

# CULTIVATING COMMUNITY

Issue 14

[www.vimga.org](http://www.vimga.org)

June 2024



## Editor's Letter

### Garden Thugs

You know the ones. The groundcovers that have been slowly taking over your garden. For me, it was a purchased 4 inch pot of *Oxalis oregana* (redwood sorrel) that looked so cute and bursting to get out of its 4 inch pot. It has slowly taken over my shade garden and my hostas are truly only discernable as clover-like humps. Or take the groundcover hooligan given as a gift that my 'friend' told me was just what I needed in my garden. *Corydalis lutea* (yellow fumitory) is one such present. My goodness, does that baby get around!



And lastly, the inherited plant that came with the house. *Hyacinthoides hispanica* (Spanish bluebell), is a bonus from the previous owners. I am positive that the bulb of this plant has a mole-like tunneling capacity. When it senses I am digging it out, it goes just a few inches deeper to evade my trowel. Where is a stick of dynamite when you need it?

Daniel Sparler with the Northwest Horticultural Society has written an amusing article on his 'cabal of gladiatorial ground covers.' He marvels at their tenacity of self-seeding, aggressive rhizomes and stolons along with entrenched bulbs. Sparler notes that the groundcovers in his garden are indeed Darwinian triumphs. 'Where is a goat when you need one?'

Set your calendars for "Fall Into Gardening" on Oct. 27 in Qualicum. This is an event that VIMGA co-sponsors with the Nanaimo and Mt. Arrowsmith Rhodo Societies every two years. A great way to meet with other gardeners AND get 4 hours of education. Our own AGM will be held on Nov. 16 at Nanoose Place. More details on both will be in the September newsletter.

Have a wonderful summer everyone. The VIMGA social is coming up on June 25th 4-7 pm at Rath Trevor Beach. To register contact Jean Carr at [j20carr@gmail.com](mailto:j20carr@gmail.com) More information is on page 6.

- Jan

### *In this issue....*

President's Message.....	2-3
Intern Update.....	4
VIMGA Plant Sales.....	5
Area Updates.....	6
Broom Plants.....	7

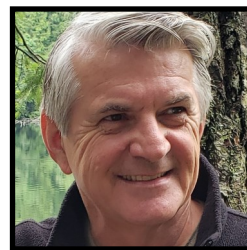
Companion Planting.....	8
Grow Your Own Crunchy Cucumbers..	9
Parnassian Woods Invitation.....	10
Fall Into Gardening.....	11
Mystery Question Answer.....	12

# President's Message

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

President's Letter to Members

Newsletter March 2024



Mike O'Neill

Here we are June 2024 and clinics are in full swing and we are mostly in our happy space!! Gardens are getting plenty of water, (in most areas), I do think the sunshine has fallen behind a bit but we know it WILL come!

We will not meet as a Board again until September as this is our summer break so I thought it might be useful to go over some of the things we have done at our board meetings for this fiscal year to date. I mentioned at our June 11 board meeting that we are always involved with VIMGA goings on but members don't get the same level of VIMGA details. Seeing as it will soon be time to consider new members for board and committee positions, I thought this might be a good time to mention some board "highlights" for you to get more VIMGA in your lives, lol. A risky undertaking but here we go.

After our Strategic Planning Committee (SPC), (Cathy, Debbie, Pam, Ruth, Jo, Phyllis), formulated our new plan, reviewed at the 2023 AGM, the SPC moved to implement the plan in stages. Over the next 8 months we continued to receive reports from the SPC on progress and a lot was done with still more to look forward to. We can all look forward to an annual progress report at our 2024 AGM. This committee will have accomplished a lot in the first year of the plan.

An ongoing project, updating our 2019 members manual, was discussed as it had been over a pretty long period of time. We (I) finally committed to have the Manual ready for members at our AGM 2024 with new edits and include any changes in job descriptions and procedures for earning hours. A lot has changed since 2019!

Cameron Smith stepped up and took on the Role of Treasurer from Jane Kerr after she dutifully kept serving after her term expired October 31, 2023. Cameron was the

Nanaimo Area rep but dropped that role when he was appointed as our Treasurer for the rest of fiscal 2023. Cameron has served as Treasurer for many years in the past as well as being responsible for the web site development. One of the pillars of our administrative team to whom we are very appreciative for their service and his many hours of dedication.

Our MGABC Reps, Ruth and Debbie, attended MGABC meetings and reported on changes taking place. One highlight was the minimum hours requirements discussions and the adoption of policies to appeal to a new demographic along with current member needs. We will hear more about this at our AGM and some conclusive decisions that will benefit our various chapter and current member needs while providing solutions for new members to join our ranks.

District Representatives are crucial in bringing together our VIMGA members as we are very much spread out geographically with each area having somewhat different needs. At our board meetings Fern (Cowichan District), Jean and Norma (Parksville/Qualicum team reps), Marion (North Island), and Mike and Cameron (Nanaimo), bring forward what is happening and member needs.

Our RPC, Debbie, wears a lot of hats, (as do many of our members), and one more is the Regional Planning Co-Ordinator (RPC) which brings together our District Planner needs and discussions affecting clinic hours and reporting. Intern hours are often discussed and acted upon to clear up confusion.

Our Vice-President, Ruth, is another one of our multi-talented board members who keeps us up to date on goings regarding plant sales and many other happenings that she participates in or leads. Plant sales are an integral part of our fund raising and outreach are we are lucky to have Ruth and Dorothee team up to lead the charge. We

are looking for new plant sales Coordinator (s) this fall.

Our Lead Mentor (Dorothee) keeps us all informed and the Intern program rolling along with planning and co-ordination of our course planning committee. She is also our past-president and Program Management Committee chair to mention a few roles. We are fortunate to have such an enthusiastic and knowledgeable member. This is a position that might interest some members as Dorothee, as Lead Mentor, will be standing down at the end of her current term. Although the lead mentor is not a board position it is certainly helpful to have them in our meetings to keep us all knowledgeable. Dorothee is looking forward to mentoring the new lead-mentor for the next fiscal year!

I don't want to prattle on too long here because we have a newsletter to read but this is just a taste of what happens at the board level, and in between all of our committee contributors, Continuing Education (Jan), Garden Advice Line (Debbie), Membership (Debbie), Badge Officer (Gail), VIRC Coordinator (Richard), Digital Committee, Webmaster (Cameron), Event Photographers (Marion and Dianne), Newsletter (Jan and Marion Waters) and our Archivist/Historians (Marion and April).

I hope you find learning about the number of contributors helpful when considering your own contribution and participation in the operation and administration of our organization.

So have a look around, thank all those folks for what they do and think about your area of interest. Perhaps consider teaming up with another member to take on a role or board position as the new Lead Mentor Team, Plant Sales Coordinator(s), President, Secretary, or Nanaimo District Rep. (ideally suited for Interns wanting to get to know other members) All incumbents will be mentoring you and are very happy to let you know how much fun it is and what is involved in the many roles. VIMGA WANTS YOU!

See you all at the June 25 social gathering.

-Mike



One of the very successful clinics at the Beban Learning Gardens: May 25, > 2024, Mariah Wilde, Jill Williamson, Dorothee Kieser





## Intern Update

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



Of the 28 students who took the Advanced Gardening Class, all but 5 have joined VIMGA as interns. Each student has been assigned a continuing mentor and a plant ID mentor. Hopefully they all will thrive as interns. It appears that most have gotten in many of their advice hours and are doing well.

We have received the class & mentor program evaluation from VIU and toward the end of summer we will start planning for the 2026 class.

NOTE: That I will be part of the planning group with VIU, however a new Lead Mentor will need to be found.

*Get together at Dorothee's*

On April 6 Dorothee Kieser hosted new interns and VIMGA members at her place for a get together and a little education session. Great to meet the new interns.



And the chickens of course!

# VIMGA Plant Sales



Two great events: Thanks to all plant donors

Thanks to all of you who donated interesting, healthy, lovely plants to the two big VIMGA sales. The first sale, organized by the Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society was held on April 20 and brought in \$620.80 for VIMGA. Plants left over from the MARS sale went to the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society sale on May 11 and brought in \$ 457.20. So... in total, thanks to all the donation by VIMGA members, our association received \$ 1078.00. Well done everyone and thanks to all who helped bring it off.

And one last thing: Ruth and Dorothee have been the organizers for these sales for the past 3 years. We are stepping down from that position and hope that someone(s) will take it on. We are of course happy to help and show you the ropes.



At the Mt. Arrowsmith  
Rhodo Society Sale in  
Qualicum

At the Nanaimo Rhodo  
Society Sale in Nanaimo



## *A Mystery.....*

Gerry Moore one of our 2024 Interns suggested this "mystery" :



**Found near Enos lake (Nanoose) on the ground in a grove of old-growth cedars with a few maples and alders mixed in.**



Answer on page 12



## Area Updates

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

Parksville/Qualicum/NanOOSE have completed most of the scheduled clinics. The next clinic we will be attending is at the Milner Garden Plant Sale September 21 and 22.

We have been busy with GAPS this spring. Five have been concluded with five more scheduled. We have had applications from three different Strata communities for guidance with their garden questions. This is something new for our District.

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



PQN held a meeting/social with our members at Jean Carr's home on April 3/24. Interns were given a short clinic on how to sign up for various face-to-face events, how to record hours etc. GALs, GAPS, Frequently asked Questions, and Quick Picks were all explained to them. We marked the completion of their exam (only the day before) with a celebratory cake!

PQN has 22 members with 8 interns. In addition to their clinic hours, interns are volunteering in a variety of ways such as: in the Food Garden at Milner (3) and the Propagation group (1) and VIRL (1) etc.

PQN has received 42 RSVP's to date for our VIMGA social picnic at Rath Trevor Park June 25/24 at 4 p.m. We are looking forward to a lovely get together with everyone! Please RSVP if you have not done so.

*- Norma and Jean*



## 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



# Broom Plants Gone to Seed.

## What Can We Do NOW???



Submitted by Joanne Sales, Executive Director of Broombusters  
Invasive Plant Society

The bright yellow blooms of Scotch broom are gone, and now masses of seed pods are hanging from the branches. Each plant produces close to 18,000 seeds, which are viable in the soil for the next 70 years.

Broombusters stop cutting once the seed pods form, because we don't want to spread the seeds and because piles are a bad idea as we enter fire season. But so much broom remains. What can we do to stop the spread of this alien aggressive invader?

Spring, mid-April to end-May, is the best time to cut broom because the roots are at their weakest point with the energy of the plant above the ground making flowers. The flowers themselves are harmless. If cut properly, the dry heat of summer will stress and kill the broom plant. Fortunately, roots and plant fragments of broom do not re-root.

Broom that is cut properly in June will still die during the dry heat of summer. But we must weigh whether it is better to cut now or wait until next spring. Three things to consider: Will cutting now increase fire danger? Spread seeds? Be most effective? Let's talk about that.

On farms, private property and areas far away from public travel, broom can be cut and stacked on top of itself in an already infested area. Small piles only! Chop it small so it settles down quickly. It will disappear as compost does, or you can burn it next fall when rains return. Do not drag the broom over broom-free areas.

What about pulling? Even with the light rains that we have had, the soil is drying out. Careful pulling of small broom can help keep broom from getting established, but it is best done when the soil is wet. Only pull broom that has a diameter *smaller* than a pencil. It should only have a thin single root with few branches and should come easily out of the ground. Pulling broom with a larger root will disturb the soil, exposing hundreds of seeds from previous years – and those seeds will sprout in the sun! What can you do next fall? Pull the small broom, anywhere and everywhere. You can usually just drop it.

I hope that helps. Broom is a volatile flash fuel. It harms our pollinators, creating a feast or famine situation, as it forms dense monocultures which crowd out the native species on which bees and birds have depended for millennia.

There are many problems over which we have no control. But Scotch broom in our communities? We can do this! Check Broombusters' website for more details. [www.broombusters.org](http://www.broombusters.org). See you next spring!



# Companion Planting

Submitted by Marion Waters

*Reprinted with permission from Campbell River Mirror*



Does companion planting actually work?

Trends abound in gardening. In the 1990's many gardeners planned their entire vegetable gardens based on companion planting. Tantalizing claims abounded for improved growth and production, pest control, and happier plants. Some were even based on actual evidence. Was it just a passing fad or is companion planting still worth considering?

Companion planting is the practice of placing different plant species in close proximity to one another so that one or both can benefit. One famous example is the Three Sisters combination. First Nations peoples discovered benefits in growing corn, beans, and squashes close together. Corn stalks provided support for the bean vines. Broad squash leaves shaded the roots of all three plants and also helped prevent loss of moisture. Beans boosted the nitrogen in the soil, providing additional nutrients for the corn and squash, both heavy "feeders".

There are so many factors to consider when planting a vegetable garden. Which area provides the right amount of sunlight? Will the plant shade or overpower other plants nearby? And what about crop rotation? Companion planting adds yet another layer of complexity. However, without getting too obsessed with perfect pairings, adding a few key plants will truly improve your vegetable and fruit production.

It may be helpful to think in broad-

er strokes. For example, salad greens need a bit of shade during hot weather so why not plant them beside taller plants (such as peas) that will provide that shade? Squashes, cucumbers, tomatoes, beans, and berries all need pollinators to produce fruit, so it makes sense to plant flowers that attract pollinators close to those crops. Some flowers give added value in that they also lure pests. These are called trap crops. Nasturtiums and calendula are good trap crops for aphid-loving plants such as brassicas and roses. The flowers may suffer a bit but your prized plants will benefit. Sweet alyssum attracts beneficial lacewings that eat aphids. All three of these flowers reseed themselves. Filling empty spaces with sprawling ground covers like alyssum suppresses weeds and prevents soil erosion. Flowers also confound some predators. The profusion of scents, colours, and textures confuses some predatory insects so they have more trouble finding the vegetables they are after. Borage, sunflowers, and lavender attract ladybugs whose larvae eat aphids. Simply expanding the variety of species in your garden by planting a mix of annual, perennial, and woody plants can significantly reduce many pest species.

Some plants repel pests with their odor. Garlic repels many pests that prey upon roses, cucumbers, peas, lettuce and celery. Chives deter aphids, mites, and flies and also improve the growth of carrots. Oregano, rosemary, and sage all have insect-repelling qualities. Dill and coriander feed beneficial in-

sects such as parasitic wasps that attack aphids, whiteflies, and spider mites. Another benefit of companion planting is improved flavour. Basil is reported to boost the growth and enhance the taste of tomatoes, peppers, and lettuce if they are grown in close proximity. Chives enhance the flavour of carrots. Learn more about companion planting and get a free chart from:

[www.almanac.com/companion-planting-guide-vegetables](http://www.almanac.com/companion-planting-guide-vegetables)

Even without precise placement, a selection of flowers and herbs scattered throughout your vegetable garden will attract pollinators and beneficial insects, which will increase the success of your crops. Choose flowers that are rich in pollen such as those already mentioned – plus sunflowers, marigolds, and cosmos. These companions will add waves of colour, scent, texture, and movement to your vegetable patch and freshen your home with cut flowers. Who doesn't need companions like that?





# Grow Your Own Crunchy Cucumbers

Submitted by Marion Waters

*Reprinted with permission from Campbell River Mirror*



Crisp, mildly sweet, and refreshingly watery, cucumbers picked at peak ripeness are a delight on a hot day. For a few dollars spent on seeds or starter plants, you can reap high yields that will rival the infamous zucchini.

Cucumbers (*Cucumis sativus*) are a warm-weather crop. Like tomatoes, peppers, and squashes, they grow best when soil temperatures are above 15 C. Wait for those balmy days in June before planting out your starter plants or seedlings. If necessary, transfer to larger pots as you wait for conditions to be right.

But let's begin at the beginning. Cucumbers are easy to grow from seeds. If May and June are particularly warm, you can even direct-sow them. Prepare your site by amending with compost or composted manure. Place a cut-off milk jug over each seedling to trap in warmth and moisture until the plants have outgrown the space. However, a few seeds sown outdoors always go missing, either due to birds or rodents or your own pets and kids! Sowing the seeds into pots and placing them in a protected area may be more cost-effective. A greenhouse, cold frame, sunny south-facing window, or protected porch can all work. Use a heat pad underneath the seed tray to speed up germination. (Heat pads are costly but well worth the investment if you enjoy growing your own plants from seed and you don't have a heated greenhouse.) You may wish to do a second sowing two-to-three weeks after the first sowing. This second

batch of plants will produce well into September when your initial plants may be dying off.

Choose varieties according to your needs and growing situation. If you like to make pickles, then grow pickling cucumbers. They can also be eaten fresh but have firmer skins and are smaller than slicer varieties. Grow some seedless slicing cucumbers as well. Choose the "burpless" variety for obvious reasons but also because they tend to be less bitter. If pickles are bitter, it may be because the plant is stressed due to excessive heat and/or inadequate water. Cut off about 2 cm next to the stem and peel more deeply than you normally would and they can still be eaten. You may wish to grow a quirky variety just for fun such as heirloom lemon cucumbers or curled Asian long cucumbers.

Seeds take about three to four weeks to grow robust enough to plant out (watch for that third serrated leaf to show), and fifty to seventy days of warm weather to reach harvest. Don't forget to harden them off; leave seedlings out in the open for an increasing number of hours over a period of a few days to a week. This acclimatizes them to cooler temperatures, wind, and direct sunlight. Cucumber vines can be left to meander over a huge space like squashes. However, you will probably get better results if you train them to grow upwards onto a fence or trellis. Keeping the vines and fruit off the ground keeps them away from dampness and may help prevent leaf rust

and rotting fruit.

They also get better sun exposure and can be planted closer together, about 30 cm (1 foot) apart. Bush varieties are ideal for pots but can also be grown in the garden if there are limited options for vertical growth.

Cucumbers are shallow-rooted plants and therefore need frequent watering. Avoid getting water on the leaves. Mulch well to hold warmth and moisture in and to shade the roots during hotter days. Cucumber plants do not like to be too wet or too dry. Long hot spells with inadequate watering can shut the plant down and lead to a disappointing crop. They are also heavy feeders and will need regular top-ups of compost or composted manure.

Stems produce tendrils, leaves, blossoms, and new branches all from the same junction. Pinch out some of the new branches to prevent too much spreading, particularly down low to the ground. This also allows more of the plant's energy to be used in fruit production. Pinch out tips of leading stems once they have reached the top of your supports.

Harvest cucumbers regularly before they get too big (not more than 5 cm or 2 inches in diameter). Fruits left to turn yellow will set seeds and the plant may shut down its production. The more you harvest, the more the plant will continue to produce. Refreshing, low in calories and offering many health benefits, cucumbers can be added to salads, smoothies, dips, pickles, drinks, and soups.



Hello All:

VIMGA members have been invited to have a walk through Parnassian woods to learn about plants, trees, and ecosystems. The walk will be led by Susan Fisher, a former Master Gardener, who heads the NALT Native Plant Nursery. Susan describes it as follows: *An interpretive walk at the Parnassian Woods, the property where our NALT nursery is located. We would combine it with a native plant nursery tour. Our walks are on single file trails, level ground, through the forest and at nearby ponds. We limit the participant number to about 10 so that everyone can hear.*

*The session would be approximately 1.5 hours and covers ~3 km.*

The date is set for August 10 with a 9:30 start.

The Nanaimo Area Land Trust (NALT) Nursery is located at **3145 Frost Road, Nanaimo, BC V9X 1S7** and more info can be found at <https://nalt.bc.ca/native-plant-nursery/>

Since the number of participants is limited, the first 10 members who email me ([dorotheekieser@shaw.ca](mailto:dorotheekieser@shaw.ca)) will get a spot. If later on you need to cancel, please let me know so that the spot can be given to someone else on the wait list.

## Pictures from our talented VIMGA members



Red lilly



Sparrow chicks



Carol's roses



Rosa rugos



artichoke



Furrow Bee



Yellow-fronted bee

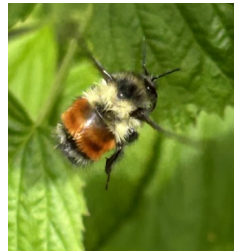


Mason Bee

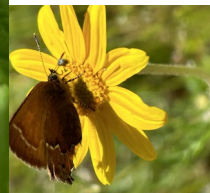
### Gerry Moore pics



Western



Orange Rumped



Juniper Hairstreak

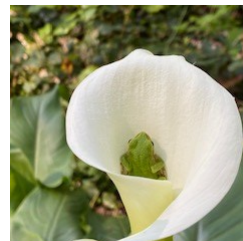


Fuzzy horned bee



Coral Sunset Peony

Norma Kilpatrick's pride and Joy. The first of many blooms.



Do you know the name of this frog? Pic by Fern Heitkamp



# 2024 Fall into Gardening

*“Planning for the Future”*

**MARS** (Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society), **NRS** (Nanaimo Rhododendron Society), and **VIMGA** (Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association) are pleased to offer a day of education and enjoyment with internationally recognized gardening experts.

**Tickets: \$25 in advance or \$30 at the door**

See NRS website for details about how to register in September: <http://nanaimorhodos.ca/>

**Date: Sunday, October 27, 2024**

**Location:** Qualicum Beach Civic Centre  
747 Jones St. Qualicum Beach, B.C. V9K 1S7

**Time:** 10:00 AM to 3:30 PM

10:00 AM – 10:05 AM	Introductory Remarks
10:05 AM – 11:00 AM	Nancy Moore: “Creating Microclimates and Appropriate Tree Selection for Small Gardens”
11:00 AM – 11:20 AM	Break
11:20 AM – 12:15 PM	Daniel Mosquin: “Using Science to Inform Gardening Decisions”
12:15 PM – 1:15 PM	Lunch
1:15 PM – 2:10 PM	Steve Hootman: “Interesting New Rhododendron Species for Changing Gardens”
2:10 PM – 2:30 PM	Break
2:30 PM – 3:25 PM	Jeff de Jong: “A Garden Revival – Design for a Sustainable Landscape”
3:25 PM – 3:30 PM	Closing Remarks

**Refreshments:** coffee, tea, and treats will be provided. **Please bring your own bag lunch.**





## Answer to Gerry Moore's Mystery

The Collared Earthstar Mushroom that is found in the Pacific Northwest is most often found in coniferous forests, but sometimes you will see them in maple and alder groves.

If you cut through a young fruit body, you will see that the interior is white, but it gradually turns into a dark brown powdery mass as the spores mature. Spores are emitted from the apical hole as the wind blows across it, much larger puffs of spores escape when raindrops hit and compress the spore sac. Collared Earthstars are larger than other Earthstar species, and they have a spore sac diameter of up to 6 cm and arms that can reach 15 cm when fully outstretched. A sac forms in the center, a hole on the top of the sac deploys spores when the wind blows across it or raindrops fall upon it.

When fully expanded the rays of these mushrooms more than double their diameter. The number of star rays is very variable with 5 to 8 being the most common. Earthstars are generally found under coniferous trees, often on sloping rather than flat ground.

They fruit after rain in late summer and autumn but can be found all year round.

<https://gohiking.ca/plants/mushrooms/non-edible-mushrooms/collared-earthstar-mushroom/>



Collared Earthstar  
Mushroom, Vancouver  
Island, BC, Photo By  
Robert Logan



*Have a great and restful summer.*

*- Jan Thorsen & Marion Waters, newsletter co-editors*