

CULTIVATING COMMUNITY

Issue 13

www.vimga.org

March 2024



Editor's Letter

Dear VIMGA Members,

Spring Education Day earlier this month was an overwhelming success; many thanks to all who went to great lengths to make it all come together. Planning the day around an overall theme seems to resonate with many, judging by the comments from the evaluations. People seem to enjoy "digging in" to a topic to review their prior knowledge and to learn about new research. Gardeners also love hearing about what other gardeners are doing, so the Master Gardener Panel was once again well received.



Marion Waters

As my garden emerges from a blanket of snow here in Black Creek, I can finally begin putting some of my plans into place for this gardening season. Mine is a rather large garden for one person to maintain – about 50 sq. metres (not including a small orchard). I have decided to cover one area with mulch and leaves and let it rest. For the rest of the vegetable garden, I plan to extend my drip irrigation so I can put an end to the damaging overhead watering I have been using in those areas. And I have decided to finally give in and expand my flower beds. People keep giving me plants and I can't say no can I? And those plant sales! Twenty dollars for so many treasures! So, I am giving in to my addiction – ahem – passion.

What about you, what exciting plans do you have for this season? A greenhouse? A pond? Microgreens? Upsizing, downsizing? Whatever your plans, I wish you great joy and satisfaction throughout the coming prime gardening months.

Jan and I hope you enjoy our new feature: Favourite Plants of 2023 (be ready with your choices for 2024)

- Marion

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President's Message

president@vimga.org



Mike O'Neill

President's Letter to Members
Newsletter March 2024

Spring has almost sprung and VIMGA members are gearing up for clinics, seminars, and education opportunities. Be sure to check our clinics on the member portion of the website at www.vimga.org to see what vacancies are available and contact the district planner for that area to sign up.

Spring Education Day took place on March 2. Congratulations to the organizers and presenters for a fantastic day of fellowship and education.

Many of you have noticed our website improvements and I encourage you to send your feedback to webmmaster@vimga.org. Cameron has been working on many improvements and we have a new team of members that are assisting with updating content as well to keep us informed of upcoming events.

In early April our VIU students will complete their garden program and we will get a chance to meet them at events planned for each of our areas. I hope you will all attend and welcome them to join VIMGA and pursue becoming a Certified Master Gardener and part of our VIMGA family.

Our Strategic Planning Committee has been hard at work telling our communities about VIMGA and what we do. Look for community publications interviewing some of our members and letting the public know where we are in their community throughout the season.

I want to welcome Cameron Smith to the position of Treasurer. Cameron has served as treasurer for VIMGA in the past and is known to most of you. Thank you, Cameron! If you are interested in we encourage you to consider taking on the position of Nanaimo Area Representative which is now open. A great way to join the administration team and get to know your local members. If you want more information contact, president@vimga.org, or any board member.

Debbie Gurrad, VIMGA Regional Planning Coordinator, is assembling a team to reevaluate and update our guidelines for advice and education hours for members. A timely project given our new crop of students who will consider joining our ranks in April.

Happy Spring everyone and I look forward to seeing you all at clinics and events throughout the season. - Mike



Seedy Sunday 2024

Our New Interns are BUSY

Submitted by Dorothee Kieser, Lead Mentor of the Advanced Gardening Course.



The Advanced Gardening Course will finish on April 2 and then a whole new crop of Interns will join VIMGA. Let's welcome them and give them a good start.

The class has 28 students and 15 Mentors (Continuing Mentors and Plant ID mentors) so we have an excellent ratio of interns to mentors. Of course not all 28 students will go on to become CMGs, but I expect that many will join VIMGA and continue. The sign-up meetings in the VIMGA areas will tell us the outcome.

Here are the dates for the sign-ups:

- Cowichan Area (Ladysmith and South): Saturday, April 6
- Nanaimo and Gabriola Area: Saturday, April 6
- Parksville, Qualicum, Nanoose: Wednesday, April 3
- North Island (~North of Bowser): Saturday, April 13

Your area reps are likely to fill you in on details as time comes closer.

The Nanaimo area will have a Social for all members in our area and any other VIMGA member who wants to join. It will be held at Dorothee Kieser's place (6299 Pearce Road, Nanaimo) on **April 6 at 2pm** to meet and welcome our new interns, help them sign-up for clinics, and overall to get together to catch up on news from each other.

To give the new interns a chance to learn about clinics, we will have some "mock clinics" during the gathering. There will also be a "tree identification" contest for fun. The meeting will credit you 1 education hour.



Taken at pruning class at Beban Learning Gardens with Deb Gurrad being the instructor. Seen here pruning a fig tree.

Area Updates

From Norma Kilpatrick/Jean Carr: Parksville/Qualicum /NanOOSE Area Representative

PQN currently has 9 CMG's, 4 alumni, 1 lifetime member for a total of 14, plus we have 10 students in our area currently registered in the Advanced Gardening Class. We hope many of them will continue as interns to become fully certified Master Gardeners!

PQN is busy with possible clinics scheduled at 4 commercial nurseries for a total of 11 days, 2 Farmer's Markets for a total of 4 days, Plant sales at 5 different locations for a total of 6 days, one garden tour with 2 locations over 2 days, 1 Fall Fair.

Our members are also volunteering for writing for: Plant Pick Articles, and Frequently Asked Questions for Milner Gardens, Garden Advice Line questions and participating in Garden Advice Parties and VIRL presentations.

PQN currently has 2 Garden Advice Parties planned for mid spring.

PQN is hosting a VIMGA wide social event at a picnic at Rath Trevor Park Tuesday June 25, 2024 - so please hold the date! More information to come.

GAL business cards are available for Clinic bins, please see Diane Buirs.

Next PQN meeting and social as well as clinic sign up for students is April 3, 2024 at 1:00 p.m. Location: Jean Carr's home in Parksville.

- Norma and Jean



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

VIMGA SOCIAL

HOLD the DATE

JUNE 25th 4-7 pm

RATH TREVOR BEACH

More information to come in May

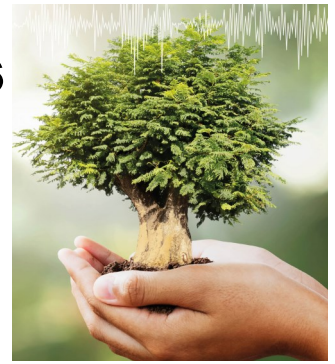
Hosted by the Parksville
Qualicum NanOOSE district



Some of my FAVOURITE Plants

We asked VIMGA members to tell us about their favourite plants. Here are their choices.

PS - don't forget to send in your own pics. We would love to share with our members.



Diane Buirs

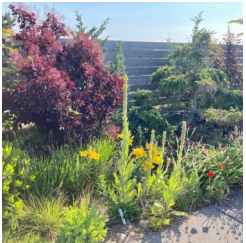


One of my favorite plants last year was **Polar Bear Zinnia** (*Zinnia elegans*). It performed extremely well from late June till October. The bees feasted on it and would sleep all snuggled up after a big feed!

Polar Bear's pure white, fully double, 4 inch flowers have golden centers that unfold into little yellow stars as the flowers mature. They are borne on long-stemmed, 3 1/2 to 4 foot, multi-branching plants that are excellent for cutting armfuls of blooms all summer long.

Cathy Lund

Living in Comox on a very windy coastal site my favourite plants now are those that can survive the wind, salt and sandy conditions here. *Cotinus coggygria* 'Royal Purple' was my favourite for 2023. It gave me the colour and size that I enjoy in a small tree and performed well in sandy soil in full sun. It also has



lovely round leaves and an open shape. I've given it a little wind protection with a slatted fence which is 20' away. I water it sparingly with drip irrigation.

Jane Kerr

My all-time favorite plant is *Echinacea*. I have many in my garden.

They are easy to grow from seeds in sun or part shade and aren't fussy about soil conditions. They provide color and bloom between July and September and make great cut flowers. Birds love their seeds. There are many cultivars and they range in height from 16" to 40" tall and have a spread anywhere from 12" to 24". I have some in morning sun, some in afternoon sun and some in all day sun and

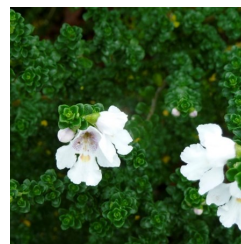
all perform well. Here are a couple of my favorite-ites.



Debora Gurrad



My favourite plant is trillium, of which I have only two in my garden. I would love to have more but they are tricky to cultivate and take a long time to multiply naturally. I love them because they remind me of my childhood spent roaming the woods behind our house with my brother where trilliums would come up every spring. I have a special affinity for native plants of which the trillium is my special favourite.



Deb Seibel

My favourite plant in 2023 was *Prostanthera cuneata* (Alpine mint). I have seven of these scattered throughout the front yard. They are all doing superbly, although there are two that are not growing as fast as they are getting bit more moisture than they'd prefer. These small evergreen shrubs, with shiny dark green leaves no matter what the time of year, do well in full sun and take little care. Summer brings sweet, little white flowers with an interior purple dot. They are moderately drought tolerant, and, so far, the deer have ignored them.

FAVOURITE Plants continued....

Marion Woloschuk



My favourite plant (at the moment), is a big old western red cedar tree (*Thuja plicata*) that lives in the middle of our driveway, surrounded by other native vegetation. I'm not sure how old it is, but it was obviously

topped many years ago. With a height of about 30 feet, this tree provides visual screening, a sound barrier, and a resting place for raccoons, owls and various other birds and insects. The hummers particularly like it, as I have two feeders hanging from the cottage nearby, and it provides both shade in summer and a secure sheltered spot for the little guys during inclement weather. I snip small branches to be used in Christmas swags and displays. It is lovely to look at year round and a daily reminder of the inherent beauty of our local plant life, and an asset to the local wildlife. We give it a few deep soaks of water over the drier months and have removed a couple of dead branches, but otherwise leave it alone. Unfortunately, it appears to be slowly decaying from the top down (due to the topping), but there is a small cedar tree growing near the base that will hopefully one day replace it.

Phyllis Pullinger



My pick is a small conifer, a *Picea Abies* 'Acrocona' (Norway Spruce) which was one of the first things I planted in the fall of 2022. It's in my front kidney-shaped bed. It gets lots of sun in the summer, a

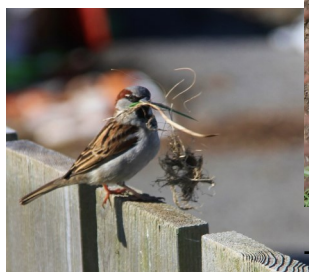
bit less in the winter. This is a small variety with drooping branches. Another interesting feature is that the cones which form on the ends of the branches in the spring are red and then fade to brown as the season progresses. It's very handsome and adaptable to many growing situations...as least I haven't killed it yet!

Marion Waters

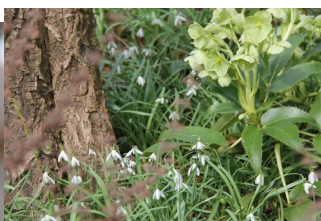


I picked up some small limp seedlings at a plant sale last spring for a dollar each. I had never heard of *Salpiglossis* so I wanted to see them for myself! I planted them in pots because the label said to protect them from the wind. They produced

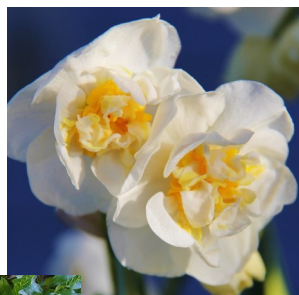
gorgeous fragrant trumpet-shaped blooms on spindly long stems almost all summer. I saved some seeds and will try to direct-sow them in May.



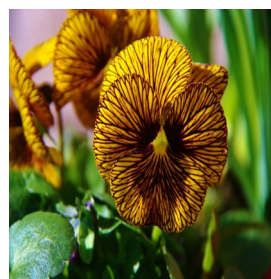
Sparrow with nest



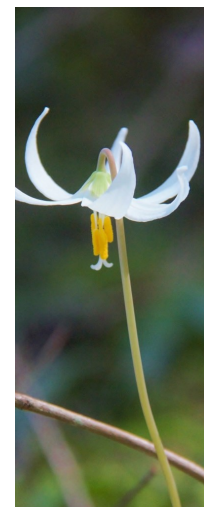
Hellebore & galanthus



Double narcissus



Yellow striped pansies



Erythronium – Robert's Park



Hail on chicory



Hellebore bowl—VanDusen

Pictures by Jo Canning who has many favourite plants!



Sugarloaf chicory



Follow the WATER

By Beth Walrond

Reprinted by permission from Island & Farm Magazine

This winter weather brought challenges for the home gardener growing winter vegetable crops in Central Vancouver Island. Perhaps not for everyone but it was for me. I won't go into the frustrating details, but the uncertainties of what is happening in my garden has led me to start research on climate change. This article's topic is water and agriculture.

Before anything else, let me offer definitions on the title terms and their meaning: climate mitigation and climate adaptation. "In essence, adaptation can be understood as the process of adjusting to the current and future effects of climate change. Mitigation means preventing or reducing the emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) into the atmosphere to make the impacts of climate change less severe."

Reference: www.worldwildlife.org

Every level of government has been working on developing plans to deal with climate change. In some cases, been working on this issue for years, and/or decades. There are provincial departments working with regional districts to help farmers, and home owners adapt and prepare for climate change. As well, the federal government is providing leadership and funds to assist with climate adaptation.

What is expected in climate change for BC, related to water is a continuation of what we are already experiencing: that is wetter winters, and drier, hotter summers. The reoccurrence of Atmospheric Rivers, or heavy-rain events lead to subsequent flooding. Summers with longer periods of less rain or no precipitation led to droughts.

A sense of urgency is expressed by all levels of government about climate change and we can see immediate results in what is happening on the Island. Action is being taken. The BC

Ministry of Agriculture is giving workshops on Agricultural Water Management and Decoding Drought this February and March. The speaker will be Dr. Sean Smukler from UBC. His talk will address soil management practices for climate resilient vegetable production and how to improve soil health in conditions of intense rainfall and drought. www.2gov.bc.ca. See Drought and Management Workshops. There is of course information online, but the government is taking extra steps to communicate solutions by organizing in-person presentations.

Another source of in-person assistance exists through the Environmental Farm Plan. (EFP) This is a program where farmers can apply to and get help to solve specific problems. It is funded through the Federal Government with support going to the provincial government Ministry of Agriculture. These programs put boots on the ground and allow farmers to make adjustments like fixing an irrigation system, updating to a more efficient irrigation system, or changing crops to a more drought resistant variety. Updating irrigation systems is important on farms and home gardens as water supplies become more limited. Changing to a ground delivery system rather than overhead spraying can reduce water needed by 50 to 70 percent. See also www.VIRL.ca.

The longer wetter winters in many areas bring floods and we have sure seen that in our province. The historic flooding caused by the Atmospheric River of 2019 which hit the farmlands in the Fraser Valley is hard to forget. It seemed like a turning point; a wake-up call, to take action, work on recovery, and prepare for the near future.

The Government of Canada Adaptation Action Plan identifies flooding as the "most common and costly of climate related disaster". Most people in Canada live in, or near cities and 80% of our cities are in, or near flood plains. www.canada.ca



Departure Bay Protection Island and parts of downtown are at risk due to sea level rise. Projected sea level rise is one metre by 2100. The city is working on Climate Change Resiliency Strategy. Further work is being done in researching, flood mapping and planning.

The right preparations can't take place without knowledge. The kind of concerns vary depending on the community's geographic location. For example, the City of Nanaimo is rightly paying attention to rising sea levels and other areas of flooding. Areas of concern are Departure Bay which is a sea level community. The Millstream River leading to the sea as potential for overland flooding. A lot of work is being done in researching, flood mapping, and creating programs to restore dykes, bridges and prepare for the future.

The Provincial Government has a Local Government Climate Action Program (LGCAP). This program was introduced in 2022, replacing a previous one. It provides funding to communities and requires progress reports. The City of Nanaimo report for 2022 shows progress in "upgrading storm drain catch basins to increase capacity, adaption measures taken regarding irrigation based on weather station data and created Overland flooding 200-year mapping for the Millstone." See https://www.nanaimo.ca/docs/social-culture-environment/sustainability/lgcap-survey-report_nanaimo_2022.pdf

These actions make a difference: better storm drains can prevent flooding. Water restrictions make sure we have enough water to get through the summer. Flood mapping provides knowledge about what to expect.

But of course, nature has many surprises. Adaptation and resiliency are key.

The federal government has a program called Infrastructure Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund. This is a 2.3-billion-dollar fund as of May 2023. It has funded thousands of programs across the country which support climate adaptation. One on the Vancouver Island is a \$12.2 million investment in the Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw near Port Hardy to install sea and river dikes and raise the Tsulquate River Bridge. This will protect the area from coastal and river flooding and sea level rise. It will also assure access roads remain usable.

While there is a great deal of uncertainty about climate change, research shows there may be some benefits for Vancouver Island in the coming changes. The Cowichan Valley Regional District speculates in its Climate Projections report about these benefits. The points related to water are increased growing days, and earlier harvests which also would mean increased demand for water. So better irrigation systems, rainwater collection and other water storage will be needed. Other benefits, opportunities and threats are listed in the report. www.cvrld.ca Climate-Projections-Report.

The importance of home gardens and our local farms have always existed but with climate change affecting food supply chains and costs, local production becomes more important.

Knowledge, resiliency and adaptation will be needed by everyone. I know in my own garden I need to change how I start seedlings for my winter garden. I also need to provide shade for the main growing crops as the summer days get hotter.

Challenging times are here. What I have written about here is just a small part of a much larger issue. So much work is being done on many fronts. Everyone doing what they can will help us create a secure future.



Beth Walrond is a member of VIMGA and a frequent contributor to our newsletter.

Prune Your Fruit Tree NOW!

By Jacqueline Sherk

Reprinted with permission from Take 5 Magazine

Fruit tree owners, late winter has arrived and if your fruit trees need pruning, they can be pruned now (before growth begins). Keep in mind though that it's important not to prune during wet periods because this can spread tree diseases. And note that winter pruning spurs vigorous growth while summer pruning reduces growth.

The following information is based on 'Cass Turnbull's Guide to Pruning' (2006). Cass was famous for her practical approach and remarked that, "Ask five knowledgeable gardeners how to prune fruit trees and you may well get five very different answers". She was referring to the deep well of methods and approaches to pruning for fruit production, particularly on the spur bearing fruit trees, apples and pears.

Cass's approach to pruning a fruit tree is very simple – she said "Just prune it like any other tree – for health and good looks!" Here are the important steps:

First, as always, remove dead wood (use the DDD rule: Dead, Diseased, Damaged).

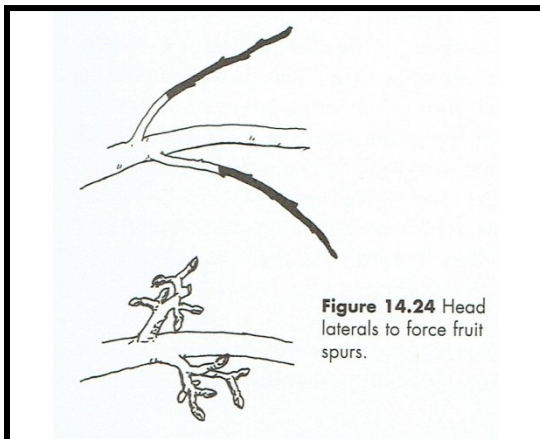
Second, remove crossing, rubbing and other branches going the 'wrong' way (that is, toward the interior of the tree, rather than extending outward).

Third, make heading cuts (aka 'tipping') on some of the top branches to allow more light into the tree. A heading cut is a stem shortening cut made just above a node (nodes are the 'bumps' along the stems where leaves emerge). This will open up the tree to more light and air and help ripen the fruit lower down. The increased air circulation will also help discourage disease.

Lastly, take a good look for branch unions (crotches) that are very narrow, because this will make them susceptible to breaking out under weight – such as fruit, snow load, and even their own growth. A 'U' shaped crotch is desirable. Remove or shorten all but one of the stems that are included in narrow branch unions.

Now your tree looks and is much improved in appearance and health!

However, if your tree fruits on spurs (is an apple or a pear) -- you can also improve fruit production by encouraging some of its side branches (called 'laterals') to form new spurs by shortening (heading) those stems down to the second or third bud on the stem. This often (but not always) results in the tree forming new fruit producing spurs.



Jacqueline Sherk

Jacqueline Sherk, is a VIM-GA member and Certified ISA Arborist and CLNA Landscape Horticulturist and a frequent contributor to our newsletter.

'Tis the season to put your soil to the test and ask 'Is it time to lime?'

Re-printed with permission from Campbell River Mirror

By Marion Waters



Understanding the pH of your soil and the pH needs of your plants will help you make more informed decisions about your garden.

Marion Waters photo

Soil that is regularly flushed with precipitation becomes more acidic over time.

Garden soil on the rainy west coast tends to be highly acidic. Some plants love this type of soil and you can probably guess which ones by their frequent appearances in local landscapes; conifers, rhododendrons, camelias, heathers, azaleas, blueberries, and most native plants all thrive in soils with a pH lower than 7.0.

Many vegetable crops and other plants, such as turf, prefer a slightly acidic soil with a pH between 6.0 and 7.0. But brassicas, salad greens and some root vegetables require a more alkaline soil.

What to do about this conflict of needs?

Soil that is regularly flushed with precipitation becomes more acidic over time and less able to hold onto nutrients. Sandy soils are affected by this process more than clay and loam soils, whose higher content of organic matter makes them more resistant. If you notice your plant development is flagging, despite adequate nutritional additives and moisture, then your soil may be overly acidic.

Since your recall of high school chemistry may have faded, here is a review – pH is expressed as a number between 0 and 14. A pH of 7.0 is neutral. Values below 7.0 are acidic, and values above 7.0 are alkaline. Small changes in numbers indicate large changes in soil acidity. A soil with a pH of 5 is 10 times more acidic than a soil with a pH of 6. Most plants can grow in slightly acidic soils, so the goal is not to raise the pH to neutral (7.0), but to avoid problems related to excessive acidity.

The best way to determine your soil pH is to test it. Garden centres sell soil test kits which are easy to use but not considered consistently accurate. A soil pH meter is another option that is relatively inexpensive. The most reliable way to assess your soil is to have it tested at a soil-testing facility. The BC Ministry of Farming lists some Vancouver Island labs that do soil testing.

Be sure to take samples from several different areas of your garden. Take note of your results and the locations where you took your samples so you can test the same areas in subsequent

years and track any changes.

Lime (calcium carbonate) is a natural amendment that will increase the pH of your soil and also supply calcium which is an essential nutrient for plants. Dolomitic lime also contains magnesium and is a good choice for west coast gardens because our soils are often deficient in magnesium. Wood ash can be used but has the equivalency rate of only 2-30% compared to limestone or dolomite lime.

Apply lime to areas where you are going to grow plants that benefit from a higher pH (7.0 to 8.0) such as asparagus and celery. However, strawberries, raspberries, and grapes prefer a slightly acidic soil and may not require liming (That is, unless you are relatively certain that your soil has a very low pH which needs to be corrected). Another idea is to apply the less effective wood ash to the previous list of plants, which will bring up the pH but not as much as lime will.

Soil with a high clay content does not acidify as quickly as silt or sandy soils. But if it does become acidified, clay soil requires more lime to raise the pH than other soils. To lime your garden, sprinkle the lime and rake it evenly into the soil. Lime can also be applied to the surface around established plants. Follow the directions on the package to determine the correct amounts to use. Lime can be applied any time of the year, but the ideal time is in the fall or winter. The freezing and thawing of the soil over the winter will help to incorporate the lime into the ground.

The other tricky thing about liming is that it is difficult to know how much any given application will change the pH of the soil without repeated testing. That is probably the reason many west coast gardeners simply apply lime every year as a matter of habit, without really knowing whether it is needed or not.

Understanding the pH of your soil and the pH needs of your plants will help you make more informed decisions about your garden.

Grow a lovely bouquet of – potatoes? by Marion Waters

Re-printed with permission from Campbell River Mirror

Potatoes are a highly nutritious and versatile vegetable that can be grown in any garden or in pots.

They are a fairly simple crop to plant – just plop a seed potato in a hole and cover it up. No need to work the soil or even amend it too much. But even with the simplest of crops, there are ways to enhance quality and yields.

The potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) is a member of the nightshade family which includes tomatoes, eggplants, and peppers. Solanums thrive in acidic soil so do not add lime where you intend to plant potatoes. Potatoes are tolerant of cool soils and moderate frost. Plant them when the soil temperature is 6 degrees C which in our area is well into March or early April.

Plant seed potatoes about 10 cm deep. Allow 30 cm between plants and about 60 cm between rows. If you dig a trench it makes “hilling” easier because you can use the soil from the trench. Hilling or earthing-up means hoeing soil up against the stem, which encourages more tubers to develop. It also ensures that developing tubers are not exposed to the sun or they will begin producing chlorophyll and turn greenish. Just cut or peel off the green portions and they are perfectly safe to eat. Straw can be used in place of soil or use a mixture of both. Hilling need only be done two or three times, beginning when shoots are about 20 cm high and ending as soon as blossoms appear. Potatoes grow in just about any soil but they prefer well-drained loamy or sandy soils. Mulching around the potato plants as they grow will add nutrients and help retain moisture.

One way to maximize success is by “chitting” your seed potatoes. You can use them whole or cut into pieces as long as there are at least two or three good eyes on each piece. Place the potatoes ‘eyes side up’ in egg cartons in a sunny window or greenhouse to allow them time to dry before planting and help prevent the cut edges from rotting. Once the eyes start sprouting, nick off all but two or three so the energy in the seed potato builds fewer and stronger stalks. Chit your potatoes a couple of weeks before you intend to plant. Minimize pest and disease problems by planting your potatoes in a different place each year and pulling up and disposing of any volunteers from previous crops.

Newly planted potatoes do not require any watering for several weeks. The seed tuber supplies the budding stalks with everything they need. Once the stalks are several cm high, then watering at the base of the plant is recommended. Potatoes (like tomatoes) do not like water on their leaves and stalks because the dampness makes them vulnerable to blights or other fungal diseases. During dry weathers, water potatoes deeply (about 30 cm) 2 or 3 times per week.



Once your early varieties flower, it's time to start harvest your delicious “new” potatoes. For your main crops, once the stalks look like they are dying, it's time to get the potatoes out of the ground. Leave them to sit on top of the soil to dry out for a day or two to toughen the peel if you are intending to store them. Do not wash potatoes before storage, since wet potatoes decay easily. Store in a cool dry dark place for optimum results.

Seed potatoes come in a variety of sizes, shapes, and colours (inside and out!) Whatever you choose, be sure to plant some earlier varieties to use as soon as they are harvested such as Warba. Stretch out your harvest by planting some mid-season varieties in April such as Chieftan and Yukon Gold. The later maturing varieties such as Russets and Kennebec are your “main crops” and are planted in late April or early May.



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

How to Build Healthy Soil
VIMGA Spring Education Day
March 2, 2024



A huge thanks to all who attended our SED and for taking the time to complete the evaluation. Your feedback is important to us so that we can continue to provide education sessions which are relevant and of interest to you. All of you enjoyed the speakers and at the same time learned something. We received forty-one completed or partially completed evaluations. - *Jan, Chris, Ruth, Mary, Jo and Phyllis*

How did you find Tamara's presentation? All of you said that Tamara's presentation was well balanced.

Would you like more of this presentation and why?

Yes 35; No 0; Neutral 2; Not answered - 4 but comments indicate yes.

Many of you described the presentation as informative, engaging, relevant, science-based, and interesting. Other comments:

- Real life gardening experience
- Informative and shows best practice or current knowledge regarding gardening, expert meaningful advice
- So interesting and helpful! All the presenters were excellent and the input and questions from the audience were good too.
- Good cross section of information and experience
- Tamara has a wealth of knowledge.

Would you like to see more panels and or forums with Master Gardeners?

Yes 35; No 0, Neutral 5 (one person left this blank)

Why? Many of you commented that hearing about local experiences provides valuable learning, it was very informative and a good way to connect with fellow gardeners. Other comments:

- MGs are doing interesting things and communicating what they learn.
- Always great to hear what fellow gardeners are doing – sharing knowledge & offers ops to visit other gardens.
- A different view of common problems informative entertaining
- Great refresher and always pick up new ideas.

- Utilize member talent and knowledge
- I really like the exploration of a theme over the day.
- Local advice on our climate and region

Subjects of interest for future panels: Many of the suggestions were like #4 below as well as food gardening, greenhouse growing, vegetable growing, trees for drought, trees for drought, fertilizers, beneficial insects, and water capture & distribution.

What subjects would interest for future SEDS? Many of you expressed interest in pruning, native plants, sustainable & drought/climate resilient gardening. Some other ideas:

- Lawn alternatives
- Busting garden myths
- The detective process for diagnosis of diseases
- Weed control; irrigation systems; growing under cover and greenhouses
- Fruit trees

What other activities would you find interesting to add to our agendas for future AGMs and SEDs? Some suggestions:

- Seeds – collecting, storing, longevity.
- Participation in strategic planning; more discussion in groups
- How about a game with prizes – 5 minutes or so to get us mingling and laughing!
- Possible garden tours within VIMGA
- Pruning seminars – roses, hydrangeas & Rhodos

General Comments. Overwhelmingly positive! BEST SED EVER!

Vancouver Island Library Virtual Series Update

Thank you for your suggestions for future SED presentations. Many of these topics have been covered in our presentations with Vancouver Island Regional Library. The rest will be added to my list for upcoming educational opportunities. Some of the suggestions can be combined with others for a more fulsome presentation.

- ☐ Native plants, lawn alternatives - upcoming presentation VIRL (Sept 9, Cameron Smith)
- ☐ Sustainable and drought resistant growing ☐ Xeriscape gardening ☐ Drought resistant planting - for future.
- ☐ Pruning – Although I know this is a difficult subject to do in a group session. VIRL – video by Debbie Gurrad - VIRL
- ☐ Pruning – shrubs/trees/fruit trees - upcoming
- ☐ Dealing with drought; water capture systems. ☐ Soil enhancements, water uses during and due to environmental changes –for future
- ☐ Pruning; regenerative farming practices – for future
- ☐ Busting garden myths; climate resilient gardens - for future
- ☐ The detective process for diagnosis of diseases – for future
- ☐ Making your own soil. – for future
- ☐ Anything to do with vegetable gardening. done VIRL
- ☐ Weed control; irrigation systems; growing under cover and greenhouses. -done VIRL
- ☐ Fruit trees and bushes - upcoming (Aug 12, Jo Canning)
- ☐ Fruit tree focus, all aspects – upcoming VIRL (Aug 12, Jo Canning)

All presentations already covered can be found at VIRL's YouTube Channel at the below link. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBzz566tnCk&list=PLSJ2NS0iLhMvjrnaov6XSU1FB-TeYhT2>

Many Thanks,

Richard Bernier



Talk to your plants. But if you really want results, bring in a motivational speaker.

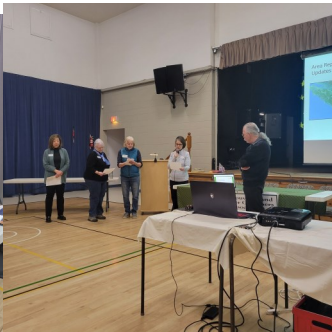
MGs:
Contact Richard Bernier
**[threepalm-
gardeer@outlook.com](mailto:threepalm-gardeer@outlook.com)**
or
**250-951-5975 if you are
interested in offering other
subjects.**



Richard Bernier

Spring Education Day MEMORIES

In attendance were 36 Master Gardeners and 32 Public for 68 total



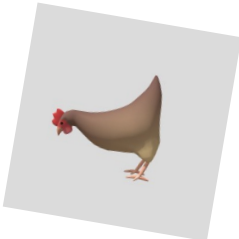
We need your ideas & opinions!
What advice people to VIMGA?
What keeps people in VIMGA?
What causes people to leave the organization?
What would encourage people to stay in VIMGA?
Any other suggestions to help us grow?



I wish to thank you for opening your education day to the public. As a 'retired' MG, I appreciate all the work that happens to keep you current and knowledgeable on many plant topics...and the topic of soil was especially valuable to guests as well as members.



Chris Southwick's "after" pictures of her garden—despite the soggy soil. WOW!



Upcoming Events and Requests

WANTED

Plants for the VIMGA table at the Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron

Society plant sale in Qualicum Beach on Saturday April 20th

This is the biggest fund raiser of the year – Thanks to all the fabulous plants donated last year we made over \$500. We were lucky enough to have enough plants to put some in the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society sale the next week.

Please make them, tag them (if possible include Common and Scientific names) and we will arrange for pickup or delivery the week before.

Please contact Ruth aruc@shaw.ca or Dorothee pastpresident@vimga.org



The AGCVI presents Bernie Dinter

Dwarf Rhododendrons,
Conifers & Shrubs



Bernie Dinter, owner of Dinter Nursery in Duncan, will speak about dwarf rhododendrons, conifers and shrubs to show what is available to create beautiful, small-scale gardens in containers and rockeries.

Bernie will bring a selection of dwarf rhodos, conifers and shrubs to sell.

Date: Monday, March 25th

Place: Qualicum Beach Civic Centre
747 Jones Street, QB

Time: Meeting starts at 1p

Doors open at 12:30pm

\$3 at the door includes entry in plant draw, refreshments



VANCOUVER ISLAND ROCK AND ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY ANNUAL SPRING SHOW



Come and enjoy outstanding show entries, including rock & alpine, woodland, bog and succulent plants. There will also be displays, vendor & seed sales, door prizes, a silent auction and tea service. Plants grown by club members will be sold throughout the event.

Sunday April 21 9am to 4pm
Admission by donation
Mary Winspear Centre
2243 Beacon Avenue Sidney, BC



For info visit www.virags.com
Facebook: @vancouver_island_rock_and_alpine_garden_society
Instagram: @virags_pics

If MG's or MGIT's are interested in signing up for hosting the MG table at Eswyn's Alpine & Rock Garden on Saturday, May 11th for their celebration of the 15th Anniversary of this garden...and yes, this garden is right beside Nanoose Place where you were meeting on Saturday.....on the hillside by the trail to the Pickleball courts. We will provide you with alpine plant reference books and support you at our event to make the day worthwhile for your MG or MGIT time.

Elaine Bohm and Karen Unruh

**The Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society
presents the
Mother's Day Weekend
GARDEN TOUR**



Rhododendron 'Qualicum's Pride'
May 11 & 12, 2024

11 Beautiful Gardens in Qualicum Beach and Parksville
Plus: Artists, Master Gardeners & Floral Art Creations

Tickets \$20 (Cash please) on Sale April 22 at:

Qualicum Beach:

**Mulberry Bush Book Store
Arrowsmith Greenhouses
Milner Gardens & Woodland
Ken-Dor Garden Centre**

Parksville:

**Buckerfield's
Cultivate Garden & Gift
Fireside Books
The Shrubbers Nursery**

Port Alberni: Colyn's Nursery

www.marsrhodos.ca

Message from Linda Derkach:

Hi Folks – Our Mother's Day Weekend Garden Tour is just around the corner.

We need to fill all our Sitter spaces before our April meeting.

If you haven't yet signed up to be a sitter at a beautiful garden, please contact Nicola at the email above.

What do Garden Sitters do?

- Sit at the entrance to the garden for a 3-hour shift
- Welcome visitors and Stamp tickets
- Keep track of the number of visitors
- Pass on any instructions from the home owner
- Smile, be friendly and answer questions about MARS

The Reward

- One free ticket to the garden tour (worth \$20)
- Lots of fun meeting other passionate gardeners

Once you have signed up, you will receive your free ticket and detailed instructions at the April meeting. If you are unable to attend, Nicola will ensure delivery.