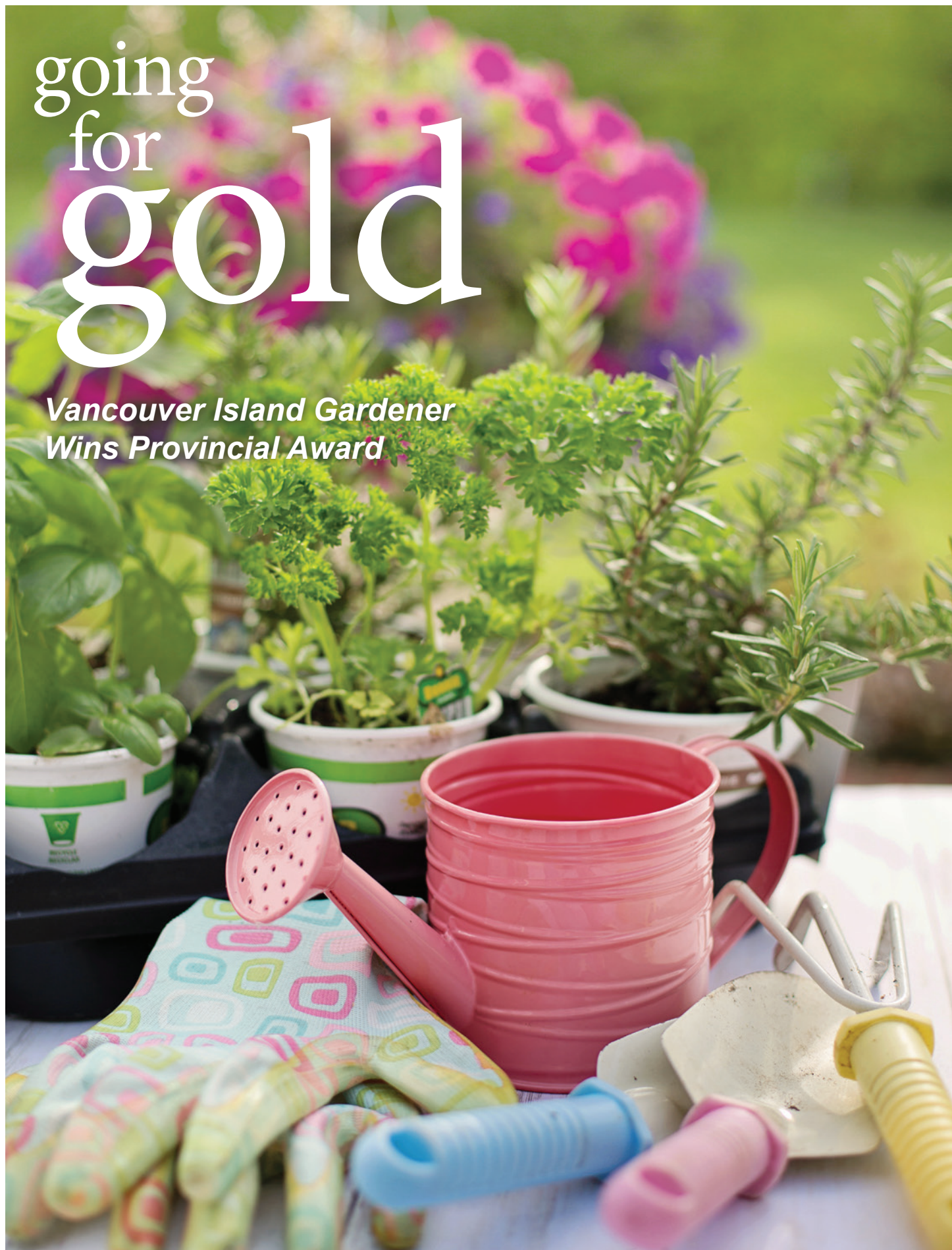


going for gold

*Vancouver Island Gardener
Wins Provincial Award*



by Beth Walrond

All around the province, thousands of people volunteer their time to help others learn to garden and grow food, fabulous flowers, herbs and steward the land in an environmentally beneficial way. Garden clubs and related organizations often give awards. This year is special as one of those fabulous Island volunteers won a provincial award.

In the Central Vancouver Island horticultural community, Dorothee Kieser is a Master Gardener well known for her work as an educator, leader and mentor. Garden enthusiasts whether beginners, students or experienced gardeners appreciate her outstanding qualities.

Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association (VIMGA), enthusiastically supported Dorothee's nomination for the provincial award which is given once a year by the Master Gardener's Association of BC. VIMGA has active volunteers from Cowichan Bay to Comox Valley.

The Master Gardener Association of British Columbia (MGABC) states the award will be given to a member "who has been recognized by their peers as an outstanding Master Gardener, has demonstrated extraordinary volunteer contributions to the MGABC and made a positive impact on the Association and service to the public." www.mgabc.org

Outstanding and extraordinary are key words here. When asked about the work and hours, Dorothee devotes to being the Lead Mentor for the Advanced Gardening Course which is organized jointly through Vancouver Island University and VIMGA, Dorothee gave the following comments:

"I thoroughly enjoyed being Lead mentor, even though it consumes a lot of time. During the 12 weeks of the Advanced

Gardening Course, the Lead Mentor needs to be there for 3 to 4 hours on Tuesday evenings and 3 to 4 hours on Saturday morning. Plus, there is a lot of "riding herd" to make sure the students have all the info they need, that they are introduced to their continuing mentor (who will accompany them and help until they graduate 18 months later) and the Plant ID mentor (who will make sure that their 25 plant ids are done well).

Regarding hours, Dorothee said, "Endless because there is also a fair bit of bookkeeping and more importantly, interaction with VIU to set up the course. We are working on the 2026 course

now and helping the course coordinator (hired by VIU, together with the speakers who are experts in their topics).

Who knows how many hours in total, because I also do the VIRL seminars and help with plant sales, do my advice hours and education hours? All fun & games though."

The Vancouver Island Regional Library (VIRL) describes the garden Seminars.

"Since 2021, we have partnered with the Vancouver Island Master Gardener's Association on the wildly popular Virtual Gardening Series. It's an opportunity for

the public to learn from volunteer Master Gardeners, who use current, science-based horticultural knowledge and integrated pest management practices to ensure the advice they offer exemplifies environmentally responsible practices and stewardship. It's also a chance for people to ask questions of the experts in real time." <https://virl.bc.ca/learn/skills/gardening/virtual-gardening/>

In a recent VIRL, garden seminar Richard Bernier, the co-ordinator commented that Dorothee's seminar *My Favourite Vegetables and How to Grow Them*, was the most viewed seminar. The seminars can be watched after the live event.



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In order to maintain certification every master gardener must do 15 hours of volunteer public education at garden clinics and 10 hours of continuing education.

What Dorothee does is on top of these requirements. You can see from the above description and comments that Dorothee contributes a great deal to VIMGA and why her nomination for the Golden Trowel Award was so enthusiastically supported by VIMGA members.



Based on the information and strength of the letters a winner of the Golden Trowel Award is named. The announcement was made at the recent Annual General Meeting of the MGABC Oct 6, 2024.

Mike O'Neil, President of the Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association wrote: "Dorothee's nominations describe how she exemplifies the Master Gardener philosophy, works tirelessly for the Chapter, the Association and her local community throughout her 16 years of volunteer service. She has participated in many Executive and community roles and perhaps most importantly created the standards for VIMGA's Basic Training and Mentorship roles. Her support as Lead Mentor has led to an impressive retention result for the Chapter. She embodies patience, level-headedness, warmth and enriches the collaborative spirit of the Master Gardener program."

"Dorothee is a knowledge keeper and shares her scientific understanding in a gentle, generous way. A pleasure to learn from," Mike added.

Dorothee reacted with this comment, "It was the greatest surprise: It is wonderful to feel that fellow gardeners in the BC Master Gardeners community thought that my input has been worthwhile".

I am deeply grateful to have Dorothee in our community and to also learn from her. This is well deserved recognition. The future is brighter because of her and the hundreds of volunteer gardeners who garden and help others learn more about gardening sustainably.



References

www.vimga.org, www.virl.bc.ca, www.mgabc.org



Beth Walrond: B.A. Diploma Visual Arts, M.A. Gardening. Member of Vancouver Island Master Gardener's Association.



Vancouver Island
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