

## From the President . . .

Most people love fall with its cooler temperatures and the refreshing return of moisture, but even the hardiest Vancouverite would have to say we've had enough of the wet stuff. A few days ago I put out a tub to collect rainwater for my houseplants – I had over 8 inches of water by the end of the week. Whether you welcome the rainy days of winter as the perfect time to snuggle in front of the fire with a book (or other good friend) or jet off to tropical climes, whether you love the fall leaves or view them as just more work or maybe more compost, you can't argue with the seasons. The dark and rainy days are upon us. There are a few sunny days to plant bulbs and do some yard clean up but basically gardening is over till next year.

There are still some gardening activities to do of course. I've been reading old magazines for design ideas, looking for pictures that suggest the 'feel' of what I want to achieve (but probably never will given the conflicting limits of budget and laziness). I've also checked out other plant related sites and clubs and have to say I haven't seen anything that compares to our website, newsletter and speakers program. Many websites lack basic info like how to join the club, or where an event is being held, or have all sorts of links that don't open. Some are just so dull you don't even realize that's the actual website. So I really want to thank the people that have made these and all our events so incredible. They really are above average.

BRAGS soldiers on through the wet too, giving you a bit of a garden fix and some friendly people to share plant talk with. A few interesting suggestions have come in from members so we might try a few new things – keep your ideas coming. We still need people to take on jobs for next year. It doesn't matter if it's your secret ambition to lead the best gosh danged plant sale ever or if you are just willing to help keep an event alive. You'll have lots of fun and lots of help. You might even like it so much you'll want to do it again.

Susan Brandl  
President

## "The little vine that could"

I need to tell you a story of a plant that I bought at the Auction in June of 2005 at the club. Most of you are familiar with *Dicentra* or bleeding heart but I, like most of you, did not realize it came in a climbing type called *Dicentra scandens*. It is a native to Asia and we were told it is a zone 8 but it has proven us wrong. I took this little seedling home and was told to plant it in out in the garden and slightly protect it, which I did. I also was told that it required afternoon shade and must have well drained soil. I chose to plant it at the base of large pine tree which face east. I have planted a number of vines at the base of this tree only to find that nothing survived. It is two years since I planted this little wonder and it is now about fifteen feet up my pine tree and has wound itself freely over my fuchsia basket, through my Pieris covering them in delicate yellow little heart shaped flowers and did surprisingly well surviving our past blast of cold last winter. I have tried to take a good picture of this plant and have failed. It always did seem a little shy but you must believe me when I say that it is my favourite vine in my garden. I have to say thank you so much to Jonathan Candy who started the seeds which are not easily available at nurseries and if you're really lucky some of you will get one of these wonderfully shy little vines at the next plant sale.

Peter Barnsdale



*Dicentra scandens*

## BRAGS MEMBERS SHARE GREAT GARDENING TIPS

### **Diane Allison**

When cleaning up the perennials in the autumn I always try to leave the dead flower stalks standing. I clean up the dying foliage, but the flower stalks are often stronger and remain for most of the winter. Besides often supplying birds with seeds, the dried stalks provide good winter interest (especially when covered with frost or snow). But, more importantly, they tell me that something is planted in that bare spot and often remind me what the plant is.

\* \* \* \* \*

Another tip - use your camera a lot. We always forget just how big that peony grows!

### **Peter Barnsdale**

My tip is a simple one but one that I notice hardly anyone follows. It is to wear knee pads while you are gardening. I have really messed up one of my knees because I would kneel on concrete, hard packed dirt or against retaining walls, and all that time I did not protect my knees. So if you want to have a long and happy gardening life, extend the life of your knees with pads.

### **Susan Brandl**

If you have to start seeds on a windowsill, put a reflective piece of paper behind the seed tray (shiny paper, aluminum foil etc). It will reduce the amount the seedlings lean toward the light..

\* \* \* \* \*

If you start lots of seeds, put a glass shelf on shelf clips across the window. With a cheap plug-in fluorescent light you have a great place to raise sturdy seedlings and the whole set-up packs away when seed-starting season is over.

### **Linda Cholette**

An environmentally friendly way of eliminating slugs is filling up a little "dish" with beer and when the slugs are attracted to the beer, they have their own little drinking party, gorge themselves and the next day you will find their little slimy dead bodies in the dish. An economical and very efficient way of eliminating slugs! Enjoy!

### **Cheryl Fiddis**

The one tip that quickly comes to mind for me, is I could not live without my pair of scissors out in the yard. While it might seem like a funny thing, I always have them in my pocket...for light trimming, edging grass...just a cheap pair from the loonie store and they do the trick. (One of the neighbours once asked if we couldn't afford a lawn mower, as I was edging some bricks!)

\* \* \* \* \*

Another tip...when digging something up to move it to another spot, - the lid of the garbage can makes a great temporary carrying tool. Light, easy to carry, and holds any loose soil that might be dropping along the way.

### **Anne Forsyth**

When taking cuttings to root indoors, I wash them off in a solution of insecticidal soap before placing them in pots to help prevent insect pests such as aphids and white fly.

### **Mary Hamaliuk**

I leave my dahlia tubers in the ground, before I would dig them up, dry them and pack them away in peat moss. In the spring I would have lost quite a few of them. Now I only lose a couple. Makes life much easier and gardening less stressful.

### **Faye Kilpatrick**

I plant all my bulbs in 12-inch wide plastic pots in the fall, protected from squirrels and stored outside but against the house. As each different one comes into bloom, I display them in containers and window boxes to enjoy when entering or from the house. When finished blooming, I put them into the garden because now I can see where there are empty spaces needing filling; also my existing bulbs don't get sliced up in the fall.

\* \* \* \* \*

I got this one from Garden Gate magazine. Take a 5-foot long piece of 2-inch diameter PVC pipe, put 1 foot in the ground beside a tomato plant, as the plant grows, tie to pipe for support and fill the pipe with water to give the plants a good drink. Throw fleece or a sheet over the top at night in the fall to protect your plant from early frost.

### **Susan McDougall**

Nature's own garden stakes...

When pruning corkscrew willows, heavenly bamboo or any tree or shrub with limbs of interest ~~ keep the longer, sturdier branches to use as garden stakes. This natural look in supporting your taller plants adds character to your garden and a further bonus ~~ it's better for the environment!

\* \* \* \* \*

Too much of a good thing...

To curtail rampant growth of plants with 'invasive' tendencies--some grasses, crocosmias, or Michaelmas daisies ~~ plant in pots and bury the pot into your garden beds. Saves 'weeding' time & also makes it easier to move/change these plants when redesigning your garden.

\* \* \* \* \*

Additional tip: (this takes a bit of work and good wire snips)~~for crocosmias: use a Tomato Cage~cut/remove the smaller wire ring. Place cage base firmly in ground, over submerged pot (1 litre) early in spring. Holds leaves/flowers upright in nice bunch and helps prevent splitting or lodging which often happens by late summer~~

\* \* \* \* \*

Happy feet...  
Create clean "pathways" with step stones/bricks in your planting beds, so when you're working in your garden bed or just stepping 'in' to deadhead a bloom, you keep your shoes clean.

\* \* \* \* \*

Are you smarter than...?  
This past spring, we had a problem with crows dipping all sorts of food items in our bird bath. Turns out (info from the internet) the reason they dip, is that their newly hatched babies need their food soppy wet to swallow. Kind of cute and isn't nature clever!? Perhaps. But, not so cute when daily your birdbath is turned into a soupy mess! The solution offered was to keep the birdbath 'dry' for a couple of weeks; until their fledglings have flown. Seemed to work. For the remainder of the summer months (mid June & on) the water in our birdbath stayed clear and clean & was greatly appreciated by all of our fine feathered friends~~

### **Coni O'Neill**

If you don't love a plant, get rid of it. If it falls over in the rain, gets mildew every August, is tortured by little green worms, looks ratty most of the time, turf it. If it's really bad, compost it. Don't even think of putting it in the plant sale. If you just dislike it, pot it up. Someone may love it - just not you.

\* \* \* \* \*

Use ammonia & water in a spray bottle to do in slugs. One part ammonia to seven parts water will do the trick. It doesn't hurt your plants and you can do them in at ten paces. Get up at sunrise, put a sweater over your nightie and get into the garden. You won't believe how many you can kill.

\* \* \* \* \*

Those pesky squirrels just love biting the heads off emerging lilies. At \$5.00 a pop, you don't want to give them the fun of doing it (which is what they are having). Buy a roll of black wire netting. Make wire circle enclosures and peg them over the lilies until they are about four inches high. The black wire makes them almost invisible and they keep the furry tailed rats from getting to them.

\* \* \* \* \*

After a long day in the garden, sit in it and enjoy the fruits of your labour.

### **Margot Moser**

You will be amazed at how well your houseplants grow if you give them 7 drops of Shultz 10-15-10 liquid fertilizer to 1 litre water every time you water them. (Stand back! - my Boston fern now measures 4 feet wide by 5 feet tall!)

\* \* \* \* \*

Make inexpensive plant tags by cutting up old plastic containers or mini blinds. Write on them with pencil rather than felt pen so they don't fade out after a couple of years.

\* \* \* \* \*

To get rid of liverwort, at least temporarily, spray with a 1 to 4 part dilution of vinegar to water. Avoid getting spray on leaves of desirable plants.

\* \* \* \* \*

When creating a new garden, smother the existing lawn or weedy area by simply putting down a layer of 6 to 8 sheets of newspaper and covering it with soil.

\* \* \* \* \*

To get rid of slugs, eastern squirrels and coyotes, not to mention liverwort and horsetail, move to Nanoose Bay.

### **Anonymous**

I don't rake the leaves until they are all down. The yard looks messy for a couple of weeks, but it saves me time and it is easier on my back.

### **Anonymous**

From my (limited) experience this year, use the starter mix when re-potting plants and when growing from a seedling. (I bought a mini pot of kalanchoe from Superstore. Since it was transferred to a bigger pot with just a starter mix, it has bloomed for more than two months and is still flowering).

**Thanks** to everyone who took the time to send in their garden tips – unfortunately, only those with e-mail were contacted with the request so I'm sure there are lots of good ideas still lingering out there – maybe next time.

For the December newsletter, I'd like to hear your opinion about plants you have recently bought. It doesn't matter whether they are annuals, perennials or shrubs; share your delight or disappointment with recent acquisitions.

Those with e-mail can contact me at [mmoser@telus.net](mailto:mmoser@telus.net). Anyone who wants to write their comments on paper can give that to Diane Allison\* at the November meeting.

All contributions will be much appreciated.

Margot

\* Thanks to Diane for this suggestion.

## Our November Speaker

*Randy Solomon*

November 7

### *"Attracting Birds to the Garden"*

With a life-long interest in nature, Randy was looking for a way to blend his interest in nature with a business concept. He opened "The Backyard Bird Centre" 12 years ago in Lougheed Mall and five years later moved it to North Road where he operated for a further 7 years. Finally, an opportunity came up to move the store to Newport Village, a popular and funky shopping area in Port Moody. Randy now carries the largest selection of bird feeders in B.C. as well as a wide array of unique gift items such as garden decor, quality windchimes and hand-painted art glass. Visit his website at <http://www.backyardbird.ca>



## Important Notice

### **BRAGS' AGM**

Our Annual General Meeting will be held Wednesday December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007 at 7:00 pm in the Discovery Room at Burnaby Village Museum (6501 Deer Lake Avenue)

If for any reason the meeting cannot be held as scheduled, it will be held the following week, December 12, 2007.

## *A Freeze to Remember*

Long-time lower mainland residents may recall a devastating early freeze that occurred on November 11, 1955. Clive Justice recounts the event in the latest edition of the American Rhododendron Society Journal (Vol. 61, # 3, Summer 2007) in an article about the first 50 years of the Vancouver chapter of the ARS.

*" . . . Never before or since has such a horrendous climatic holocaust occurred; the temperature dropped from 70F to 0F in 6 hours. It had been a beautiful warm wet fall. A wide range of broadleaved evergreen trees and shrubs froze to the ground. Even birch trees still in full leaf and Western hemlock had their main branches killed; leaves and needles turned brown as if they had been scorched by fire . . . "*

Much as I hate to admit it, I remember that day very clearly because it killed or damaged so many plants in my family's Burnaby garden including a little Douglas fir I'd been given as a Grade 1 student at Sir James Douglas school. When we moved from Vancouver to Burnaby, my father dug it up and put in the new yard where I kept a close eye on its growth, anticipating the day we'd be the same height.

I realize now that young cedar trees I noticed in the late '50s with dead tops were probably suffering the delayed effects of the big freeze. (Most trees in Burnaby then were relatively young since logging in the 1890s had eliminated most of the old ones – not that I personally remember *that*.)

I think frost damage to the tree tops may also explain why the huge old cedars in my former Burnaby garden had multiple trunks from about 30 feet above the ground. Chances are, when their tops died they developed multiple leaders when growth resumed. Perhaps they weren't deliberately topped after all.

It's interesting isn't it, that nowadays we'd immediately attribute a 'weather event' like this to climate change, even though such incidents of great variability have undoubtedly occurred from time to time through the ages. Margot

## **BRAGS**

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

### STANDING COMMITTEES

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421-8987  
& Cheryl Fiddis  
435-2801  
**Membership**  
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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**  
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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**  
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