

CULTIVATING COMMUNITY

Issue 17

www.vimga.org

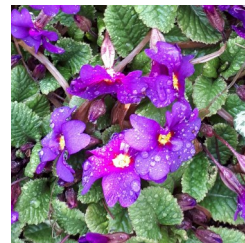
April 2025



Editor's Letter

Greetings VIMGA members,

I don my gardening clothes and step outside during a rare dry moment. Within minutes, a few tolerable droplets progress into another deluge. I am itching to get down and play in the dirt but it's simply too sloppy for that. Rain is good, I chant to myself as I head back inside.



I browse a few websites and begin to notice that not all of those slick videos are filmed in faultless weather. I also remember Jeff de Jong (at Fall into Gardening) stating that he is out in his garden almost every day of the year! Ok, I admit I'm a fair-weather gardener. But - I reason with myself - maybe if I plug away at general garden maintenance now, it will free up more time later when the weather improves and it seems like everything needs to be done at once. So, I set about creating a list of jobs to tackle on soggy days and it's a much longer list than I anticipated!

I'm sure there must be other "fair-weather friends" out there. Maybe something on my list will help nudge you into action.

I wish you joyous spring gardening in all kinds of weather! - *Marion*

Indoor tasks:

Paint a bench
Grow seedlings under a grow light
Repair a windchime
Feed and tend houseplants
Sharpen and oil tools
Tidy a shed
Clean plant pots
Fill pots with container mix ready to plant
Shop for plants and seeds
Read gardening books
Watch how-to videos

Outdoors between weather events:

Do some light pruning
Cut forsythia branches to bloom indoors
Cut back any remaining dead stalks and flower heads
Use an edge tool to tidy up beds
Remove invasives
Lay our cardboard/tarp on areas you are planning to clear
Clean your greenhouse
Set up rain barrels!
Take note of soggy areas to improve

drainage when things are drier

Use a long-handled stirrup hoe to get under weeds
Pick a spring bouquet

And When I'm Feeling Tough Enough:

Plant trees and shrubs
Move trees and shrubs
Divide perennials (and plant up some for the **VIMGA PLANT SALES!**)

In this issue....

President's Message.....	2
Spring Education Day.....	3
Clinic Data Team.....	4
Horticultural Hero(ines).....	5-6
Area Updates.....	7-8

Rose Pruning Notes.....	9
No digging—no kidding!.....	10
VIMGA Plant Sales.....	11
Upcoming Garden Events & Plant Sales.....	12

President's Message

VIMGA Newsletter – March 2025 Presidents Notes

Coming off our very successful SED on March 8, 2025, we now head into a very active 2025 volunteer season. With 108 of 133 scheduled clinics still to come our members are going to be busy serving our communities throughout the coming 2025 season.

I have not as yet seen the statistics for views but I hope you have all shared Linda Gilkenson's presentation posted on our web site for the public to view. This video will only be available until April 8th and I hope many have taken advantage of Linda's generosity in allowing us to present it through our web site. Also thank you Cameron for putting it up on the site.



Mike, President

president@vimga.org

Aside from all our regular events taking place we have what has been our biggest fund raiser of the year coming up. Together with the Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society, (MARS), this plant sale will take place April 19 at the Qualicum Curling Centre from 9am to 1pm. I want to encourage members to donate plants for sale to the public at this event.

Celebrating our members is something we never seem to spend enough time on! This year we will celebrate members with 15, 20, and 30 years of service at our November 2025 AGM together with graduating our 2024 interns and much more. I want to remind you all to look around for nominations for our 2025 Silver Spade award and our graduating interns give some thought to applying for our bursary award for 2 graduates in the amount of \$500 later in the year.

In closing I want to thank our members for their contributions to our success in service. Many hands make for light work and we have 148 working hard to provide outstanding service to our communities from Mill Bay to Campbell River.

Happy Gardening, *Mike*



Two New Certified Master Gardeners- Congratulations! Mariah and Peter!

At Spring Education Day, we could celebrated a very special event: Two interns of the 2024 class had already completed all their requirements to become Certified Master Gardeners (CMG). I am sure that is a first: to complete everything in under a year of finishing the Advanced Gardening Course.

Hopefully all other interns from the 2024 class will graduate at the Fall AGM, having completed their 65 volunteer hours, 25 Plant ids and for 2025, 10 education hours. We all look forward to the new CMGs be part of VIMGA. To graduate, please make sure that all requirements are completed by mid-September so that VIU can issue the certificates.

Happy gardening season!- *Dorothee*



VIMGA's Spring Education Day

Saturday, March 8, 2025



VIMGA Continuing Education Committee

Thank you all for attending the Spring Education Day March 8. The evaluation forms show that it was a success! During our debrief we came up with some ideas:

1) Coffee, tea and water was on a lot of gardeners minds. We are hoping that we can remedy this by forming a hospitality team. If you are interested in being part of a hospitality team at future meetings we are looking for you.

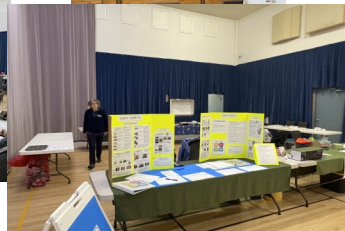
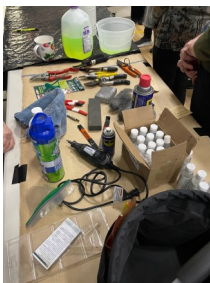
2) Ideas for future meetings:

- Are you doing any experiments this year? If so, please start taking pictures and documenting your trials and tribulations. Then do a short 10 minute talk at the AGM.

I am going to grow peppers 3 different ways – I have started taking pictures and taking notes. Hopefully I will have some peppers to harvest!!

- Do you have an idea that you would like to present at our HOW TO demonstration circle? Are you proficient in some aspect of gardening that others will be interested in?

Because you commented that it was too rushed, we are extending the time at each station to 30 minutes. If you are interested in joining the Continuing Education Committee, helping out at a meeting or doing a talk or presentation, please send a message to Ruth or Jan. cec@vimga.org



North Island Group

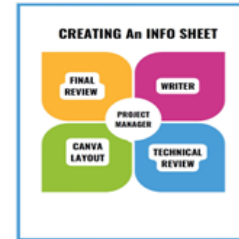


Clinic Data Team

It was great to talk to so many of you at SED. Thank you for stopping by to learn about the InfoSheets and how to become involved. The InfoSheets are answers to the public's most commonly asked questions raised at our clinics.

The Clinic Data Team sends a BIG THANK YOU to the authors of our current Info-Sheets:

- Are any plants really deer proof? – Gerry
- What kind of mulch is best? – Deb & Gerry
- How can I support local pollinators? – Gerry
- What are the basic pruning cuts? - Deb
- Can I use my phone to identify this plant? – Norma & Jean
- What is the best method for transplanting trees, shrubs & perennials? (a) Root washing - Deb
- What is the best method for transplanting trees, shrubs & perennials? (b) Transplanting - Deb
- How do I grow geranium cuttings? – Gerry & Diane



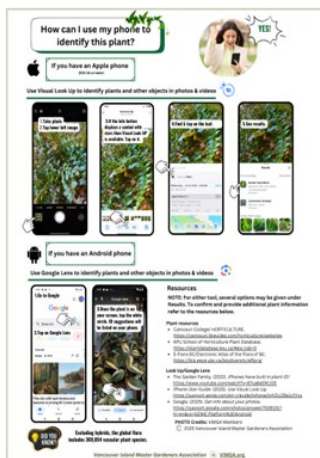
We also wish to thank those members who stepped up to undertake the very important work of reviewing these [Info Sheets](#). The ideas & suggestions of our reviewers are key to ensuring the Info Sheets are factual, engaging, and grammatically correct. A SPECIAL THANK YOU is extended to the following reviewers: Beth, Dorothee, Jen, Jo, Deb, Jean, and Norma.

Cameron's timely technical support is also much appreciated.

If YOU are INTERESTED in writing about one of the clinic questions or perhaps you have a passion topic of your own, reach out to Norma or Gerry. Likewise, reach out if you feel your TALENT/INTEREST is more in the areas of review or layout. Spring & Summer are busy times of year, so Autumn & Winter are also great times to get involved.

Look forward to hearing from you.

Norma, Jean, Jo, Deb & Gerry



BROAD QUESTIONS FROM THE 2024 VIMGA CLINIC DATA

- How do I grow & care for blueberries?
- How do I plant & care for strawberries?
- How do I grow & care for apples?
- How do I prune raspberries?
- Can fruit trees & shrubs be grown in containers?
- What are common weeds?/ What is the best way to remove them?
- How & when do I divide bulbs, corms, rhizomes?
- How do I take care of rhododendrons?
- How do I care for clematis?
- How do I care for hydrangeas?
- Why aren't my irises blooming?
- How do I grow asparagus?
- What do I need to know about growing tomatoes?
- What do I have to do to grow garlic?
- What should I do so my fig tree produces fruit?
- What pests eat cabbage related veggies?
- General planting advice
- What is this plant?
- What do I need to know about soil? My plants are sad.
- What type of raised beds work well?
- What are lawn alternatives?
- I have wireworms. What should I do?
- What is causing tipping on my plant leaves?
- What can I do about slugs?

Horticultural Hero(ines)



Our Horticultural Heroine for this newsletter is Linda Derkach. Our introduction to this hard working and generous member of our VIMGA is by another long time member, Chris Southwick.

"What an interview can't tell you is how amazingly intelligent, dedicated and hard working Linda is. She has been quietly influential in helping to create success for the MGABC, VIMGA and the many organizations she is associated with. She is kind, caring and generous. She is an amazing wife, mother and grandmother. She doesn't suffer fools gladly and she is relentless in working to improve things where she feels strongly that change is required. She is fearless and forthright, has integrity and grit – a woman to be admired and praised for her self-effacing dedicated leadership.

Her life's work was laying the foundations of support within government for people with disabilities by creating the policies and procedures to support those who truly need support. Her knowledge and experience with policy and bylaws underpins many of the organizations we work with today. She has guided many groups, offering advice and examples for groups to follow.

She was the secretary of MGABC for many, many years and was instrumental in forming VIMGA. It would be worth checking with the MGABC folks to find out exactly how many years she was secretary of MGABC. Her organizational skills are legendary. Her MARS bus trips, MARS Garden Tours and leadership of successful ARS conferences are just some examples of those skills."

Where did you grow up? Victoria BC among the Garry Oak meadows, native spring flowers, rocks and wild spaces.

Earliest garden memory? In my mother's garden holding iris and tulip competitions when I was 4.

Career(s) before/after retiring?

- Teacher
- Public Administration (Executive Director, Port Alberni Association for Community Living),
- School Trustee - Port Alberni
- Public Guardian and Trustee of BC to implement new legislation

First plant love? The trees and native plants of a Garry Oak Meadow - Camas and erythroniums growing around Victoria and in Beacon Hill Park and in wild spaces; Garry Oak trees.

Gardening organizations that you have belonged/belong to? VIMGA, Mt. Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society (MARS), Alpine Gardeners of Central Vancouver Island, Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Garden Society, North America Rock Garden Society, Royal Horticultural Society, American Rhododendron Society (ARS)

Awards?

- MGABC Golden Trowel
- ARS Silver Medal
- ARS Bronze Medal



Linda Derkach's Beautiful Garden



VIMGA positions you have held? Secretary, Director, Master Planner, MGABC Rep, MGABC Education Director

Current positions? (including other gardening organizations).

- President, American Rhododendron Society
- Secretary, Alpine Gardeners of Central Vancouver Island
- Newsletter Editor and Director, MARS

I'm glad to see her love of native plants shining through her answers. -Chris

When did you start your own garden? My first garden around age 12 was an attempt to replicate the native areas around Victoria by including ferns, moss, erythroniums. It was marginally successful as most native plants do not want to be disturbed or transplanted.

Horticultural hero/mentor? My mother, Joan Rich, Pam Harrison

Favourite garden that influenced you?

- Finnerty Gardens at UVic
- Beacon Hill Park – the native spaces where the camas grows
- Sissinghurst in England
- Many of the wonderful gardens in England



Most valuable training? The VIMGA Basic Training Program followed by the Advanced MG Training at Van Deusen

Favourite weed you're happy to have in your garden? Anything that provides pollen or nectar to the pollinators and other insects – beneficial or not

Favourite plants? Native plants especially *Ribes sanguineum*, Erythroniums, Trilliums, *Oemleria cerasiformis* (Indian Plum) *Arbutus unedo* 'Compacta'; rhododendron species

Favourite planting style? Informal; more influenced now by what grows well here, and what is not too attractive to the bunnies and deer

One thing every gardener can do to be more sustainable? Reduce the amount of grass in your yard; incorporate native plants in your garden; include plants that give the pollinators a long season of pollen and nectar from early spring blooming to late summer and autumn; reduce your water usage

What principles guide your attitude to gardening? Do no harm to any of the creatures that we share our gardens with, from the microbes in the soil to the pollinators, beneficials, birds and even the non-beneficials

Advice to future Master gardeners?

- Understand that you will never know everything; you will be learning your whole life; that there is not just one right answer to anything (almost)
- Listen to others and their experiences
- Take every opportunity to learn and grow – even if you've heard it before.

Future hopes for VIMGA?

- I think VIMGA is going in the right direction with many dedicated leaders and lots of learning opportunities
- I would like VIMGA to offer continuing education as often as possible.
- Our new trainees have a lot to learn; the 12-week course is just the beginning and members need years of experience to be able to advise others

Is there a 'hort hero' you would like to honour?

Area Updates

North Island District Rep

—Marion

ni-rep@vimga.org

The Comox Valley Horticultural Society reached out to us, and we are now producing articles for their newsletter on how to grow food in backyard gardens. The two Marions are collaborating on this, the idea of food sustainability is no doubt on everyone's mind these days and we hope to inspire both novice and experienced gardeners to have a go at this. A number of our members were able to attend the SED on March 8th, and want to thank the organizers for all their hard work putting this together. The educational component was great and we appreciated being able to meet up with members from up and down the Island.

Marion is the District Rep for North Island



Marion

VIMGA Qualicum/Parksville District Reps - Norma & Jean

pqn-rep@vimga.org



With the spring graduation of two of our interns, we now have 12 CMGs, 4 Alumnis, 1 lifetime member and three interns.

So far, we've participated in three Seedy Saturday/Sunday events in our community. The events were fun and well attended. This year, we will be expanding our presence at the Qualicum Beach Farmers market by having clinics throughout the summer to help answer gardening questions at the peak of the growing season.

We're also busy with planning some educational displays in the Milner Food garden as a part of our collaborative project with Milner Gardens and Woodlands.

In addition to a full slate of clinics, some members are also working behind the scenes in different committees supporting various projects. It's looking like another busy year!

For our next district get together, we will be taking a tour through Milner gardens with some of our members acting as guides and maybe a visit to the tea house if we're lucky.

Jean and Norma, Co Reps for Parksville, Qualicum Beach and NanOOSE district



Kathy and Marion at Campbell River Seedy Sunday



Cowichan District Rep - cow-rep@vimga.org

Cowichan is well on its way in 2025, having completed 4 advice clinics so far! The last one was at Duncan Seedy Sunday on March 23rd and included 4 of our members: Meredith, Lousie, Jennifer, Gwen and Louise. It was a great event.

We are busy planning our 'Celebrating VIMGA 2025 Picnic' to be held at Transfer Beach on July 29th.

Ute is the District Rep for Cowichan



Ute



VIMGA Summer Picnic 2025

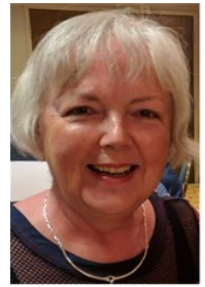
Save the Date!

July 29, 4 – 7 PM

**Transfer Beach
Ladysmith**

Rose Pruning Notes

By Beth Walrond



Beth

At our recent Spring Education Day, I gave a short talk on pruning shrub roses. Here are notes from that talk.

The clothes that you wear are important to protect yourself from being scratched by the thorny rose bushes. Long sleeves with smooth material that won't catch on the rose thorns are best to wear. As well as thick gardening gloves with an over the wrist design will help protect you.

The disease often associated with rose thorns is Sporotrichosis, also known as "rose gardener's disease," a fungal skin infection caused by the fungus *Sporothrix schenckii*. It can be treated with a topical antifungal cream. Reference AI from internet.

Clean your pruning tools with oil-based hand sanitizer. Sharp tools work best, of course. Lee Valley has a great little sharpener. You will need a variety of tools, needle point pruners, secateurs, long handled by-pass loppers, one or two saws.

With your tools clean and sharp, your arms and hands protected, now you are ready to begin pruning. Next, inspect the plant. Look at the structure of the branches, look for evidence of disease, I hope you don't find any. And note branches that are crossed or very close together. These diseased, crossed, broken branches are the first to be taken out.

After that, cut down the remaining branches to about 2 feet. Then stand back and look again. Cut out any branches that are too close together. The goal here is to create space between the branches. Make the cuts above an outward facing growth nodule with an angled cut. Everything you do is to create space for air movement in the shrub

and room for this year's vigorous growth. By the end of the pruning, you should have 3 to 5 evenly spaced healthy branches. When cutting out the branches you will need to use the long handled loopers to reach in past the thorns of the other branches.

When finished be sure to clean up all the debris, of course. One more task is to spray with the lime-sulphur spray that you would use on your fruit trees. This will greatly reduce black spot. To help the plant fertilize with a high nitrogen product to help the new growth. Our heavy rains really deplete the soil. Fertilize once a month with a good organic fertilizer until July. Then let the plants begin their winter preparations. You don't want tender new growth at the end of the season which would be damaged by frost. In the fall, pick off the rose leaves; over winter they may develop black spot.

Some rose bushes, like South Africa can overtake the garden without hard pruning. Be assured the pruning will keep the plant healthy and promote vigorous growth.



No digging – no kidding! By Marion Waters

Reprinted with permission from the Campbell River Mirror.

Here's a dirt story (as opposed to a dirty story). A friend informed me she had given up vegetable gardening. She had created her garden a few years earlier by tilling a patch of lawn, covering it with topsoil and proceeding with her planting. That summer, she was rewarded with bumper crops that she delighted in sharing around the neighbourhood. Inspired by her success, my friend continued this routine for a few more years: tilling, adding topsoil, planting. She noticed the productivity was not quite as amazing the second year and steadily diminished thereafter until, she declared, 'It just wasn't worth it anymore.'

Rototilling the garden each spring used to be standard procedure for gardeners. A weedy, lumpy garden bed could be transformed: amendments easily incorporated, weeds obliterate, and clods churned into a workable consistency. In recent years, however, research is showing that there are few advantages to tilling or shovel turning. Furthermore, these practices can be detrimental to the health of your soil.

The top few centimeters (3-4 in.) of soil host a thriving ecosystem of fungi, microbes, worms, insects, even rodents. All play their part in breaking down organic matter and transforming it into nutrients essential for plant growth. Their movements aerate the soil, creating space for air and water to circulate. This top layer of soil is warmer than the soil below. Tilling and digging disrupts this network, burying its inhabitants deeper into a colder, less habitable region. Turning the soil also turns up buried weed seeds which will quickly germinate when brought to the surface. Disturbed soil also releases more carbon dioxide.

You may well wonder how on earth a gardener can plant anything without disturbing the soil? Remember, the goal is to disturb as little as possible. Avoid lifting and turning the soil. Planting seeds or seedlings will have little impact if the soil is moved only enough to accommodate them. Planting holes are also spaced apart, so the soil network around them remains mostly intact. When adding amendments such as compost or manures, use a digging fork or rake to lightly break the surface and allow the amendments to begin mixing with the soil. If your soil has a high clay content, it may be necessary to sink the fork down into the soil and rock it back and forth here and there to improve aeration.

Planting trees and shrubs will, obviously, require some digging and disruption of the soil, but again it will only affect that space and not the whole sur-

rounding area. Adding in organic matter when you plant will help restore the balance.

Having said all of that, there are some circumstances where tilling is still useful. For example, if you wish to start a garden bed in an area where the soil is extremely compacted. You could try aerating the area with a digging fork, then covering it with a thick layer of organic matter, and waiting for the microbial layer to develop and work its way into the compaction. But this may take a lot longer than desired. Also, compacted soil does not absorb water easily, so a good rainstorm could wash away most of your amendments. Tilling just enough to break up the compaction might be the answer. Similarly, if you are preparing a patch of ground for a walkway or patio, some digging and disturbance of the soil will be inevitable.

My property is full of rocks of all sizes. Sometimes when I dig a hole to plant something, I encounter a rock which turns out to be the size of a sack of potatoes. By the time I have extricated it, I am faced with a gaping hole. Removing all rocks is simply not necessary but a boulder lurking just under the surface will interfere with plant growth, so I feel it's better to dig it out and do my best to help the soil recover afterwards.

There is increasing evidence to support "no-dig" gardening. Protecting the soil structure allows the soil ecosystem to work its magic, building nutritious, aerated soil that promotes healthy plant growth. "No dig" also means less work – no kidding!



It's time for the MARs and NARs Plant Sales again!

These plant sales are the biggest fundraisers for VIMGA, raising over \$1000 last year that's put towards our annual education days.

Now is a good time to start dividing up plants or potting up seedlings. Please have your plants in pots and labelled.

Plants that sell well include:

- Perennials
- Small shrubs and trees
- Vegetable or ornamental seedlings
- Indoor plants

Plants to avoid include any that are the B.C. invasive species list:

<https://bcinvasives.ca/take-action/identify/>



There will be more specific district information coming to you from your area plant sale rep.

Organizing committee:

Jean PQN rep and Coordinator

Marion NI rep.

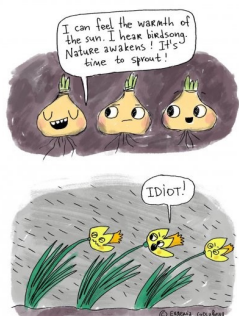
Mary COW rep.

Felix NAN rep

MARs Plant Show and Sale: April 19, 2025 <https://marsrhodos.ca/coming-events/truss-show/>

NARs Plant show and Sale: May 10, 2025 <http://nanaimorhodos.ca/truss-show/>

Pruning Workshop at Dorothee's March 27



Upcoming Garden Events & Sales



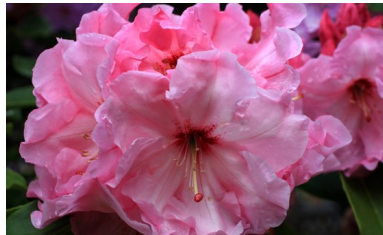
The Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society presents the Mother's Day Weekend **GARDEN TOUR**

Rhododendron 'Qalicum's Pride'
May 10 & 11, 2025

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

Tickets **\$20** (Cash please) on Sale April 21st
Tickets go on sale in April 2025

Check this website for where to purchase tickets:
<https://marsrhodos.ca/coming-events/garden-tour/>



 **APRIL 8**
~ 7:30 pm ~
~ Doors open at 7 ~
747 Jones St
(QB Civic Centre)

Healing Gardens
The Power of the Garden
for Healing
~ A personal, inspirational story ~
with
Jackie Morra

Guests \$5 / Yearly membership \$15
QualicumBeachGardenClub.ca
 qualicumbeachgardenclub

 **AN ONLINE WEBINAR**
**TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR
FOOD SUPPLY!**
**GROWING THE MOST
FOOD IN THE
SMALLEST SPACE
ALL YEAR ROUND**

With Gardening Expert
Linda Gilkeson

 **PAY
WHAT
YOU CAN**

**SUNDAY, APRIL 27, 2025
3PM-5PM | LIVE ON ZOOM**
Register: tinyurl.com/GrowYearRound

Victoria Cactus & Succulent Society
www.vcss.info

2025 Spring Show & Sale



Friday May 9, 12 - 7 pm
Saturday May 10, 10 - 4 pm

510 Mt View Ave., Colwood
(Church of the Advent)

FREE ADMISSION