

From the President . . .

I have a new garden! It is partially developed and has some good bones to get me started - as well as some bad ones that will have to go as time and energy allow. One of my "problems", a leaky concrete pond, is actually quite fun despite being a bit of an eyesore. Like disguising figure flaws, good planting can cover bad design so the pond can stay awhile while drain tiles and such are dealt with. Everyone knows you're supposed to observe your garden for a whole year before making changes or planting plans but that would mean no playing in the dirt for a whole year, plus no buying plants. Now browsing nurseries is one of my favorite things so I broke the no planting rule almost immediately. There are areas that won't be changed in the foreseeable future and I've designated some as dry (I'll water only if things get desperate) and some as wet (I'll water weekly, plus make sure there's lots of humus in the soil) and stuffed in my treasures. Thus I have three or four beds for planting to keep me happy. If you see a good plant you have to buy it, right?

The other thing that is keeping me sane is planting containers. Almost anything can go into a container temporarily - perennials, shrubs, even small trees. This time of year I've found all sorts of bargains - like 4-inch perennials for \$0.47 or small shrubs half off - which I put in pots and planters and will later move to the garden or the plant sale. Other material for pots can come from your own garden cleanup, with things like snow-in-summer or periwinkle spending a few months in a container before ending up in the compost pile. Don't forget bulbs - you will be very thankful for a big tub of daffs or tulips by the door come spring.

Think of the plant sale when doing your fall cleanup. Lots of things you're cutting back can be planted and turned into a saleable item next spring. Decide now what can be divided because by next February you'll have forgotten about that nice clump of blooming whasis that would be such a good thing for the sale. And the other thing we're always looking for is new members. As you're roaming the neighbourhood checking out gardens or talking plants in the checkout lineup, remember to let people know about BRAGS. If you're involved with other garden programs and hear a good speaker, let us know too. The more people involved the better the club will be.

Susan Brandl

Please, please ~~

~~don't~~ eat the Rhododendrons

Two interesting articles have come my way lately; the first warning of the dangers of eating rhododendron leaves, flowers or honey and the second, extolling the virtues of a particular rhododendron extract.

The first article focusses on the fact that many rhododendron species contain a chemical called "grayanotoxin" in their leaves, flowers and nectar which is transmitted to the honey of bees that collect the nectar. Especially if bees collect exclusively from rhodo blossoms, the resulting honey can cause poisoning. Whether ingested via honey or leaves, grayanotoxin intoxication is very rare and rarely fatal to humans or other creatures who make this poor nutritional choice (with the exception of weevils).

Symptoms, which generally subside in 24 hours, include dizziness, weakness, excessive perspiration, nausea and vomiting shortly after the toxin is ingested. Other symptoms that can occur are low blood pressure or shock, bradyarrhythmia (slowness of the heart beat associated with an irregularity in the heart rhythm) and sinus bradycardia.

Accounts of grayanotoxic poisoning from rhodos and other members of the Ericaceae family date back to the 400 BC in Greece. Here in British Columbia too, several of our native rhodo species are known to be toxic - *Rhododendron occidentale*, *Rhododendron macrophyllum* and *Rhododendron albiflorum*.

See: <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~mow/chap44.html>

The second article extols the benefits of a food supplement derived from *Rhododendron caucasicum* which grows in the Republic of Georgia. The claim is that a person living in that area is 36 times more likely to live to be 100. "Researchers" attribute this to their environment and a unique source of nutrients in their daily regime. The source of nutrients is found in a powerful super antioxidant extracted from *R. caucasicum* which is reputedly the only species not toxic to humans. If you're interested, capsules containing *R. caucasicum* extracts may be available at some health food stores across North America.

So, there you go - a bit of fascinating, albeit useless, rhododendron trivia.

Margot

CLEANUP TIME AGAIN

(The following article, adapted from one on the web, provides a good summary of fall garden cleanup issues.)

Why cleanup?

Removing spent plant material from your garden reduces the amount of disease spores and insect eggs that could cause problems next season. It also neatens the garden so you're not looking at a disheartening tangle of dead foliage all winter. Your spring "to-do" list will be a little shorter, too! If your time is limited, just get after the messiest plants and don't worry about the rest.

Once you've had a hard frost, pull out and compost any annuals which have not yet died down on their own. Most perennials can be back to 3 to 4 inches high. Leaving some stubble will help you locate the plants next spring and also helps insulate the plants from cold by holding mulch and snow over the crown of the plant. Remember to keep diseased plant material out of your compost pile.

Some perennials, including ornamental grasses, Autumn Joy sedum, achillea (yarrow) and stachys (lamb's ears), look good even after frost, adding garden interest and food for birds through the winter. You may want to leave these in place and just cut them back next spring.

Why mulch?

The biggest benefit of winter mulch is that it helps to moderate soil temperatures. Rather than thawing and then re-freezing, soil that's covered with a layer of mulch will usually stay at a relatively consistent temperature. This helps keep your plants fully dormant until spring arrives and also minimizes damage to roots that can be caused by frost heaving.

Mulch also suppresses weed germination and makes any weeds that do grow easier to pull.

The amount of mulching you do in your own garden depends on the severity of your climate, the condition of your soil, the kinds of plants you have, the amount of mulch materials you have on hand, and how much time you can devote to the task. Remember that in most cases, winter mulching (like cutting back your perennials) is one of those good but not essential tasks. If you can't mulch everything, concentrate on plants that may be marginally hardy or those that you especially treasure.

When to mulch

If you do mulch, don't rush it. Plants should enter winter dormancy slowly and completely. For this reason, mulches should be applied only after average

temperatures have dropped to below 10 C which will be around the middle of October. Once the ground begins to warm next spring, it's important to pull the mulch several inches from the crowns of your plants. This will give newly emerging growth access to sun and good air circulation.

What to use for mulch

An effective winter mulch must be water- and air-permeable so as not to smother plant roots. Non-matting winter mulch materials include: shredded leaves, evergreen boughs, pine needles, weed-free straw, chopped cornstalks, bark mulch and compost. Do not use large leaves whole; they pack down and can suffocate the plant they're intended to protect. For most plants, 2 to 4 inches of mulch is adequate.

In exposed areas, you can use garden fabric or burlap to hold organic mulches in place over a framework of branches or stakes.

Moisture is important

Most winter plant damage is actually due to moisture problems, not cold temperatures. In dry climates, as much as 95 percent of the winter plant loss is due to dehydration. In wet climates, such as we have in the lower mainland, both soil and plants can get waterlogged during the winter and either suffocate or be damaged by frost heaving.

Plants in wet climates require good drainage especially if they are native to dry climates. Add organic matter to the soil, plant in raised beds and be careful about where you site your garden and your plants. If you can't improve the drainage everywhere in the garden, choose moisture-loving plants for the wetter areas.

Wind protection makes a difference

Cold, drying wind is another major hazard for plants. If your garden is in an exposed area and/or you get lots of winter wind, your plants will really appreciate some wind protection as well as a layer of mulch. Shrubs, hedges, fences and walls can buffer the wind and help maintain a protective soil covering of mulch or snow. You can also protect plants from wind damage with a temporary windbreak made from shade netting or burlap.

So prune things back and cover up what you can, but leave yourself plenty of time for apple picking, leaf peeping and the other delights of autumn.



BRAGS' Year at a Glance

October 3, 2007 Meeting

Barbra Fairclough:
Ornamental Grasses in the Landscape

November 7, 2007 Meeting*

Randy Solomon:
Attracting Birds to the Garden

December 5, 2007 Meeting*

Agenda to be announced

***Meetings: 7:00 pm**

Burnaby Village Museum
(Discovery Room)
6501 Deer Lake Avenue

Our October Speaker *Barbra Fairclough*



Barbra joined the BCLNA while still a student at Kwantlen School of Horticulture and has been an active volunteer ever since. Barbra chaired the

redevelopment of GardenWise Directory and currently sits on the Inside BC Committee and the Membership Committee. She has volunteered as Judge for both the Canadian Horticulture Technician Certification and BC Landscape Awards of Excellence. Barbra has consulted to Canada Wide Media Limited and has worked as Horticultural Editor and contributing writer and photographer for GardenWise Magazine. Barbra is a sought after garden speaker and currently operates FarmHouse Gardens, a company specializing in high quality residential landscape maintenance in the South Central Fraser Valley.

FarmHouse Gardens

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Refreshment Committee

We Appreciate You!

Thank You

A great big thank you to the dedicated ladies who worked with me on last season's refreshment committee.

- Helen Vaughan
- Pat Raleigh
- Linda Cholette
- Louise Meville
- Pauline Baldoumis
- Arlene Hrastrnik

If you think you would like to be part of the shopping, set up and clean up team, give me a call at 604-937-0556.

Wendy Snyder

~ MISSING ~

Garden Tour Signs!

Ten garden tour signs are still floating around out there. Please check your garage and hand them back to Wendy Snyder or Faye Kilpatrick at our October meeting. Thank you.

Wendy



BRAGS 2007 EXECUTIVE

- President**
Susan Brandl
433-4250
- Vice-President**
Faye Kilpatrick
434-5921
- Treasurer**
Heather MacKay
438-1342
- Secretary**
Lanny Hui
- Past President**
Cheryl Fiddis
435-2801

STANDING COMMITTEES

- Fund Raising**
Peter Barnsdale
421-8987
& Cheryl Fiddis
435-2801
- Membership**
David Forsyth
298-6350
- Nominations**
Cheryl Fiddis
435-2801
Marti Tutti
436-1942
& Val Wuensche
298-2836

- Publicity**
Jackie Walker
420-0275
- Rhododendron Festival**
Judy Wellington
434-8287

OTHER COMMITTEES

- Garden Contest**
Judy Wellington
434-8287
- Garden Tour**
Wendy Snyder
937-0556
& Faye Kilpatrick
434-5921

- Newsletter**
Margot Moser
250-468-9167
Anne & David Forsyth
298-6350

- Plant Sale**
Susan McDougall
432-9641
- Raffle & Greeting**
Val Wuensche
298-2836
Judy Wellington
434-8287

- Refreshments**
Wendy Snyder
937-0556
- Speakers**
Peter Barnsdale
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- Website**
David Forsyth
298-6350