

Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Newsletter



**Cultivating Community
Since 1982**

Issue 23

www.vimga.org

September 2026

Dear fellow VIMGA members,

You may remember the raised bed project that I wrote about in the spring newsletter. I promised an update so at right are a few photos. We (my husband Terry and I) built and installed six boxes and I think we will add at least two more in the coming year. Gardening is so much easier at this level! Pests and weeds are easier to spot and deal with. Picking is easier, too. Our grandkids also love getting their hands into those boxes. This can be both good and bad, but any interest in gardening must be encouraged of course!

We bought (very) rough-cut 1" cedar planks, plus 2X2's for the corners, all from a local mill for about \$500. We also spent about \$100 on coconut coir. We half-filled the beds with dead logs and branches, then topped that up with compost, leaves, and coconut coir.

The leftover pieces became a smaller herb box for our son. So the cost was about \$70-\$75 a box. (We had the screws on hand so that would add to the cost if those had to be purchased.) We will also need to replace boards periodically as they break down.

We built the first box without really following a plan so that involved some fumbling around at first, but subsequent box-building went increasingly faster. I confess I am not skilled with power tools, However, in working on this project, I became more comfortable with the circular saw and impact driver. We built the first box together but after that was finished, I left Terry to build the remaining boxes so I could get to work filling and planting them. All in all, this project was very rewarding and cost-effective, although labour-intensive!

Marion Waters

PS Please consider sharing your projects in future newsletters. The next one is in December.

Your Newsletter Team:
Debora Gurrad Kelly Husband
Marion Waters

*March:
filling the boxes*



*April:
strawberries planted
with the help of my
five-year-old grandson*



*July:
Swiss chard, beets;
cabbages in the rear
bed*



President's Message

September 21, 2026



Jo Canning photo

Another clinic season done. Districts will have their own reports for all to enjoy. Plenty of compliments from clients at clinics this season. Congratulations everyone.

Everyone has heard the rumours and yes, it is all true. We have a new logo thanks to our Logo Committee who really came through for us. The new VIMGA logo will be revealed at our AGM on November 7th and I am excited for members to see it. We hope to have new badges for everyone then and will sort out signage over the 26/27 year to be ready for clinics 2027!

The WEB team continues to do outstanding work with our web site and it certainly shows, thank you. We will get our cloud file storage and directories sorted this coming year so documents and pictures will be easy to access when needed. No more totes in my basement with historical minutes and reports as we will scan everything in as needed.

You have by now heard about about yourname@vimga.org emails available to all members and I recommend you consider getting one for all things VIMGA. These will be automatically offered to our incoming members in the future.

Members are to be celebrated for the great work they do within our organization. Mentors, newsletter team, Board of Directors and Executive, committee chairs and members. None of what we do is possible without the effort these fine folks all do, over 600 hours of time spent making VIMGA work and serving our members in 2026, THANK YOU!

I hope you will seriously consider participating in VIMGA's administration and operations in whatever capacity you would like and let Ruth know your interest. (vice-president@vimga.org) She is chairing the 2026 nominations committee along with the District Representatives in accordance with our policy. If board work is not for you, consider volunteering for one or more of our many committees as they always look forward to new faces.

President's Message, cont'd

We do have a lot to celebrate, which we will do at our AGM in November and I look forward to seeing you all there. (note: our meeting place at Nanoose is lit with LED overhead lighting)
This is my last newsletter note as VIMGA president, I want to thank everyone for their support and hard work over the years. It has been a privilege to work with you all and I have learned a lot about our great organization and the members that make it work so well.

Sincerely,
President - Mike O'Neill



Members' Manual
Vancouver Island Master Gardeners
www.vimga.org/members/members-manual/

Other timely information . . .



Swallowtail butterfly on Daikon radish flowers
Marion Waters photo

VIMGA MEMBER DUES:

Member dues of \$40.00 are due no later than November 30, 2026. All members with unpaid dues by December 15 will be considered resigned and removed from the member roster in accordance with our member policy. Interns are reminded they will pay full membership dues this year.

The treasurer will be prepared to receive dues at the AGM or you can e-transfer them to treasurer@vimga.org through your bank online. If you still use paper cheques you can send payment to:

Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association
#101 - 5170 Dunster Road, Suite #299
Nanaimo, BC, V9T6M4

I would like to send a request for one or two MGs to take over the Seed Swap spot for QB Seedy Saturday. The MGs started this event in 2001 and it has MGs involved and or running the show ever since. It involves one meeting a month for Sept-Nov. None in Dec. And then several in January for the opening on the first Saturday in February. I'll be available to explain all the necessary details about the set up day, organization of seeds etc. It's an easily run commitment. I can be contacted directly.

Thank you. Kim Hammond,
trilliums@shaw.ca
250-927-3500



The latest MARS newsletter
is up on our website now!

[Click here to read it](#)

<https://marsrhodos.ca/newsletters/newsletter.pdf>

Check out the online reference for
rhodo species and hybrids:

rhododendra.com

Other timely information, cont'd

Just a reminder to
register for the MGABC AGM Sunday, October 4
starting at 9:30 am on ZOOM.
Click the link below for registration.

Presentations:
Ants: A Plant's Best Frenemy
Growing Perennial Vegetables



Registration <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/Oolbklz8SA26jj-HGRJOrA>

Ruth Beilman and Deb Gurrad
VIMGA MGABC Co-Representatives

Did you know?

Lifetime Membership (LM)

This can be awarded at the discretion of the board to VIMGA members who have resigned from the association. It is based on their long-standing history with the association (Minimum of 10 years as Certified Master Gardener CMG), of which 7 must be with VIMGA) Fees for insurance for Lifetime members are paid by VIMGA and LM do not have to fulfill any volunteer tasks or education requirements. The Membership Chair informs the Board on potential qualifying former VIMGA members. The purpose of this award is VIMGA's wish to retain valuable members.

Alumnus Membership

A CMG can apply for Alumnus membership provided they have been a CMG for a minimum of 10 years. Members applying must be up to date on their volunteer requirements and pay the annual insurance cost (\$10 at this time) but no additional fees. They will need to complete 5 hours of approved continuing education and they are encouraged and welcome (but not required) to participate in volunteer activities.

Other timely information, cont'd

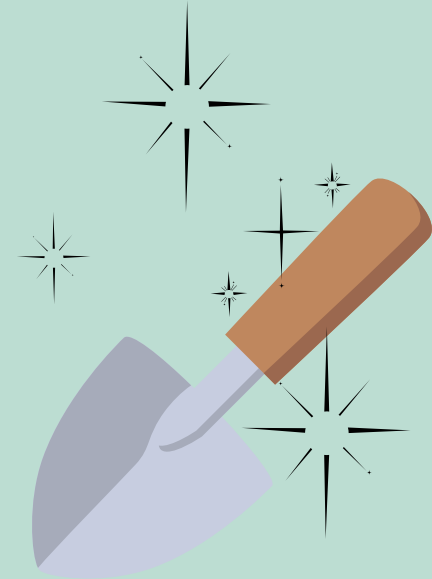
SILVER SPADE AWARD 2026

The highest member recognition award we celebrate is our annual **Silver Spade Award**. Past recipients are: (not awarded in 2020)

Dorothee Kieser 2018
Chris Southwick 2019
Karen Bennett 2021
Jo Canning 2022
Angela Einarson 2023
Kay Howard 2024
Cameron Smith 2025

The criteria.

1. Must be a full member in good standing of the Vancouver Island Master Gardener Association.
2. Must be a Certified Master Gardener.



In addition, the nominee must have at least 2 of the following.

1. Have led numerous clinics.
2. Have undertaken other volunteer activities, such as holding seminars, teaching garden-related courses or publication of written material, to educate and interact with the public.
3. Held one or more administrative positions with VIMGA or MGABC.

Nomination process:

The chair of the Awards Committee receives the nominations and tallies them.

Qualifying suggestions (likely more than 3 votes) are then checked against the criteria.

1. Number of years as VIMGA Member (minimum 7)
2. Number of years of holding administration or Ad Hoc committee positions.
3. Any other extra service.

Please submit your detailed nominations to last years recipient, Cameron Smith, at csmith@vimga.org no later than October 20, 2026 to be awarded at our 2026 AGM with the subject "Silver Spade Award Nomination (NameofNominee) – 2026"

No picture of the plaque is available as it was destroyed in a fire. We are going to have a new plaque this year which will be sporting our new logo design!!

*** News from our Neighbours ***

North Island

North Island Members enjoyed
Phyllis Pullinger's lovely garden
at their meeting on July 18th



News from our Neighbours - North Island continued



Parksville/Qualicum/Nanoose "PQN"



PQN report:

24 members:

- 5 Interns
- 13 CMGs
- 5 Alumni
- 1 Lifetime

It's been a busy summer with clinics at two different farmer's markets. We are finding that there is a real need for gardening advice during the growing season as seen by the interest and the number of questions members are receiving at these clinics.

In addition to answering questions, the interns were involved in creating educational displays or demonstrations at the new farmers market in Parksville. It was a great way to initiate a conversation and provide some public education. Some of the topics were The Dirt on Dirt, Bringing Pollinators into the Garden, Propagating Strawberries and Mulching and other Fall Gardening Tasks. The teaching aids can be reused again at future clinics.

We've also been very busy with GAPs this year with about 9 so far.

On the social side, we were sad to see Norma Kilpatrick, our former co-rep for the district, leave the island to be closer to family.

Back in June, we took a bus trip to Victoria and visited the Horticultural Centre of the Pacific as well as the gardens at Government House. It was a great day and we saw some beautiful and very interesting gardens.

Jean and Peter
Co-Reps PQN

News from our Neighbours - PQN continued



Nanaimo

Nanaimo District Rep Report -

Mike O'Neill - Interim Nanaimo District Representative

Salutations from VIMGA Nanaimo District. We have an active district with plenty of clinics and events taking place throughout the year.

26 Members

12 CMG

2 Alumni

4 Lifetime

8 Interns

We had a fun District Social with 17 guests on September 13 hosted by Cathy and Gene in their beautiful garden. Everyone enjoyed a variety of delicious treats and drinks with Cathy and Gene providing members some wonderful plants to take home. Door prize winners Jill and Peggy lucked out with a heavy duty clinic tote bag and a sweet hard cover notebook. Aluminum plant tags and wires were presented to the hosts and our education presenter Beth. Beth gave a comprehensive session about iris gardens giving members an opportunity to take home some special iris plants after learning about dividing and growing.

Nanaimo District statistics (year to date):

42 Clinics for 515 Advice Hours in Nanaimo (to date)

177 continuing education hours and Nanaimo members recorded over 181 hours of administration time. Reminder to update your volunteer hours and education online before December 31.



*News from our Neighbours -
Nanaimo continued*



Cowichan



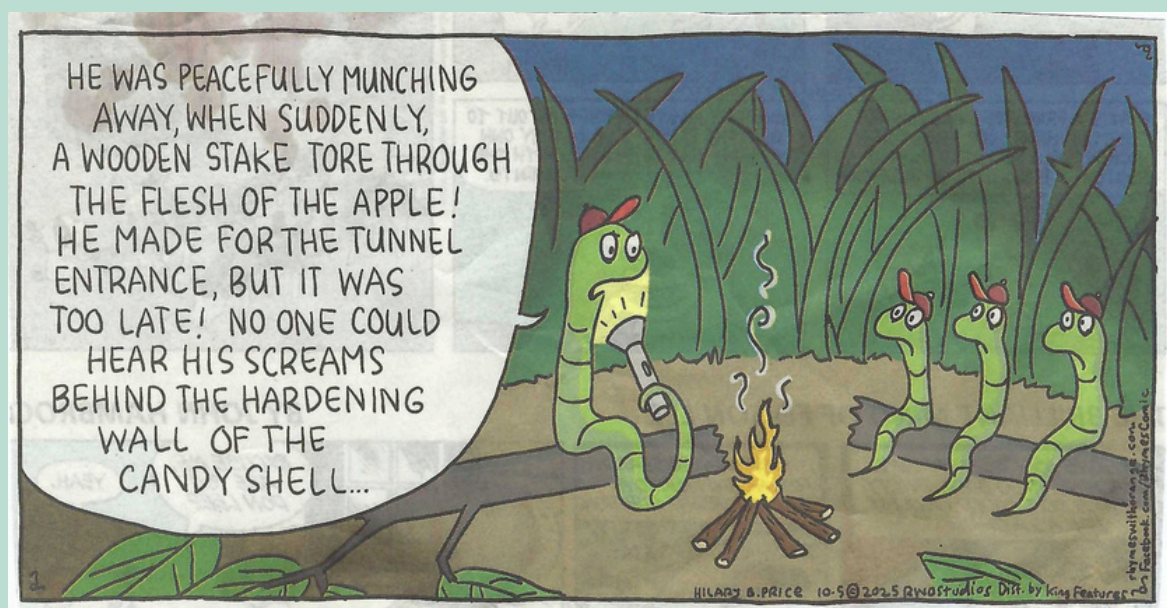
News from the Cowichan District

We were delighted to place **first** and division champion in our category at the recent **Victoria Dahlia Show** and **first** and section champion in the **Nanaimo's Gladiolus and Dahlia Show**. Our **Gwen Redcliffe** dahlia has brought us a lot of joy.

Cheers Gwen Carlson-Redcliffe



News from our Neighbours - Cowichan continued



A Summer Afternoon of Gardens, Good Food & Great Company

VIMGA Summer Social • Saturday, August 22, 2026 The Gardens on Anderton

More than 60 VIMGA members and their guests came together on a beautiful August afternoon for our 2026 Summer Social at The Gardens on Anderton in the Comox Valley.

It was a wonderful opportunity to step away from our own gardens, explore a new one and, most importantly, spend time with fellow Master Gardeners.



Celebrating the Bounty of Our Gardens

Food was very much part of the celebration, with members bringing dishes made using produce, herbs and other ingredients from their own gardens. The result was a delicious and generous summer feast — a wonderful reflection of the abundance our gardens provide. There was plenty of time to eat, chat and catch up with friends, as well as to meet VIMGA members from elsewhere on the island.

Exploring The Gardens on Anderton

The Gardens on Anderton provided the perfect setting. Over nearly three decades, a dedicated group of community volunteers transformed a two-acre cow field into a tapestry of themed "garden rooms." The gardens feature an impressive array of specialized landscapes—including a dedicated butterfly garden, a rose garden, an Alzheimer loop, a labyrinth, a children's garden and highly accessible raised allotment beds—demonstrating the profound power of community-driven, therapeutic horticulture. Adding to the afternoon was a Master Gardener Scavenger Hunt, created by two of our MG interns, Wendy Young and Laura Stoicescu. Teams explored the gardens looking for plants, features and clues while putting their horticultural knowledge to the test. It was a fun way to discover the gardens and meet members from different parts of the island— with a little friendly competition along the way!



Prizes, Plants and Community Support

The winning teams received prizes including a selection of plants, sheep wool pellets from Vancouver Island Wool Pellets, a beautiful stainless steel garden sculpture from local artist John Czegledi and hand crafted nightlights from our very own Master Gardener, Jane Kerr. We are very grateful for their support. Thank you also to the Anderton Therapeutic Gardens Society Volunteers for creating and lovingly maintaining this special location.

A plant-by-donation table was another popular feature, giving members the opportunity to find a new plant for their garden while supporting VIMGA.



Even the Weather Cooperated!



There was one brief interruption when a burst of rain sent everyone looking for shelter. Being gardeners we were undeterred and continued enjoying the gardens and the rest of the afternoon.

Thank You, VIMGA Volunteers

A very big thank you to all the North Island VIMGA volunteers who helped make the afternoon such a success. From organizing and preparing the food to setting up, creating and running the scavenger hunt, arranging prizes and plants, and cleaning up afterwards, there was a great deal of work behind the scenes. The Summer Social was a wonderful reminder that being a Master Gardener is about more than sharing horticultural knowledge. It is also about sharing gardens, friendship, food and a passion for growing things. What better way to celebrate summer!

Laura Stoicescu and Wendy Young, North Island VIMGA interns









Articles

Editor's Note:

We (the newsletter committee) thought the last newsletter was much too lengthy to be enjoyed in a single read. So from now on, we will print a “teaser” from each submitted article with a link to the full article on the website. If you would like to read more, just click the link.

Pollinator Garden Project Begins in North Island District

by Whitney Peek

This fall marks the beginning of a new project for North Island members: a pollinator garden project. We are helping to create 12 pollinator gardens for people in the Comox Valley community. Inspired by the Butterflyway Project by the David Suzuki Foundation, these 12 gardens will make our first "Butterflyway." As we add more gardens each year, we will create more connected corridors of food and habitat for our Vancouver Island pollinators.

Click [here](#) to read more!



A Climate On the Move

by Jo-Ann Canning

The Canadian plant hardiness zones were first updated in 2000, and British Columbia – affected by both a warmer ocean and mountains -- had more changes than the rest of the country combined. As of July 2025, growing zones were updated again. Traditionally, each hardiness zone represented an average spread of 10 degrees F / 33.8 C, with the lower end being the usual frost date. When The Canadian map was updated, each 10 degree hardiness zone was split into a 5 F degree (17 C) spread, designated as a) and b). Looking back, the insight of Resources Canada initiating this designation because of our northern latitude and varied geography has proven a real help to gardeners and farmers dealing with a warming climate.



[Click here to read more!](#)

Watching the Harvest Moon

by Jo-Ann Canning

The September moon is important for gardeners because this month's full moon at midnight will tell us where the noon sun will be in six months, that is, March, 2027. The sun shadow is so important for our early planting. Two hours extra shade keeps the soil cold and can mean seeds rot instead of sprouting, and perennials that were lifted and overwintered will struggle rather than have a good year.

Several ornamentals and crops can be planted in March, as long the sun hits the area and the soil is warming. Do you see the worms moving in the soil? If so, and is not soggy mud, it is warm enough. Here are some seeding candidates:

Kale, hardy lettuce, leafy greens like spinach, dill, mustard , bok choy, mizuna
Beets, rutabaga, turnips, carrots, parsnips, radishes
Sweet peas, poppies, echinacea, daylilies, hardy geraniums.



[Click here to read more!](#)

Yellow Flag Iris – A Pilot Project in Removal

Sept 14, 2026

Submitted by Jacqueline Sherk

This summer I had the privilege of participating in a hands-on workshop to control an infestation of that beautiful but dangerous invader, yellow flag iris (*Iris pseudacorus*, aka YFI). As members of the Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society, we were able to secure a grant to hire plant biologist and weed scientist, Catherine Tarasoff of Thompson Rivers University. Dr. Tarasoff has studied and investigated methods of controlling this highly invasive non-native plant, which has spread across Canada and is classified as a noxious weed in our province. It is a remarkably adaptable plant and, although it prefers riparian areas, it can also survive in terrestrial and aquatic zones.



[Click here to read more!](#)



Camelia sinensis sochi tea
blossom
Jo Canning photo