why you see the experimental plots each one being about 5m x 2.5m. These have received differing ground preparation treatments to determine which will be the best approach to remove non-native vegetation and establish new material. There have been basically two series of treatments in Spring and Fall further divided into rototilling, stripping top organic layer, heavy mulching, solarization and control plots. Three 1m squares will be planted or seeded in each of these plots. A snake cedar fence has been erected around the site to define the boundary and, with luck, deter predators. The issue of

letting people onto the site has still to be decided, balancing the opportunity to show what is happening against the damage that may occur to a sensitive area. The fence also defines the Finnerty Gardens materials handling area and this together with gates and signage will go some way towards deterring strollers and joggers through this area. The jogging trail itself has been diverted around the outside of the new meadow to help in this regard. The fence has also proved an asset to the Gardens by defining this area as well as being visually pleasing. In October, each of the plots will be planted with native material. Seed collection of bulbs, grasses and some plants from Southern Vancouver Island has occurred during the Summer. Already in stock is a wide selection of plants including bulbs and grasses. Many grass plants have been purchased and removed from Manny Vaartnou's seed reclamation trials in Duncan. It will be interesting to see how these true native grasses can establish with the intense competition of the invasive species.

The Garden's boundaries have now been defined and gradually integrated into the outside landscapes. The Henderson Road view now looks good, the Garry Oak meadow is improving the Cedar Hill aspect and the new planting and bed redesign around the west end of the Chapel, should see a marked improvement between this and the parking lot. This latter will feature a collection of hydrangeas with some broadleaved evergreen screening to hide the vehicles.



**Houhere, the Hoheria**

**Alec McCarter**

Butterflies are more numerous in our garden than ever before. The reason is that in our garden, far from its native land, New Zealand, a large tree is blooming white in huge snowy billows. The weight of the small flowers on the willowy branches, bends them

down in pendulous masses, that sway and yield to the wind and shower down drifts of white petals on the grass. Butterflies, in ones and twos, in colours of orange, black and white, some dusky red, some white, flutter on the branches and swirl about in the air. There are only a few at a time, but they are constantly moving and the air seems alive with them. I am reminded of the migration of Monarch butterflies seen at Point Pelee on Lake Erie in Ontario. The numbers of Monarchs there dwarfed the numbers of the insects seen here, for there they were in the millions, weighing down the branches of the trees from their combined weight. Here it is the weight of the flowers that bends the branches of the tree.

This tree, looking very much like a huge, densely-leaved shrub, was given to us as a small plant, *Hoheria sexstylosa*, by Dr. John Trelawny about twenty years ago. At the same time he gave us another *Hoheria*, *H. glabrata*, also from New Zealand. Houhere is the Maori name



*Hoheria sexstylosa*

They are trees of the Lace-bark or Ribbon bark tribe, of the Malvaceae family—and they are known to attract butterflies when in bloom. Now the *H. sexstylosa* is about thirty feet high and half as wide, evergreen, while the *H. glabrata* has remained a small, slender tree, blooming

sparsely in comparison to its relative, and losing its leaves in autumn.



*Hoheria glabrata*

Both are not fussy about soil or location. The soil can be sandy, or heavy clay, very acidic or very alkaline. The site can be in full sun or dappled shade. Both like a moist soil. Both species can stand wind but it must be said that our *glabrata* is in a wind tunnel and has a distinct bow in its trunk as a result. Both weathered the frosts of 1985 and 1989—but are damaged if the temperature gets as low as 15C. In 1989, *H. sexstylosa* lost most of its leaves but was not permanently damaged.

The flowers borne near the ends of the willowy branches are very numerous, white, about 2 cm across, slightly cup-shaped, with six styles radially displayed. The time for bloom is July to August. At the height of bloom the tree is almost entirely covered from ground to top, side to side and the lawn beneath is buried deep in spent flowers as they fall. For the remainder of the year, the narrowly lance-shaped leaves, with serrated edges, remain green and shiny, densely covering the shrub so that only the smallest branches are visible. The overall effect is somewhat like that produced by a weeping willow. As a bonus, the flowers are sweetly scented.

The flowers are hermaphroditic, but our

tree has seldom produced seed. I have found one or two small seedlings under it, but they have not survived. Propagation is by means of rooted cuttings taken with a heel in July-August, or by layering. Seed can be obtained from suppliers in New Zealand, and shrubs can be grown readily over the first winter in greenhouses.

The common name is Lace-bark tree or Ribbon bark tree. I think I know why the latter name is used. If you plan to prune one of these trees be very careful to make a deep undercut for if this is not done, as the branch falls it will rip a ribbon of bark the full length of the tree below the cut!

The Maoris used this bark to make very tough ropes.

Different varieties are grown in New Zealand, but I know nothing about how well they would do here. *Hoheria sexstylosa* does well in Victoria and should be grown more often.

Knowing her interest in all manner of growing things, I sent photos of our shrub to Margaret deWeese. Her response was this poem:

#### ***Hoheria Sexstylosa***

On the wave of the summer's breeze  
Which sings and sighs  
'Hoheria, Hoheria' are  
The snowflakes of July,  
Six sexual styles to attract the bees,  
Who revel in their scented pollen,  
Awaken desires of youth,  
Before the smooth pure petals,  
Turn to desiccated cream  
And fall to earth in spent glory.  
I sense them whispering  
'Hoheria, Hoheria'  
As winter snows muffle  
The promise of rebirth.

Margaret deWeese

Photos by  
Bill McCarter



## The Dogwood Triangle

M. J. Harvey

Forgive me for going back to dogwoods again because recent newsletters have had articles by Alec McCarter and Margaret deWeese on the same subject, but there are some new kids on the block and I thought readers should know about these as well as giving some notes on their basic biology.

My subject is the three "flowering" dogwoods. All dogwoods have tiny, insignificant flowers but the flowering dogwoods have greatly enlarged white or pink bracts (stand-in petals) surrounding the head of true flowers, and for this reason are commonly called the flowering dogwoods. I will deal with their basics first then go into their hybrids, some of which are truly outstanding.

### The Species

1. *Cornus florida* from eastern North America is a member of the eastern deciduous forest where it is a substantial twiggy shrub. Biologically this species is adapted to the eastern climate where it can get quite cold in the winter, so it is hardy to Zone 5. In summer the east gets hot and very humid and it rains fairly frequently. These are necessary conditions for a deciduous forest. As a result *C. florida* has a fibrous root system for searching out water from the upper layers of the soil. That makes it a favourite of nurserymen because this type of root system adapts to pots readily and makes the plant easy to transplant. In the wild the species is widespread and variable with tall and dwarf, white or pink flowers, green or variegated leaves, and as a result the catalogues are filled with a wide selection of named cultivars. So should you rush out and buy one? No. It flowers too early for us and spring frosts can damage the bracts. Sometimes when the tips of the bracts are frost-nipped they stick together at the tips, giving a cute three-dimensional cage effect. If you have one keep it but read on for better options.

2. *Cornus nuttallii* is our own western dogwood and the Provincial Flower of British Columbia. It is superficially similar to the

eastern dogwood and presumably closely related but its physiology is tuned to our western climate and this is a drawback to its cultivation. We have a mild winter which gives a hardiness zone rating of 7. But the summers are a complete contrast to the east since we have a rain-free, low-humidity summer with dry soils. Our conditions necessitate trees and shrubs which have big water-wasting leaves (dogwood, arbutus, garry oak) putting down a series of good, deep tap-roots to guarantee a summer supply of water. This makes them difficult to cultivate in pots and the devil to transplant. *Cornus nuttallii* is not a nursery-friendly species. In fact I know of no nursery which sells them. The British have tried to grow it over a couple of centuries but the plants die young, presumably because it rains a lot in the summer which is just what it doesn't like.

The shrub is still locally common in the wild. When I drive back to Sooke in the spring there is a fine display of shrubs beside the Sooke Road near Jacklin which were left along the property lines when the forest was cleared for housing on the old Cecil Bloggs farm. Now, many people have planted dogwoods in their gardens which they think is the western dogwood but is in fact a hybrid that I will get to shortly.

3. *Cornus kousa* is the Asian member of the trio and flowers several weeks later than the other two. Late flowering is useful and means that frost on the bracts is not a problem, but by then the leaves are expanded and the spectacle is consequently a little diminished. The flowers are smaller but borne in such profusion that they make up for the slight size difference.

*C. kousa* is native to Japan, Korea and China in a region where there is more rain in summer than in winter. This means that it has a fibrous root system and takes to container cultivation in nurseries superbly. There are no unusual problems in transplanting it to gardens and it loves being watered. There is a fair amount of variation in the species, most cultivars have white flowers but the Japanese have the pink "Satsumi" and there is "Gold Cup" with variegated yellow and green leaves.

### The Problem Fungus

Anthrachnose is the general name given to a group of leaf and stem fungi. In the case of dogwood a particular anthrachnose was introduced to the eastern States about 1970

and very rapidly proceeded to infect all the eastern flowering dogwoods in the wild and in gardens. The leaves would emerge as normal in spring but develop brown spots which spread and kill the leaves so that by midsummer the tree would be bare. A second crop of leaves would develop later. Gardeners and naturalists were concerned that this was a pandemic which might kill off the trees just as the 1900 chestnut blight had eliminated the American chestnut.

After a number of years, the anthracnose spread to the west and proceeded to kill the leaves of the western dogwood—other dogwoods were immune. At the time I arrived in BC in 1990, a ten foot scruffy, non-flowering seedling on the property would lose its leaves by June. There was I—male, new chain saw, sick tree. I just itched to cut that thing down. Only my wife, a tree-hugger, saved it: "Give it a chance — it's only young — it might flower next year." I sprayed it with copper three times each spring as the leaves expanded and now it is healthy, green and floriferous, a credit to my wife. At the same time, the semi-wild, untended trees along Sooke Road flowered even better, so I don't know what is going on but I think the fungus is becoming less aggressive. (A parallel sequence happened to the local garry oaks when an aphid gall was introduced in the 1990s.)

At the height of the anthracnose epidemic, gardeners were advised to plant the Asian *C. kousa* because it is immune to this particular fungus. I did plant one and have not regretted it but *kousa* is not quite the same as our native flowering dogwood.

### The Hybrids

#### 1. *C. nuttallii* x *florida*

##### The Henry Eddie Story

The Eddie story is so well known that I hesitate to retell it but the account needs it for context. On the banks of the mighty Fraser River at Sardis, Henry M. Eddie had a nursery and during the slow times in the Depression and in the 1940s, he would make crosses between our native *C. nuttallii* and two or more *C. florida* cultivars including white and pink forms. I presume he saved pollen from the early-blooming *florida* and put it on to the *nuttallii* stigmas. From the seeds that resulted he grew rows of hybrids, some with larger, some with smaller flowers, some white, some pink. By all accounts there were some

spectacular specimens among them. But the Fraser is a moody river and in spring 1948 had one of its periodic floods, which in this case inundated the property washing away some buildings and the rows of *nuttallii* x *florida* hybrids. This was a tragic loss to the nursery industry. There was one saving grace—he had given a rooted cutting of one of the hybrids to a friend and this was the sole survivor of years of work. That white-flowered form was propagated and eventually put into commerce in 1955 under the name "Eddie's White Wonder". Henry Eddie died two years later not knowing how widely grown his hybrid would become.

It is "Eddie's White Wonder" that is widely planted in British Columbia (and the rest of the world) and which is usually assumed by non-gardeners to be the native species. "Eddie's White Wonder" is difficult to tell apart from *nuttallii*: more vigour, easier to grow in containers, slightly different branching angle and some resistance to anthracnose. It is a credit to the man who produced it but, true to the Canadian tradition of not honouring our own, it usually remains labelled just "White Wonder".

Unfortunately we do not have a pink version of the hybrid (derived from a pink cultivar of *C. florida*). I predict that it would sell really well and am surprised that the nursery industry has not picked up the ball and carried on from where the Fraser River left off. Maybe the UBC Botanic Garden could be commissioned to make this as one of its projects.

#### 2. *C. kousa* x *florida*

##### The Elwin Orton Story

About thirty years ago, Dr. Orton of Rutgers University had the idea of crossing the local (to New Jersey) *C. florida* to the Asiatic *C. kousa*. I don't know whether anthracnose resistance was on his mind as the disease was just coming into the eastern States at the time but he produced a number of hybrid plants combining the characteristics of the two species and with complete resistance to the leaf spot anthracnose. The plants are vigorous, flower young and a little later in the season than *nuttallii*. And, might I add, they are gorgeous.

These Rutgers hybrids have been registered and can only be propagated by paying a fee. It appears that Duncan and Davies in New Zealand are one of the main



propagators and they ship to nurseries all over the world. Robin Denning tells me that when these new hybrids came on the market over ten years ago, he got some into Brentwood Bay Nursery and they sat, and sat, and sat. Nobody knew what they were so they didn't sell. Now they do.

I give a list of the first ones registered but should also explain the reason for each having two names. Rose growers will be familiar with the system, but for others I should say that the registration name is an alphabetical concoction which in this case starts with RUT (for Rutgers). This applies worldwide. Then for each country there can be a nursery label name which can be something friendly in Japanese or German or whatever. I give the English language versions.

RUTBAN	-	"Aurora"
RUTDAN	-	"Celestial"
RUTSAN	-	"Constellation"
RUTLAN	-	"Ruth Ellen"
RUTFAN	-	"Stardust"
RUTGAN	-	"Stellar Pink"

I haven't seen all the cultivars myself but each has distinct characteristics: "Aurora" is white with broad bracts giving a full, circular flower head; "Stardust" has narrow, white bracts giving a starry effect; "Stellar Pink" is pink as, I think, is "Ruth Ellen". I recently came across a plant labelled "Heart-throb" which seems to belong to the group—it starts off white and turns pink.

Are these new introductions any good? Yes, they seem to combine several desirable characteristics: flower young, choice of colours, variable flower shape, container friendly and easy cultivation. The only drawback I have found is that my deer just love them and have removed all leaves up to five feet. There are not many around so far but I saw a group in early May planted in front of Suburban Design on Beaver Lake Road at West Saanich.

### The Missing Link

I called this article the Dogwood Triangle for a reason. Observant readers will have noticed that there is a third set of hybrids possible—those between *kousa* and *nuttallii*. These, one can predict, would inherit the anthracnose resistance of *kousa* (should this continue to be a problem), would extend the

flowering season by two or three weeks and would be easier to grow and establish than our native *nuttallii*. Most would have white flowers but by using the pink "Satsumi" cultivar of *kousa* pale pink flowers should at least be possible.

Whether the nursery trade needs more dogwood hybrids in the face of the onslaught of the Rutgers hybrids I leave to the economists to decide. For myself, I would love to try them to see what their garden potential is. You never know until you attempt them. And, not being omniscient, I must admit the possibility that these hybrids already exist—let me know if they do.



### Late Summer Bloom

Alec McCarter

Mid to late August is the time for the Japanese anemone to be at its best. *Anemone hupehensis*, fills in the months of August and September before the Michelmas daisies and Chrysanthemums take over.

To be rid of derogatory statements first; in our garden this anemone is something of a rogue, albeit a charming one. If given a chance and the right growing conditions, it spreads and dominates. Being a tall and dense grower, it is likely to defeat any weaker opponent. One might even say of it that it is a coarse weed not easy to keep under control. Occurring only in white, pink and rose, it lacks the refinement, enormous diversity of colour and form that the asters and Chrysanthemums possess, but we like it just the same. Long before the plants flower, the leaves make an attractive border by themselves and when they bloom, the large saucer-shaped many-petalled flowers on long stems are really quite beautiful and graceful. The white flowers with their central boss of yellow stamens are particularly fine. They are at the ends of stems that can be three feet or more high, and are best, I think, when they are blown about by a breeze, showing their ability to dance as they whirl and bob together.



*Rose-form of Japanese anemone*

They are of the easiest culture, at home in heavy clay or better soil, not dry, in partial shade or, in our garden, in full sunlight. The only way that we have found to keep them under control is to dig them out, being careful to get all the roots and the tufts of leaves that spring from them. I do not believe that they resent disturbance; that is contrary to our observations. On the contrary, they relish having the opportunity to spread into the empty spaces left by the removal of their brethren and they surpass in usurping the spaces occupied by less-vigorous plants. They look fine with Crocosmias (Montbretias) which overlap in bloom and can stand up to the aggressors. The contrast between the long sword-like leaves of the latter with the softer, wide, flatter, lobed leaves of the Anemone is also an attractive feature.



*Buck eating Japanese anemone*

When the flowers are done, the plants can be cut to the ground. In Victoria, no special means are necessary to protect the plants through the winter. So long as the ground is well-drained, they will lie dormant until next spring. The new growth is somewhat late to appear so that spring-flowering bulbs can bloom and mature without interference. We like these anemones, and so does the large buck who sometimes comes into our garden. In the photograph, he is devouring the tops of the Japanese anemones. The plants are now blooming as if nothing had happened. How is that for being resilient?



### "Christmas Floral Fantasy"

Cadboro Bay United Church Hall  
2625 Arbutus Road

November 19 - 12:00 pm to 8:00 pm

November 20 - 10:00 am to 5:00 pm

For more information contact Julie Noble at  
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