

From the President . . .

Ready for spring? Somewhere between rainstorms, bulbs and perennials alike have sprung up, buds are swelling and weeds you missed last fall are doubling in size every week. So you're already behind in your garden chores. It's the worst thing about our maritime climate: it's a long growing season but on many days you can't get into the garden because of the rain. Still, much better than drought.

The first big event in spring for BRAGS is of course the plant sale. We need plants! With only one dig scheduled, we need members to raid their own gardens (and those of their friends) to fill the benches. The Popular Plant List will be available at the March meeting so try to take a moment to let us know what you can offer. Remember to replant into sterile potting mix and to label the pots. If you need knives for labels, they'll be available at the meeting too. Faye Kilpatrick can help you find other members who have pots to donate, if you're short. And save the receipts if you're doing a lot of potting – we'll reimburse you for the cost of soil.

We have also been asked to participate in GardenWorks Spring Fling Weekend again in mid-March. This would involve manning a table, handing out brochures and ads for the plant sale and Rhodofest, but the table doesn't have to be staffed 100% of the time so you can certainly poke around while you're there. Of course they would welcome anyone who would like to do a talk.

One thing we would like to have for this kind of event, as well as for our table at the Rhodofest, is a poster or other display showing some of our community projects. If you have pictures, let me know, and if you would like to make the display, even better! We're also looking for someone to write up a history of the Rhodofest. Many of the long-term members have material but it needs to be put together, so if that's your special talent, let us know.

For our March meeting Gerry Gibbens will be giving a talk on Rhodos. I certainly hope we won't be snowed out this time. Actually, I'll be off trekking in Patagonia, so be sure to come out and cheer Faye on – she never gets to talk. I expect to see some very interesting plants but sadly they frown on one trying to take them home.

Susan Brandl

Gardening by the Book – Long Season Gardening

If you're thinking about adding plants to your garden this spring, take a trip to the library before you take a trip to the nursery. There are several good books that will help you plan for a long season of garden interest.

Typically when we think of planning for 3 or 4 season interest we want to find plants that bloom at different times, rather than have everything explode in June and languish thereafter. *Continuous Bloom* by Pam Duthie (Ball, 2000) gives a month-by-month progression of flowers or foliage with nice colour photographs and care descriptions. She suggests companion plants and sometimes mentions particular cultivars. She gardens in Illinois, though, so you'll have to adjust the month of bloom to our climate, and there's nothing at all for winter. Still, a good basic book and some interesting suggestions.

Perennials All Season by Douglas Green (McGraw-Hill 2003) is organized by season rather than by month. He covers a wide range of perennials and lists recommended cultivars, as well as care instructions and some interesting facts about the plants. This book might encourage you to try some of the older species, like Gas Plant (*Dictamnus*) or *Heleniums*.

Christopher Lloyd took long-season gardening to the next level when he wrote *Succession Planting for the Adventurous Gardener*. This is a beautiful book, with amazing photos of garden beds showing how full they look each month from March through October. He planned the beds of his garden at Great Dixter using the concept of layers. The first layer was the small trees and shrubs that, along with the hardscaping, form the backbone of the garden. His next layer was perennials and bulbs, which he considered one layer as they usually can occupy the same space. Then, he let self-sowers like Welsh Poppies and Love-in-a-Mist (*Nigella*) add another dimension. Annuals, usually the looser, old-fashioned kind, are a fourth layer. Finally, any gaps that survive are filled with a pot of something, summer bulbs or tender plants. The effect is incredible: full beds for months.

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**March Speaker – Gerry Gibbens of VanDusen Botanical Garden
“Rhododendron Questions & Answers”**

Nominations! Nominations! Nominations!

No, we're not talking about the U.S. Presidential race, - we're talking about BRAGS!

While it may seem early in the year, a number of our BRAGS positions will be coming up for election by the end of this year. Now is the time to begin thinking about what you might want to take on, and to begin asking questions.

Executive positions up for election will be: President, Vice-President, Treasurer.

Standing Committee positions will be: Fundraising, Membership, Publicity, Rhodofest.

Nominations must be submitted prior to the December 2008 AGM, and positions can be co-chaired by two individuals. With everyone's busy schedule these days, more and more positions are co-chaired which can make taking on a position less overwhelming. If you think you might want to take on a position, but are reluctant to take it on alone, take time over the upcoming months to discuss the option of co-chairing with a buddy. An example of this would be the Fundraising position (Peter and Cheryl and Sheila share this role). If you can't always make a meeting, but want to take on a role, co-chairing means less obligation as your position will always be covered.

Have a basic feel for numbers? Can you balance your chequebook? Perhaps the Treasurer position is the one for you. Interested in Publicity? Chat with Jackie and find out what she does 'behind the scenes' to make PR things happen for BRAGS. When you see your executive team sitting up at the front during each meeting, pay attention to the role they play...there might be one for you!

New to the club? All positions are strongly supported by other members, so jump in and get your feet wet! You will never be left alone to do the job...sometimes you might even be crowded!

Over the upcoming months, your Nominations team will be providing you with more information, be delivering hand-outs, and will of course, be available to answer your questions. Please don't be shy! A club like BRAGS doesn't happen without volunteers and members willing to step up and fill the roles we need. At present there are other non-executive roles that need to be filled, such as the Speaker program and the Plant Sale. And volunteers are always needed for refreshments. If you are interested in any of these positions right now, please speak to anyone of the executive team.

(Cont). **Nominations! Nominations! Nominations!**

Your nominations team welcomes your questions, and we'd love to hear your new ideas!

Cheryl Fiddis & Lois Brown, your Nominations Committee

Gardening by the Book -Long Season Gardening

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Of course, Great Dixter is an open garden and has a whole army of gardeners to look after it. And the massively full borders aren't to everyone's taste - they can look less than restful, almost too "bitty". But the book can still offer lots of take-home ideas, especially the use of some elegant annual like *Amni magus* and *Nicotiana sylvestris* to add elegant interest. And while you might not have a greenhouse full of pots ready to pop into the garden when needed, there's nothing wrong with buying one or two splashes of colour if needed.

If you're looking for a much easier way to keep your garden looking good the whole season, check out *Long Flowering Garden Plants* by MBL Craigmyle. This lists over 500 plants that work hard so you don't have to. Noel Kingsbury's book *Seedheads in the Garden* how great it can look to not deadhead.

These are just a few of the books on perennials and borders that our library has in its collection. It's definitely worthwhile to check some out. They also have gardening magazines, like *Fine Gardening* which is nice to look at but too expensive to buy. A little bit of research is not only enjoyable, it also means your plant purchases will have greater impact in your garden. Enjoy!

Susan Brandl

Out & About

March 4 (Tue)

Mary Ballon of West Coast Seeds speaking on what's new in their catalogue including a larger selection of certified organic and heritage varieties of seeds. South Burnaby Garden Club monthly meeting, Bonsor Community Centre, 730pm. Visitors welcome.

March 11 (Tue)

Brian Minter of Minter Gardens speaking on "Today's Lifestyle Gardening". New Westminster Horticultural Society monthly meeting. Centennial Lodge, Queen's Park, New Westminster. \$2 non-members. Brian Minter will be bringing a selection of plants for sale.

BRAGS Coming Events

March 5, 2008 Monthly Meeting Gerry Gibbens "Rhododendron Questions & Answers"

Gerry Gibbens is the Gardener responsible for the Sino-Himalayan section at VanDusen Botanical Garden and an expert on Rhododendron culture. Bring your Rhodo questions

April 2 Monthly Meeting Candyse Roberts Water Features

April 20 BRAGS Plant Sale Burnaby Village Museum

May 2 Monthly Meeting Elaine Cramer Hydrangeas

May 4 Rhododendron Festival Deer Lake Park

Gardening Education

VanDusen Botanical Garden – March Courses

A sampling of VBG courses. Check www.vandusengarden.org or phone 604-257-8666 for more information

- From Berry Patch to Grape Arbor - Mar 8
- Roses for your Garden – Mar 9
- Gardening Through the Seasons - Mar 12
- Spring Gardening Tips & Techniques-Mar 15
- Grafting Workshop – Mar 15
- Trees & Shrubs for Urban Gardens – Mar 18
- Flower Arranging-Easter & Spring Themes
Mar 19
- Designing with Grasses - Mar 29
- Plant Propagation – Mar 29
- Introduction to the Perennial Border –Mar 29
- Basketry – Waves & Undulations – Mar 30

Cedar Series Lecture – March 6 "Japanese Cherry Trees in Vancouver" Speaker – Doug Justice, Asst Director & Curator of UBC Botanical Garden

Master Gardeners Assn. of BC Presents Spring Seminar 2008 Sunday, March 16

"Within a Hundred Miles – Home & Beyond".

Moving beyond the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides is a new Movement emphasizing the necessity for people to re-harmonize themselves with nature through our relationship to food and agriculture. 'The 100 Mile Diet' is shorthand for the practice of only buying food and drink that was produced within 100 miles of one's kitchen. This year's Master Gardener Spring Seminar, *which is open to everyone*, will explore how we can obtain a sustainable food system which maximizes healthy choices, community self-reliance and equal access for everyone. In addition to the speakers there will be **compost**, **plants** and **books** offered for sale, **displays** and a **Silent Auction**.

Michael J. Fox Theatre, Burnaby South High School, 5455 Rumble Street.
For Information Phone 604-786-5317

BRAGS 2008 EXECUTIVE

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Susan Brandl
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Vice-President
Faye Kilpatrick
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Treasurer
Heather MacKay
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Secretary
Lanny Hui
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Past President
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STANDING COMMITTEES

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& Cheryl Fiddis *
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**Rhododendron
Festival**
Judy Wellington
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OTHER COMMITTEES

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Editor-Vacant
Distribution-D & A Forsyth *
Plant Sale
Vacant
Garden Contest
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Garden Tour
Faye Kilpatrick
434-5921
Speakers
Vacant
Refreshments
Helen Vaughan
299-2014
Greeter
Judy Wellington
Raffle
Sheila Chowdhury
Website
David Forsyth *

* Phone number included above

Where are the Minutes ?

If you have arrived at this page looking for the Minutes of the last meeting, you have obviously forgotten (or aren't aware) that the February meeting was cancelled due to an unexpected, sudden snowstorm in Burnaby on February 6th. In place of the usual Minutes, we give you a short, humorous story thanks to the ever-fertile imagination of Cheryl Fiddis.

Plant People Sweet, Silly Similes by Cheryl Fiddis

Have you ever compared your friends and family to flowers and plants found in your garden? It's amazing how some people are *just so* like a plant or flower! Kind of like how some owners seem to look like their pets...or is it that pets look like their owners?

I have a young **grandson** who is just so **Nasturtium!** He's vigorous, bright, has a cheery open face and thrives in full sun!

Another dear **friend** and past co-worker, no longer with us, was just so **Sunflower**...cheery even on the gloomiest of days, and full of life at the earliest hour of the day.

And my youngest **granddaughter**, a sweet tiny child ... why a **Sweet Pea** of course.

An elderly Scottish **friend**, so frail and looking like a puff of wind would blow her away...yes, an **Astilbe** for sure! Fernlike foliage, feathery plumes...that's Jessie for sure.

My favorite **sister-in-law** is a **Columbine**...delicate, precious, and a real treasure. Not just loved by hummingbirds, but all the family. Can't get enough of her.

My elderly **uncle** is a **Foxglove**...old fashioned and always popping up when you least expect him, but always welcome! And yes, he kind of does bob his head up and down!

And I've yet to see a Hydrangea without thinking of my paternal **grandmother** ... round and colorful and just, well, *so blue*, just like the **Hydrangea** in my garden.

I had a **boss** once who was lethal...was pleasant enough when you first met her, but wow, eventually you'd get pricked for sure. I have a **Pyracantha** with *very, very* large thorns in my yard...need I say more? I still get pricked every time I get too close. I'm thinking of taking it out of my life altogether.

Someone else I know is a **Hyacinth**...intense, dense thinking...a bit of maintenance, but worth the friendship.

My **mother** is a **Gladiolus** for sure, my favorite flower. She's not tall, quite the opposite actually, but forever surprising me how strong she is and *honorable* somehow, and there's this way she just holds her head up high and marches thru life.

My **husband**, now he's a **tree**, - a rare exotic tree, - he was hard to find!

I knew a lot of **wildflowers** when I was young. Like seeds, they've all scattered and blown away in the wind...

And even the perfect garden/life, has **weeds**. We've all known a few, - usually not that welcome and usually arriving on the tail of the wind and the wings of the birds - both of which we couldn't live without.

You might say they enrich our lives and give us *balance*.

And now, you are probably wondering what would I imagine **myself** to be like? Perhaps a **Lupine** - strong, a perfectionist, and a bit finicky when it comes to being 'planted' in the right place. But well worth the trouble of course!

The Secret World of Gardens

This beautifully filmed nature series uncovers the hidden world in our backyards. Find out about the delicate relationships between plants, insects, wildlife and other creatures. Learn about defense strategies against predators, mating rituals and the wondrous cycles of life.

Using macro lenses and time-lapse photography, this series reveals the danger and beauty within an ordinary garden.

Knowledge Network

Tuesdays at 730pm, Saturdays at 630pm