

# CULTIVATING COMMUNITY

Issue 12

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## Editor's Letter

### To Persevere

The late graphic designer, Milton Glaser told a joke that goes like this:

*'A butcher was opening his market one morning and as he did a rabbit popped his head through the door. The butcher was surprised when the rabbit inquired, 'Got any cabbage?' The butcher said, 'This is a meat market – we sell meat, not vegetables.' The rabbit hopped off. The next day the butcher was opening the shop and sure enough the rabbit popped his head round and said, 'You got any cabbage?' The butcher now irritated said, 'Listen you little rodent I told you yesterday we sell meat, we do not sell vegetables and the next time you come here I am going to grab you by the throat and nail those floppy ears to the floor.' The rabbit disappeared hastily and nothing happened for a week. Then one morning the rabbit popped his head around the corner and said, 'Got any nails?' The butcher said, 'No.' The rabbit said, 'Ok. Got any cabbage?'*

After reading this, I thought what a great way to convey a feeling of hope and optimism for us gardeners. Although we may have dealt with drought, plant failures and dare I say – those rabbits! - we persevere.

In this edition you will find our VIMGA members busy at work. Thank you to all who contributed throughout the year from sending in articles and pictures, hosting get togethers, volunteering for VIMGA committees and generally sharing your garden knowledge. What a great organization. Our Spring Education Day will be at Nanoose Place on Saturday, March 2, 2024 with Tamara Dinter who will speak on 'Healthy Soils'.

Wishing you all a happy and relaxing time with your loved ones and here's to a happy and prosperous gardening year.

- Jan

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# President's Message

president@vimga.org

December 2023



Season Greetings and Merry Christmas to All!

My best wishes to you all for a safe and happy holiday.

For many, this is a special time of year to be with family and friends celebrating whatever traditions you may follow. For Mary and I, it is all about family, friends, and grandchildren as we celebrate with our children gathering at our house for a few days over the holiday. It is a wonderful tradition in our household that happens every second year.

December can be a time in our gardening calendar for continuing to clean up annuals and finished plants from the previous season, as well as continuing to mulch, if that is your thing. I hurry to put away my gardening tools and generally admire my resting gardens all tucked in and mulched for the winter. Many of us have winter crops that need tending but generally, a much more relaxed time to focus on other things.

Soon though we will be getting excited for the coming season and with a new group of students in the VIU Advanced Gardening program starting in January. Planning our 2024 clinics and events and our SED is just around the corner. I always think of the District planners now and the great effort that comes from starting the planning process soon after the new year in earnest. Make sure you give **Cathy, Karen, Jill, and Ute** support for planning your clinic participation in 2024. It will be a somewhat greater challenge with our students graduating and making their final VIMGA decision in late March or early April or hopefully sooner. I will be looking forward to seeing everyone while doing what we enjoy 2<sup>nd</sup> most "providing garden advice to the public", and spending time in the gardens.

Board and committee members take a well-deserved "meeting" break in December but also spend that time preparing for the new year in VIMGA. I thank the board and committees for their work in making VIMGA work for members in fine form.

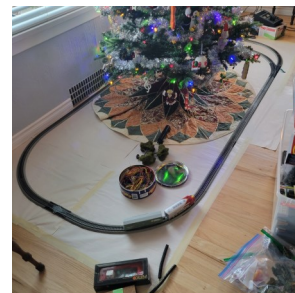
We need a new Treasurer for the balance of this year as Louise had to step back from her acceptance for personal reasons. If you are thinking about it please let me know and you will be welcomed and supported. I am happy to talk it over with you before making any commitment and Jane is standing by for orientation. No previous experience is necessary! A big Thank You to **Jane Kerr** for continuing to write cheques while we locate our new Treasurer.

Membership dues are due, January 4<sup>th</sup> is the final due date, and please get your hours entered into the system by December 31! If you need assistance let me or another director know.

Lots of great articles in our newsletter this quarter so check it out and catch up on all the great VIMGA news! Thank you, **Jan**, for your commitment to our newsletter that keeps us all in touch, and all our contributors for their articles.—*Mike*



O'Neill household  
getting ready for  
the holidays.



## VIMGA Board of Directors 2023/24

### President

Mike O'Neill [REDACTED]  
president@vimga.org

Term 1 of 3 allowed  
serving year 2 of 2

### Treasurer

(Vacant)

[treasurer@vimga.org](mailto:treasurer@vimga.org)

(interim Jane Kerr)

Term 1 of 3 allowed  
serving year 1 of 2

### Past President

Dorothee Kieser [REDACTED]  
[pastpresident@vimga.org](mailto:pastpresident@vimga.org)

Term 1 of 3 allowed  
serving year 2 of 2

### North Island District Member Representative

Marion Woloschuk [REDACTED]  
[ni-rep@vimga.org](mailto:ni-rep@vimga.org)

Term 1 of 3 allowed  
serving year 1 of 2

### Nanaimo District Member Representative

Cameron Smith [REDACTED]  
[nan-rep@vimga.org](mailto:nan-rep@vimga.org)  
Term 2 of 3 allowed  
serving year 1 of 2

### Regional Planning Coordinator (RPC)

Debora Gurrard [REDACTED]  
[rpc@vimga.org](mailto:rpc@vimga.org)  
Appointed

1 Year Renewable Term

### Vice President

Ruth Beilman [REDACTED]  
[vicepresident@vimga.org](mailto:vicepresident@vimga.org)

Term 1 of 3 allowed  
serving year 2 of 2

### Secretary

Fern Hietkamp [REDACTED]  
[secretary@vimga.org](mailto:secretary@vimga.org)

Term 1 of 3 allowed  
serving year 2 of 2

### MGABC Representative

Debora Gurrard [REDACTED]  
Ruth Beilman [REDACTED]  
[Provincialrep@vimga.org](mailto:Provincialrep@vimga.org)

Term 1 of 3 allowed  
serving year 1 of 2

### Nanoose/Qualicum/Parksville District Member Representative

Jean Carr [REDACTED]  
Norma Kilpatrick [REDACTED]  
[pqn-rep@vimga.org](mailto:pqn-rep@vimga.org)

Term 1 of 3 allowed  
Serving year 1 of 2

### Cowichan District Member Representative

Fern Hietkamp [REDACTED]  
[cow-rep@vimga.org](mailto:cow-rep@vimga.org)

Term 1 of 3 allowed  
serving year 1 of 2



## VIMGA Committees 2023/24

### Continuing Education Committee (CEC)

(vacant)

[cec@vimga.org](mailto:cec@vimga.org)

(interim Jan Thorsen)

Members: M. Shakespeare, C. Southwick,  
R. Beilman  
Phyllis Pullinger, Jo Canning

2 Year Renewable Term

### Vancouver Island Regional Library Coordinator

Richard Bernier [REDACTED]

[rbernier@shaw.ca](mailto:rbernier@shaw.ca)

1 Year Renewable Term

### Program Management Committee (PMC)

Dorothee Kieser

[pmc@vimga.org](mailto:pmc@vimga.org)

Members: D Kieser, K Bennett, D. Gurrad, R.  
Beilman

2 year Renewable Term Year

### Badge Officer

Gail Hudson [REDACTED]

[badges@vimga.org](mailto:badges@vimga.org)

1 Year Renewable Term

### North Island District Planner

Cathy Lund [REDACTED]

[ni-district\\_planner@vimga.org](mailto:ni-district_planner@vimga.org)

1 Year Renewable Term

### Nanaimo District Planner

Jill Williamson [REDACTED]

[nan-district\\_planner@vimga.org](mailto:nan-district_planner@vimga.org)

1 Year Renewable Term

### Newsletter Committee

Jan Thorsen [REDACTED]

Marion Waters  
[newsletter@vimga.org](mailto:newsletter@vimga.org)

1 Year Renewable Term

### Membership Committee

Debora Gurrad [REDACTED]

[membership@vimga.org](mailto:membership@vimga.org)

Members:

J Kerr, J Canning, D. Seibel, Marion Woloschuk,  
Gail Hudson

Year 1 of 2

2 Year Renewable Term

### Plant Sales Coordinator

Mary Shakespeare [REDACTED]

[shakespeare.ms@gmail.com](mailto:shakespeare.ms@gmail.com)

members: Gail Hudson

1 Year Renewable Term

### Mentorship Committee

**Lead Mentor:** Dorothee Kieser [REDACTED]

[leadmentor@vimga.org](mailto:leadmentor@vimga.org)

2 Year Renewable Term

### Gardening Advice Line (GAL)

Debora Gurrad [REDACTED]

[gal@vimga.org](mailto:gal@vimga.org)

Members: M Waters, D. Buirs

2 Year Renewable Term

### Qualicum Parksville District Planner

Karen Bennett [REDACTED]

[pqn-district\\_planner@vimga.org](mailto:pqn-district_planner@vimga.org)

1 Year Renewable Term

### Cowichan District Planner

Ute Holewa [REDACTED]

[cow-district\\_planner@vimga.org](mailto:cow-district_planner@vimga.org)

1 Year Renewable Term

### Digital Committee and

#### Webmaster

Cameron Smith [REDACTED]

[digitalchair@vimga.org](mailto:digitalchair@vimga.org)

[webmaster@vimga.org](mailto:webmaster@vimga.org)

Members: D Gurrad, M Waters,

1 Year Renewable Term

### **Event Photographer**

Marion Waters – NI

Diane Buirs - PQN

### **Archivist/Historian**

Marion Waters, April Johnston

### **Strategic Planning Working Group**

Cathy Lund, Debora Gurrad, Pam Theriault, Ruth Beilman

Jo Canning, Phyllis Pullinger

### **Positions not yet filled:**

Milner Demonstration Garden

Milner Activity Committee

Loonie Toonie Coordinator

Sunshine Committee

### Update on VIMGA Strategic Planning Committee

The Strategic Planning Committee met on December 11 to discuss next steps in our newly developed Strategic Plan adopted by the board and presented to our members at the 2023 Annual General Meeting.

Moving forward the committee decided to focus on Action Plans and specifically item 1 in **What We Plan to Do for the next 5 Years** - "Attract and Retain Members while engaging the Gardening Public". There were 2 pieces that can be focused on this season.

- An Initial Campaign of letting the public know who we are and what we do.
- Followed by a Campaign to let the public know where and when we will be holding clinics throughout the gardening season.

The first part would consist of a campaign to identify, utilizing various media, and develop what VIMGA and its members do in the community for publication.

The second part would consist of announcing, in each district, when and where we will be holding advice clinics once they have been set for the coming season.

We should be able to leverage with our existing media partners as well as new sources that can be canvassed including our commercial partners as part of their advertising campaigns. District Planners will be consulted and members who are interested in the execution of the strategic plan will be invited to participate.



Mike O'Neill (President), Marion Woloschuk (NI District Rep), Ruth Beilman (V. Pres., MGABC rep), Norma Kilpatrick (NQ Member rep), Louise Sawchuk (Treasurer), Fern Heitcamp (Secretary Cowichan District rep), Debora Gurrad (RPC?MGABC rep), Cam Smith (Nanaimo District Rep, website manager).. Missing Jean Carr



### **Strategic Planning Cttee:**

Cathy Lund, Debbie Gurrad. Ruth Beilman, Pam Theriault.

Missing - Jo and Phyllis

## Welcome to the CMG Graduating Class



Say Hello to our newest CMG's  
L to R: Norma Kilpatrick (PQN), Marion Woloschuk (NI), Marion Waters (NI), Jill Williamson (NAN), Ellen Stewart (NAN), Diane Buirs (PQN), Louise Sawchuk, (Cowichan), Deborah Seibel, (PQN), Sandra Lee, (Cowichan), Missing: Jean Carr (PQN)

## VIMGA Congratulations

### Silver Spade Award



This years recipient is Angela Einarson seen here with last years recipient Jo Canning.



Former Silver Spade recipients: Chris Southwiick, and Jo Canning with Angela.  
Missing Dorothee Kieser

### Certificates of Appreciation



Ruth Beilman, Jan Thorsen, Kay Howard, Jane Kerr and Richard Bernier

### VIMGA Bursary Award



Marion Woloschuk with VIU rep, Julia Fisher. Jean Carr also received the award.

Pics by K. Howard

## Vancouver Island Library Virtual Series Update

# VIRL Virtual Gardening Seminars Schedule 2024

Speaker	Date	Subject	Time	Length
Jo Canning	Feb. 5	Gardening Under Cover	18:30 hrs	1.5
Dorothee Kieser	Mar 4	Tomatoes	18:30 hrs	1.5
Group Presentation	April 8	Flower Perennials: Everything you wanted to know	18:30 hrs	1.5
Dorothy Kieser	May 6	Salad Greens all year long	18:30 hrs	1.5
Jacqueline Sherk	June 3	Shade Plants & Shrubs	18:30 hrs	1.5
Richard Bernier	Jul 8	Small Space Design	18:30 hrs	1.5
Jo Canning	Aug 12	A Year in the Orchard	18:30 hrs	1.5
Cameron Smith	Sept 9	Lawn Care and Lawn Alternatives	18:30 hrs	1.5
Deborah Gurrard	Oct 7	Root Prep for Successful Transplanting	18:30 hrs	1.5
Group Presentation	Nov 4	Putting the Garden to Bed for Winter	18:30 hrs	1.5

**Mondays, 18:30 – 2000hr**

Subject Requests for Seminar from seminar feedback forms:

### Food Crops

Brassicas  
Crop rotation  
Root crops  
Squash

### Plant Types

Drought tolerant plants  
Erica  
Ground covers & prostrate shrubs  
Hydrangea

### Landscaping Design

Rain gardens  
Lawn care and lawn alternatives  
Soil Care  
Managing your landscape

### Garden Health & Climate Change

Beneficial insects  
Water wise gardening



Richard Bernier

**MGs:**  
Contact Richard Bernier  
[threepalm-gardeer@outlook.com](mailto:threepalm-gardeer@outlook.com)

or

**250-951-5975 if you are  
interested in offering other  
subjects.**



## Area Updates

### North Island District Rep—Marion Woloschuk

[ni-rep@vimga.org](mailto:ni-rep@vimga.org)

Seasons Greetings to One and All:

2022 has been a busy but enjoyable year for our District. We all participated in many clinics, GAPs, GALs and workshops, as well as the VIRL/VIMGA gardening series.

Two recent graduates have joined our team – Marion Waters and Marion Woloschuk, and they are looking forward to being involved in the many activities we CMGs participate in. Mark Fleming, who has been an active and very well-liked CMG for many years, is moving to alumni status. He assures us he will remain active within our organization, so we will still benefit from his sage advice and congenial personality.

With the uptake of a new class of interns in 2024 we anticipate another exciting year ahead. We wish all our fellow CMGs a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year 2024!



Marion Woloschuk



Pictures by Marion Woloschuk

### VIMGA Cowichan District Rep - Ute Holewa

[cow-rep@vimga.org](mailto:cow-rep@vimga.org)

At our recent VIMGA AGM, within our Cowichan District: Louise Sawchuk, a new graduate and now a CMG, has taken the position as our association's treasurer. Pamela Theriault will graduate next year, is an integral member on the strategic planning committee for VIMGA, and is involved in the mentor program. Sandra Lee also a happy graduate, is pleased to be a new CMG.

Congratulations from our Cowichan District members.

Submitted by Gwen Redcliffe

**CMG members: Louise Sawchuk, Pamela Thereau and Sandra Lee**



Ute Holewa

## Area Updates

From Jean Carr: Parksville/Qualicum /Nanoose Area Representative

Many of our district members recently attended the latest coffee social and Christmas cookie exchange in Nanoose. We exchanged garden stories and discussed our district plans for the coming year. Our next social is planned for Wednesday February 7, 2024 at Karen Bennett's home for clinic sign up.

In October a truckload of donated plant material was dug up and transported and planted in Ruth's garden for safekeeping for the MARS plant sale in the spring. Many thanks to Ruth, Diane and Jean for doing all the heavy lifting! The plant material was donated by a couple as a result of a GAP meeting we had earlier in the summer.

Recently some members attended the G.R. Paine Horticulture Centre's Open House. We were given a guided tour of the facilities by a very enthusiastic student. He showed us their projects and various trials that are underway as well as commercial irrigation and window screening technologies. He also shared pictures of his imaginative use of sweet grass braids that he used to tidy up long grasses for the winter months. The grass mounds are intact for winter wildlife refuge but are wonderfully tidy and sculptural! Genius! A really informative afternoon.

CMG 9, Interns 0, Alumnus 6, Lifetime 1, Leave of Absence 1



Co-representatives for  
Parksville, Qualicum,  
Nanoose: Norma  
Kilpatrick and Jean Carr



PQN get together,

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Tour of G.R.Paine Centre

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Cookie exchange

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# Fall Colour Anyone?

By Jacqueline Sherk

Reprinted with permission from Take 5 Magazine As fall approaches we say goodbye to the long days of summer and the season of bloom. Now, with the changing season upon us, we see our gardens in a new and colourful cloak. The chemical changes that occur in leaves often produce a myriad of colours for us to enjoy as the plants signal their coming dormancy.

Saskatoon, also called service-berry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*) is a small, flowering native tree that colours up beautifully in autumn, and also produces a blue and very edible berry that is famous for pies and jellies .

Vine maple (*Acer circinatum*) is also a native here on Vancouver Island, and its leaves turn bright crimson red as it heads into dormancy. Vine maple makes a very nice shade tree in the garden, as it is not large growing and is often multi-stemmed, therefore spreading pleasingly and allowing dappled light to the plantings below.

Mountain ash (*Sorbus sitchensis*) is a west coast native that grows more like a shrub than a tree, unlike other species in the genus. Hailed as a 'four season' plant, it greets spring with pretty white flowers followed by red berries and rusty orange eaves in fall. The berries persist through winter if the birds don't eat them all!

An Asian tree that produces brilliant yellow leaves in fall and is popular with gardeners is the

large growing Katsura (*Cercidiphyllum japonica*). Its leaves have the lovely fragrance of brown sugar as they fall to the ground seemingly all at once.

Redbud hazel (*Disanthus cercidifolius*) is a very small tree also originating from Asia. Even in light shade it presents beautiful fall colour. Not widely known in gardening circles, I was fortunate to find it at one of our Island nurseries!

In addition to trees, there are also many shrubs whose leaves become colourful in autumn, including some that are native to our region. Gardeners have become ever more aware of the importance of native plants because we have learned that insects, including pollinators such as butterflies, need the plants they have evolved with in order to complete their life cycles, and in doing so, produce the next generation.

Our native dogwood shrub called red osier (*Cornus sericea*) offers both fall and winter interest. Leaves of this plant turn purple as they age, and then in winter, the vibrant red stems remain. This shrub grows quite large but can be coppiced. Coppicing refers to a method of cutting woody stems low to the ground, and served people in ancient times to harvest wood for fire. Plants that can be coppiced regenerate easily from their roots.

Fothergilla is a shrub native to the Southeast US and is sometimes called witch alder. This plant is in the witch hazel family and has similar leaves. Tolerant of both sun and shade, there are just two species in the genus, one is a dwarf

(*Fothergilla gardenii*) and the other grows large (*Fothergilla major*). Both produce an early flower that is attractive to pollinators, and in fall the leaves turn shades of orange, yellow and red.

Also originating from southeast North America is a shrub called Virginia Sweetspire (*Itea virginica*). Aptly named, it is a pretty little plant that in the wild favours the banks of shady streams. Its graceful, arching stems terminate in flowers not unlike those of *Fothergilla* except that they are highly fragrant! Its leaves turn shades of crimson and garnet and last well into fall.

These are just a few of the many plants that could be mentioned for their outstanding fall colour. I hope you will consider adding some of them to your garden the next time you visit your local nursery.



Redbud Hazel  
(*Disanthus cercidifolius*)  
via Wikimedia  
Commons/  
Pinterest

Saskatoon  
aka Service-  
berry  
(*Amelanchier alnifolia*)  
via Wiki-  
media Com-  
mons/



Jacqueline Sherk

# Enjoy Forest Bathing in your own Backyard

Reprinted with permission from Campbell River Mirror

By Marion Waters



*Salal, Oregon grape, and huckleberry sprout between the rocks under the shade of a grand fir. Photo by Marion Waters*

On your next walk through a natural forested area, take a closer look at what's growing.

Nature is the original great gardener. She doesn't care about keeping things orderly. Decisions are made by – well – nature. The climate of the particular area (or the microclimate) and the weather are the decision-makers. Plants thrive where the conditions suit them and struggle where they do not. Litter falls to the ground and feeds the soil.

The only digging is done by wildlife or by falling trees whose roots or branches rip up the soil. Ground-dwelling mammals, insects, micro-organisms, and fungi do all the work of processing the litter into rich black soil. Plants spring from it seemingly

overnight.

On my walk today, ferns, Oregon grape, salal, and mushrooms all looked particularly robust and healthy. Fall colours popped out here and there from dogwood shrubs, wild crab apples, big-leaf maples and tiny bright orange lichens.

Why not channel some of this natural beauty and self-sufficiency into your own garden? Incorporating native plant species opens the door to many benefits.

First, native plants are perfectly adapted to the local climate and soil conditions so they require little tending or fussing.

Second, wild pollinators such as bees thrive where native plants grow. Once they are attracted to your garden, they will visit your other plants as well.

Native species need less frequent watering than most imported plants. They create soothing shade and attract multitudes of birds that feed on the insects and natural nectars.

Even the addition of a few native plants in any garden helps to increase dwindling species populations. Native plants can be incorporated almost anywhere. Flowering currant, dogwood, ninebark, huckleberry, and viburnum are all handsome shrubs. Consider kinnikinnik as a groundcover. Dramatic ferns and salal will thrive in the shade beside your hostas.

If you have the space, why not create a nature garden? Get creative with rocks, old stumps, or driftwood. Perhaps you have a few like-minded neighbours who would be willing to connect their native gardens with yours. If enough properties joined forces, you could create a natural wildlife corridor that extended for a whole block!

Embracing native plants is a bit of a mind-shift. Colours are often more muted. Instead, a rich variety of textures and shapes offer interest. If you prefer things neat and tidy, you can do some trimming

Instead, a rich variety of textures and shapes offer interest. If you prefer things neat and tidy, you can do some trimming and pruning, the same as you would with your other plants. Your biggest chore will be cutting out invasives such as blackberries and Scotch broom. Wild roses can also be a nuisance but you can easily thin them out by cutting unwanted stems to the ground.

Now, how to get started? Digging up plants in the wild is a definite no-no. But what you can do is take cuttings and collect seeds. In my rural yard, native plants are constantly Second, wild pollinators such as bees thrive where native plants grow. Once they are attracted to your garden, they will visit your other plants as well.

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the wild is a definite no-no.

But what you can do is take cuttings and collect seeds. In my rural yard, native plants are constantly popping up in my garden beds. Maybe in yours, too, if you are situated near a forested area. Learn to recognize and identify them so you don't weed them out. Most garden centres feature some native plants so there is always the option of buying.

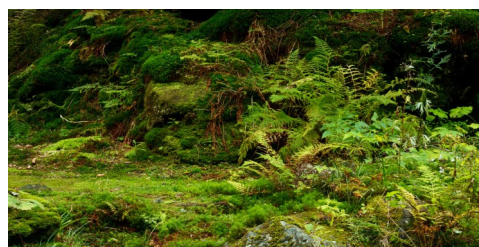
If you are lucky enough to live next to a green space, extending that space into your garden increases the size of an established natural habitat area. Connected stretches of natural landscape provide the best habitat for insects and pollinators that may not have the ability to travel great distances to find food and pollen.

Your garden will reap the benefits of being on the forest edge where the soil is naturally rich.

Another bonus to creating an enchanting natural space? Forest bathing in your own backyard.

Following are just a few examples of easy-to-grow native plants:

- Small trees – bitter cherry, cascara, dogwood, vine maple, wild crabapple.
- Tall Shrubs – red-osier dogwood, elderberry, filbert, flowering currant, huckleberry, mahonia, ninebark, ocean spray, spirea.
- Low-growing Shrubs – ferns, Oregon grape, salal.
- 



Pic from creative commons

Groundcovers – kinnikinnik, mosses, vanilla leaf.



Marion Waters is a recent Master Gardener graduate who writes a monthly gardening column for the Campbell River Mirror.

# Deck the Halls with Boughs other than Holly

Reprinted with permission from Campbell River Mirror

By Marion Waters

One of the greatest pleasures for a gardener is strolling, clippers in hand, with the happy intent of creating a captivating table bouquet. This sounds like something gardeners always do, but it's surprising how seldom we allow ourselves to relax and appreciate our gardens. There is always so much work to be done! Picking flowers is not just a fanciful waste of time either, but an opportunity to check up on the health of plants, deadhead flowers, take note of what needs to be staked or thinned out - the list goes on.



Why am I bringing this up now, with winter almost upon us? Because garden strolling can and should continue. After a snowstorm, knock heavy accumulations off of shrubs and trees. Prune out dead branches that may chafe bark. Pull a few weeds. And clip greenery to make interesting winter arrangements. English holly used to be everyone's go-to for seasonal decorating, but lately the alarm bell has been sounded because it is invading forest habitats. Amazingly, a species called San Jose holly 'has been bred to closely resemble English holly without the invasive tendencies,' according to the Invasive Species Council of BC. There are many other garden plants that feature winter berries other than holly: *Skimmia japonica*; Japanese laurel; viburnum; firethorn; cotoneaster; hawthorn. Beautyberry produces show-stopping pink berries. *If you already have an English holly tree that you can't part with, dispose of any loose berries in the garbage or community compost facility. That will at least get some of the seeds out of circulation.*

The Ministry of Forestry website page offers a very useful bough harvesting information guide. A permit is not required to cut branches in BC forests or along roadsides.

In fact, trimming along roadsides may actual be helpful in improving visibility for drivers. It may be difficult to determine which forests are government land and which are privately owned. Stick to the roadsides to be on the safe side. Keep your pruners sharp and clean. For the health of the plant, cut fewer, longer branches rather than many short ones. You can always cut them into shorter stems later. Cut next to a stem or trunk, leaving the branch collar intact but without leaving long stubs. Trees and shrubs are programmed to heal neatly over the collar but not over a stub. Avoid stripping of the bark. Such wounds allow easy access for disease and pests. And don't take too many cuttings from any one plant. If the temperature suddenly plummets, overcutting may leave a plant vulnerable. Choose species with smaller needles that won't dry out quickly such as cedar, hemlock, and grand fir. Clip long red osier dogwood and snowberry stems for contrasting colour and shape. Add in a variety of leaf textures: Oregon grape, salal, rhododendron, and boxwood. Get creative with whatever you have in your garden.

Now comes the most satisfying task – assembling your arrangements. Outdoors, I use the same pots that I used for summer plantings. No soil or water is necessary. The branches get all the moisture they need from our damp air. Do not use vases because

magically twinkle to life.

If you want to take some of your harvest indoors as well, then I recommend using floral foam soaked in water to help prevent foliage from drying out. The foam also allows you to create more formal arrangements because it holds branches in place at just about any angle. Use floral picks to add cones or other ornaments. To complete your splendid centrepiece, poke in a few fragrant carnations or roses. The evergreen boughs will last for about a month indoors but replace the flowers every week or so. Your outdoor displays and wreaths will last well into the New Year.

## References:

<https://bcinvasives.ca/invasives/english-holly/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deck\\_the\\_Halls](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deck_the_Halls)

[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/natural-resource-use/christmas-tree-permits/dcr\\_bough\\_pruning\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/natural-resource-use/christmas-tree-permits/dcr_bough_pruning_guidelines.pdf)

## Memories of our AGM



Pics by K. Howard

**ABOUT THOSE TREES**  
**'Tree Fundamentals'**  
**VIMGA Annual General Meeting**  
November 4, 2023



Thanks to all for your feedback. It sounds as if you enjoyed the AGM and learned from the speakers. Here are a few of your comments:

**What went well?**

- Loved Trevor Coey's pragmatic tips on planting trees (biochar and granulated sugar)
- Liked MGs' panel "Tips and Tricks for Growing Trees"
- All in all, everything! I enjoyed learning about the wiggle test. Demonstrations are great
- The flow was wonderful - there were no long, drawn out reports. Everything was reported on quickly and efficiently
- Loved the prizes!
- Good to have our OWN AGM – a more cohesive program that features our members and new graduates, VIU and accomplishments

**What could be improved?**

Many of you had helpful suggestions (speakers' use of microphones, slides, handouts and web-sites) which the CEC will use as we plan future meetings. Here are some of your other suggestions:

- Was not clear whether MGs were to endorse/approve the Strategic Plan or just discuss and respond to it.
- We need a description of duties and hours involved in volunteer positions, maybe on our website
- Hold questions until the end of main speaker's presentation and use a microphone.
- More time for Q&A – especially the business part.
- Have handouts for the slide show presentations

**What suggestions do you have for future programs?**

- How to cope with heat/climate change
- Fertilizers
- Co-existing with insects/pests
- Climate change ideas
- More info on root washing
- Specific plants: roses, clematis, etc. Specific plant groups: woody perennials, bulbs, annuals, climbers. Specific vegetables: beans, squash, broccoli
- Please do cypripediums, ladyslippers
- Feature member initiatives and successes (have some MGs up to speak about initiatives they undertook this year, with pictures.
- Garden design
- Food crops in our gardens, more on growing various types of plants.
- Speakers about aqua culture, fish tank – grows fish that feeds plants- filter water – fish tank
- Any topic to do with practical advice  
Food gardens – choosing seeds, companion planting
- More on coping with drought and climate change
- Lawn replacement, more tree talk

Your feedback determines the topics for our Newsletter and AGM. If you have a speaker you would recommend, please get in touch with one of us:

*- Jan, Chris, Ruth, Mary, Jo and Phyllis*

The Education Committee meets through Zoom and we are always looking for others to join our 'fun loving' group. Welcome additions to our committee this year are Jo Canning and Phyllis Pullinger. We are sad to say goodbye to Jacqueline Sherk who was such an integral member of our committee and wish her all the best. Currently, we are looking for a chairperson or (chairpersons to share this responsibility). If interested, please contact Mike O'Neill or a member of the Education Committee.



## **VIMGA Spring Education Day**

### **‘How to Build Healthy Soil’**

Date: **Saturday, March 2, 2024**

Location: Nanoose Place  
2925 NW Bay Rd. Nanoose Bay

Time: 9:30 AM to 2:30PM

Our presenter for this day will be Tamara Dinter.

Tamara’s presentation will include:

- What is soil?
- Texture
- Structure
- Major and minor nutrients
- Soil ecosystem
- Mulch
- Planning for acidity
- Planting for soil texture



Tamara Dinter

Tamara has a Bachelor of Science from the University of Victoria and two Master of Science degrees in Agriculture and Environmental Science. She specialized in soil science for her graduate thesis work, ultimately travelling to the Galapagos Islands to participate in filming and producing a documentary on the soil resources of the remote archipelago. Tamara returned to join her family business, Dinter Nursery, in 2020 and is currently the General Manager.



Following Tamara’s Presentation there will be a panel of VIMGA Master Gardeners who will share their own wisdom on building healthy soils.

# Upcoming Education.....

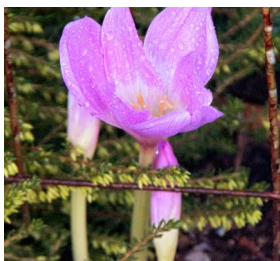


The Alpine Gardeners of Central VI have invited **Richard Hebda** to speak on snowdrops on February 26, 2024. Details to follow in the New Year.

Having a hard time deciding whether Michael Grab is an artist or a magician, because he creates stunning structure from finely balanced rocks that seem to defy the law of physics. These seemingly impossible structures require intense concentration and meditative focus. A winter project?



Winter pictures  
by Jo Canning



Autumn crocus



Ice on kale



Solstice



Borage frost

*"When it snows, you have two choices: shovel or make snow angels."*