MAY 2023/ISSUE #5

RICHMOND GARDEN CLUB

Merry May

Photo by: Visnja Gasparic Vojvodic

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Message from the President

Lynda Pasacreta

May is glorious! It is that wonderful bridge between spring and summer when we start to get a hint of real warmth and the plants start to leap from the earth. The parade of flowers from here through to fall has begun. We can garden in a T-shirt!

The garden events, tours, and plant sales are all now in full motion. And, best of all, a long delicious verdant season still stretches ahead of us for many long months, before the garden sleeps again.

In this issue we check in with you to be sure you know about key club news and events (new writing contest!) coming up this month. We showcase a shy little charmer of a plant that can do great things in your early May garden. And we wrap up with some reflections from fellow RGC member gardening soul-mates. It's kind of neat how gardening can be a touchstone that grounds us, sustains us and saves us in different ways at different times on this crazy ride of life.

Enjoy this month's chatter, stay connected with us, and keep gardening.

Tulips in Richmond BC. Photo by: Visnja Gasparic Vojvodic

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 6
World Naked Gardening Day
(Just saying...)
https://wngd.org/

May 6
RGC Annual Plant Sale
South Arm United Church
9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

May 10
7 - 8 p.m.
"Gardening Talks with Gary Lewis: Edible Containers"
Richmond Public Library - Brighouse. Register *here*.

May 10

Club News Update

Annual Plant Sale - It's Showtime!

The annual plant sale is here. For all those who have volunteered to be there andplay a part - a huge thank you. This event is the biggest funding contributor to our club each year. Good luck to the whole team this coming weekend.

All members - please come out to show your support.

- Saturday, May 6th
- 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- South Arm United Church parking lot

Earth Day - Success

8:30-10 p.m.
Bat Walk with UBC Farm.
See a bat roost and learn about bats!
Registration required - see link: https://ubcfarm.ubc.ca/biodiversity-days-bat-walk/

May 13
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
VanDusen Botanical Gardens Plant Sale
Bloedel Plaza at
Queen Elizabeth Park
https://vandusengarden.org/events/vbga-plant-sale/

May 13
9 a.m. 11 a.m.
Morning Bird Tour at UBC Botanical Garden
Registration required here: https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/biodiversity-days-2023-morning-bird-tour-tickets-591563090127

May 20,21
10a.m. - 4.p.m.
VJGA Sumi Bonsai show.
Floral Hall VanDusen Gardens

May 24
6:30 p.m. RGC Club Meeting and feature speaker, Marilyn Holt of Buckerfields Garden Centre, Abbotsford: What Plants Need to Excel

May 25
9:30-11p.m.
Goth Butterflies at UBC Farm
Register here: https://ubcfarm.ubc.ca/events/event/may-25-goth-butterflies-shedding-moonlight-on-nocturnal-insects/?login

June 10,11
All day.
Desert Plant Society Show & Sale. At VanDusen Gardens

Thanks to those who came out, for Earth Day events in Paulik Park. Particular thanks to the handful of intrepid RGC volunteers who steadfastly offered terrific free demonstrations on planting hanging baskets, soils, and garden tours in spite of inclement weather most of the weekend. Public turn-out was lighter than last year due to the wet and cold, but those who ventured forth were treated to outstanding personalized small group sessions!

Poet's Corner - Now Complete - Paulik Park

It looks like a fairy ring or a whispering glade for poets to dream. You will find it nestled into the forest in the quiet northern section of Paulik Park. After a lot of work hauling heavy salvaged concrete slabs from a ruined and decommissioned artwork elsewhere in the park, and arranging tree stump seats cut from a fallen tree two winters past, the vision was finally realized the last week in April. As the green moss and forest floor and maybe some woodland bulbs creep and grow between the stones, this will become a magical space for visitors. A huge thanks goes to the volunteers for all the heavy lifting and careful maneuvering that went into this lovely project.

See below two of our volunteers enjoying a well-deserved rest after the work is done.

Volunteers in new Poet's Corner, Paulik Park. Photo by: Jill Wright https://bcgardenclubs.com/events/desert-plant-society-show-and-sale/

June 18
12:30 -4:30 p.m.
Vancouver Rose Society 66th Biennial Rose Show
A judged rose show featuring hundreds of blooms from member gardens. Floral Hall, VanDusen Gardens
https://bcgardenclubs.com/events/vancouver-rose-society-66th-rose-show/

"In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt."

-*Margaret Atwood*

Writing Contest - win a prize!

Who is responsible for you falling in love with gardening? Famous garden designers? Grandma? Tell us the story. Send us a poem or an article. It can be short or long to a maximum of 500 words. Winning submission will be published in this newsletter. Maybe the reflections in our *Green Inspirations* section this month will get those memories flowing.

Volunteer Opportunities

Our club is 100% volunteer-run; we have no staff!

That means, no matter how much or how little experience you have, you are perfect! If you are ready to have fun and pitch in somewhere, there is a place for you. It's a great way to get to know others in our club, learn a few new skills, and help keep our club vibrant.

The Complete RGC Committees & Projects List
Below is the complete list of projects and committees currently active. We don't have the space to include detail for all of them here but, if any of these projects pique your interest and you might like to get involved, reach out to the lead contact listed below to learn more, c/o richmondgardenclub@gmail.com. Where you see 'vacant' there is something that needs help right away and you can contact Lynda Pasacreta for more information.

Speakers Coordinator - Vidyut Aklujkar
Paulik Park Committee - Jill Wright
Parlour Show - Pat Walach
Rooftop Garden - Ruth Henderson
Annual Plant Sale - Kate Herring
Communications - Gary Lake
Newsletter - Lisa Colby
Members' Garden Tour Tea - Joyce Novick
Advertising Sales - Vacant
Membership Committee - Judy Matheson
Photography Committee - Thora Gislason
Raffle Prize Draw - Joyce Novick
Steveston Boardwalk Planters - Karen Hakansson
Richmond Hospital Thrift Store Planters - Kate Herring
Refreshments - Maria Silva

Looking for a Place to Garden?
If you don't have a garden patch of your own - we do!
So if you are looking for a place to get your hands in the warm earth and get gardening - come join us at some of our projects. You can meet people and learn some gardening skills in a beautiful space. Contact us for suggestions at *richmondgardenclub@gmail.com.*

Gently Used Garden Tools Wanted

Local Master Gardener, Sharlene Singh, is currently working as the School Gardens Program Coordinator at an elementary school in Richmond. The school needs gently used metal hand tools. Anyone interested in donating please contact Sharlene at:
E: sharlene@spec.bc.ca
W: spec.bc.ca/school-gardens

Letter from a Roman Volunteer

By Emanuele Sequi

Hi everyone!
My name is Emanuele and I am a high school student. I am from Rome and I am studying in Canada for one year.

I came from an important city, which, even though it is famous for historical and artistic reasons, we are losing contact with nature and land.

Since I joined this group of volunteers I could find again the contact with one of the most essential things that makes our world a better place to live.

Thanks to Anne-Marie, Jill and Lynda I am learning many things about gardening and how to enjoy the outside life. Paulik Park is not only a beautiful place to spend some time, but it is a community of people who take care of a place where we all are living. All the volunteers are very amiable, and always happy to know new people to teach them how to look after plants.

Grow Your Garden Savvy

Garden Giggles
Why was the bee so hard to understand?

Answer:
It was a mumble bee!

Plant of the Month:

ASK THE GARDEN GURU

Have a gardening question? Many others probably have the same one – we guarantee. Send those questions in to our Garden Guru at richmondgardenclub.com and we will track down answers to publish in the newsletter each month, so we all learn together. (Watch out Master Gardeners and other local experts, we might be calling for help!)

Q: Which type of bee pollinates your tomato plants?

A: Bumble bees!

Bumble bees, and some other native bees, are considered to have a special super power for pollinating certain plants. Honey bees do not have this super power!

Some flowers keep their pollen in hard to reach places. Bumble bees are one of the only bees who can get these flowers to release their pollen.

Bumble bees have a special way to pollinate flowers called "sonication" or "buzz pollination". Basically, a bumble bee will vibrate its body which causes the flower to vibrate at just the right frequency and that causes the flower to release its pollen.

Some plants that need bumble bees to be pollinated through buzz pollination are: tomatoes

- tomatoes
- blueberries
- eggplants
- pumpkins
- zucchini, and

Common Lungwort

Prettier than they sound!

You will have noticed these beguiling little beauties daintily blooming pink, white, and blue in shady nooks around the neighbourhoods and parks of late. This little gem of a shade performer is definitely worth a closer look.
We are delighted that one of our new volunteers in Paulik Park this year (who also happens to be a Master Gardener) has kindly offered to research this plant in more detail. Enjoy her findings below, to consider whether your garden would be a suitable home for it.

Pulmonaria officianalis

By Wilma Nederend

The name Pulmonaria is derived from Latin pulmo meaning lung. It was once believed by Medieval herbalists to be an effective remedy for treating lung diseases because the spotted plant leaves resembled diseased lungs. (Source 1)

Common Name: Common lungwort
Type: Herbaceous perennial
Family: Boraginaceae
Native Range: Europe (gardens Italy, France)
Zone hardiness: 3 to 8 depending on the variety
Height: 0.2 to 0.4m
Spread: 0.3 to 0.6m
Bloom Time: March to May
Flower Colour: White; Pink aging to rose-violet maturing to blue.
Uses:

- Forms a low spreading ground cover. Effective in part shade areas of woodland or shade gardens, border areas, rock gardens or as a path edging. Interesting substitute for Hosta.
- This nectar rich, early spring perennial is one of the first to bloom and attracts pollinators, especially bees. Pollinators need early blooming plants to provide food after hibernation or northern migrations.

Soil: Easily grown in cool, rich, moist but well-drained soil. Lungwort is highly sensitive to soil pH. The shift in flower color from pink to blue is because the plants pH levels shift as the growing season progresses.

Sun: Part shade to full shade; best in part shade; performs well in the shade of large trees. It can tolerate quite a bit of bright light in the early spring.

- cranberries.

The next time you are snacking on one of these you can thank a bumble bee for pollinating the flowers!

Here is a link to a video that shows buzz pollination in action: https://youtu.be/kbzwXq9A0Vw

Sources:

Thanks to RGC member **Anne-Marie Fenn**, Master Gardener, Butterfly Ranger, and teacher here in Richmond, for her research and expertise in the Garden Guru this month

Bee! I'm expecting you!
by Emily Dickinson

Bee! I'm expecting you!
Was saying Yesterday
To Somebody you know
That you were due
--The Frogs got Home last Week
--Are settled, and at work
--Birds, mostly back
--The Clover warm and thick
--You'll get my Letter byThe seventeenth;
Reply Or better, be with me
--Yours, Fly.

Water: Medium; plants need a moderate amount of moisture and struggle in soil that is too dry or too wet. Water whenever the soil begins to dry out due to a lack of rainfall and/or particularly hot weather. But don't overwater so that the plant is sitting in soggy soil for a prolonged period.

Maintenance: Low. Overall, caring for these plants is straightforward. Make sure they have adequate water and shade and feed them annually.

Flower: Showy; blue, pink, and white. Funnel-shaped, five-petaled flowers (3/4" long) bloom in forked clusters in mid-spring atop sparsely leaved flowering stems rising above the foliage.

Pulmonaria in Richmond BC. Photo by Visjna Gasparic Vojvodic.

Leaf: Colorful; leaves are often prominently spotted in pale green due to the presence of foliage air pockets which cool the lower leaf surface, masking the presence of chlorophyll. The ornamental leaves are a feature during the growing season.

Tolerate: Deer, Heavy Shade, Black Walnut
Cannot Tolerate: Hot dry locations: full sun causes leaves to scorch or wilt; wet poorly drained soils.

Common Pests & Plant Diseases: Lungwort does not have any notable pest or disease problems but can be prone to powdery mildew and slug damage which results in abnormal and damaged foliage.

Common Varieties: Most lungwort varieties sold for garden use are cultivars of hybrids created by crossbreeding key species, especially P. saccharata, P. angustifolia, and P. longifolia. New cultivars appear regularly, and some current

favorites include:

- 'Blue Ensign': An early bloomer with cobalt-blue flowers and solid dark green leaves.
- 'Raspberry Splash': Dramatic clusters of raspberry pink, and soft lavender flowers, with dark green leaves speckled with silver.
- 'Trevi Fountain': Unusually large cobalt flowers, longish green leaves with silver spots.
- 'Majeste': Pinkish flowers that gradually turn blue violet. Leaves are long and lance-shaped, silver-gray with green margins.
- 'Excalibur': A clump former with silver leaves and long-lasting violet-blue flowers.
- 'Spilled Milk': Pink-transitioning-to-blue flowers. Young leaves are tinged purple, changing to white as they age.
- 'Roy Davidson': Dark green leaves with silver-white spots; the flowers are pale blue.
- *Pulmonaria officinalis* 'Sissinghurst White': Long, speckled leaves with pale pink buds that open to pure white blooms. (See photo below)

Sources:

1. https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=359968#AllImages
2. https://plantdatabase.kpu.ca/Plant/pule
3. https://www.thespruce.com/pulmonaria-1402859
4. https://www.gardensillustrated.com/plants/pulmonaria-how-to-grow/
5. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pulmonaria

Photo by Visjna Gasparic Vojvodic.

Fun Trivia for the May Gardener

By L. J. Colby

According to legend, May was named after the Roman Goddess Maia, who oversaw the growth of plants. And there is more!

- May's Full Moon is called the Flower Moon, and it will reach its peak this year on May 5th.
- Ancient pagan, Celtic, and Gaelic rituals celebrating rites of human and crop fertility were celebrated on May Day (May 1), a day that falls exactly halfway between the Spring equinox and summer solstice.
- May's birth flowers are the Hawthorn (which represents hope) and the Lily of the Valley (which symbolizes the sweetness of the return of happiness).
- Birthstone for May is the emerald, a symbol of rebirth and fertility.
- May 23 is birthdate of Swedish botanist and naturalist Carl Linnaeus, one of whose famous achievements was the formal introduction of a system for classifying and naming organisms according to genus and species.
- May is the month we celebrate Mother's Day (second Sunday). So kiss your Momma on May 14!

Sources:

"The Merry Month of May". 2021. Diana Blidy
May Day 2023: What Is May Day? Traditions and Lore of May 1st | The Old Farmer's Almanac

Green Inspirations

Richmond, BC. Photo by anna edels

Gardening for a Healthy Mind

By Lynda Pasacreta

Last year a fellow Richmond Garden Club member and I led a large group on a tour of Paulik Park, the most secret garden in Richmond.

The group consisted of a majority of people just starting out their careers, some just about ready to step out of the workforce and some in between. As everyone gathered in the Park, there appeared to be a lack of engagement, just polite acquiescence of their circumstance and several stifled yawns.

Our introduction included a historical review of the gardens we were standing in and the forest around us which dates back to the early 1930s. Body language was changing in the group. These folks were leaning in, gazing around them, heads turning at the sounds of nature surrounding them.

We took a stroll through the 1.5 acres of perennial flower beds. As leaders of the tour, our passion for the Park and our immediate evidence of calm and peacefulness began to mirror on everyone's faces.

Research has shown that gardening has a positive effect on our mental health. For the many hours we volunteers spend in the Park kneeling amongst all things green, we can attest to that statement.

Some of the ways gardening seems to be healing, helps us overcome anxiety and lift our spirits include the following:

• Taking care of plants gives us a sense of responsibility. This is a great way to teach children how to look after and respect other living things. It helps us develop an appreciation of the magic of nature.

• Gardening allows us to be nurturers. Plants don't give a fig who is tending them, whether you are five or seventy-five, male, female, nature is a great equalizer. Those with mental health problems to be able to transform a garden can help boost self-esteem.

• Gardening helps remind us that we are not the centre of the universe. Self-absorption can lead to depression. Focusing on the great outdoors - even pared down to a little patio area - can encourage us to be less insulated.

• Gardening can help us to relax and breathe. Sigmund Freud once stated that flowers are restful to look at. They have no emotions of conflict. Gardening allows us to tap into the carefree part of ourselves with no deadlines, money worries or bosses to worry about. The rhythmic nature of the many tasks associated with gardening such as weeding, trimming, digging and planting, allows thoughts to ebb and flow throughout all of our movements.

• And finally, working in nature releases our happy hormones. It is obvious that gardening is great exercise but understanding that it is also extremely beneficial for our minds is important to overall health. Science shows that when you are deeply immersed in gardening, levels of serotonin and dopamine (hormones that make us feel so good) rise and the level of cortisol (a hormone related to stress), is lowered.

By the end of our 30 minutes together, we found a work-tired, noticeably stressed group of people wandering right into the garden beds, gazing up into the almost 100 year old stately trees, stopping to watch the plethora of swallowtail butterflies busy being butterflies and touching and feeling the nature all around them. My partner and I silently said to ourselves, "Nailed it!" We gave them a half an hour of healing and they understood what was happening to them.

Stop by the most beautiful park in the City of Richmond and breathe.

Photo by anna edels

Why Do We Garden?

By Thora Gislasen

Why do you sing?

This was the question posed by our choir director at the beginning of a Music Week held at Naramata some years ago. The query initially left some of us speechless. Ultimately it triggered some profound and emotional conversations.

With gardening season now upon us, I have been pondering a similar question: why do we garden? What is it that has us flocking to our Garden Club meetings; eagerly rushing to plant sales and of course, devoting hours of our time creating and nurturing our own beloved gardens?

The obvious answer is simply that we enjoy it ... but what is it exactly that affords such deep fulfilment? I would agree with those who see gardening as a creative act and one not too far removed from singing or other artistic pursuits.

Gardening is an act of self-expression in which we reveal our personalities and aesthetic sense through our choice and placement of plants as well as our artful combining of shapes, colours, and textures. By providing a nurturing environment for our gardens to grow and thrive we are also co-creators with nature, active participants in the evolution of living things in our environment.

Even more profoundly, we're following the key advice of novelist E.M. Forster who famously urged his characters in Howards End to "Only connect." He was referring to human relationships, but I would say that our "ecstatic kinship with nature" is also vital. When we're with our plants we are quite simply happy; when we visit gardens, we're often overjoyed. I've often remarked to my companions when touring Van Dusen Gardens: "Do you ever see anyone frowning in here?"

When we garden with others, something even more magical happens, something akin to what we experience singing in a choir. Working side by side toward a common creative goal, breathing the fragrant air, sharing observations and ideas or toiling away in companionable silence, we're drawn together in a very special way. There is a timeless quality to our labour - perhaps due to a recognition deep in our psyche that by working the land we are carrying on a tradition begun by our ancestors many generations before us. We draw on our ability to be attentive, patient, and curious - qualities that are becoming increasingly hard to hold onto in our hectic lives.

I belong to a group that gardens one Saturday a month at my church, the Unitarian Church of Vancouver. A few of the members have remarked that it's the most rewarding volunteer work they do at the church, something they'd much rather do than sit on a committee. One day as I was crouching in the courtyard rhythmically pulling weeds I experienced a powerful feeling of connection to the place, more than I'd felt at any other time.

Maybe it's no coincidence that a singing group meets on Saturdays at Paulik Park, providing a choral backdrop to the cheerful work of the gardeners. A rousing reminder that we're meant to sing; we're meant to garden!

Photo by Visjna Gasparic Vojvodic

Newsletter prepared by L.J. Colby, Richmond Garden Club
Contact at: *richmondgardenclub@gmail.com*

Growers Delight

Granular Soil Activator

NEW ORGANIC HOUSE BLEND 4-2-2 with HUMIC

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