vimga.org

Summer 2026 Newsletter

Debora Gurrad

15–19 minutes

Dear fellow VIMGA members,

Welcome to our first newsletter created on WordPress. This platform allows us to include live links within the newsletter as well as other benefits I'm sure we will learn to appreciate! Please be patient while we become comfortable with this system. (I am far from it yet!) This edition isn't as slick as the ones created using Canva – although I think we'll get there, it will just take some practice! So please enjoy this bare-bones style while I figure out how to jazz it up for next time. Meanwhile, please enjoy the following "guest" editorial written by one of our new interns, Kelly Husband.

We wish you all a wonderful summer and fabulous growing conditions 🙂

Marion Waters, Editor

and Deb Gurrad

Hello VIMGA members,

I've been gardening since my early 20s. While living in Vancouver, I had many patio gardens. So full of pots that I could barely walk through them. In 2012, my husband and I bought and renovated a townhouse inside and out, building a beautiful garden in our backyard. In 2016, we bought an acre in Cedar and moved to the Island. Most of our backyard was an overgrown wooded area. We took some dead or dying trees down, which really opened the area up … and turned it into a weed garden. During COVID, we rebuilt

the backyard into an oasis, with several raised perennial and vegetable beds.

Ladysmith Rotary Tour 2023

Taking care of an acre of ornamental gardens and veggie beds is very different than patio gardening. I realized very soon that I needed more knowledge, more formal training. In January 2026, I started the Master Gardeners program through VIU and VIMGA. We were the largest class in the program's history with 40 students.

The educational portion through VIU was outstanding. I learned more than I ever expected. Since finishing that portion, I've tried my hand at planting new vegetable crops, introducing companion plants to my veggie beds, as well as incorporating crop rotation into my planting schedule. I've sourced many of our native plants to incorporate into my perennial gardens. I've started using arborist wood chips in my perennial beds instead of a much finer

wood mulch. Next, I will be thinning out the number of fruits on my fruit trees. I have learned so much from amazing instructors and mentors that I may not be able to incorporate all of it into my gardens, but I can always pass on that knowledge to someone who can and will.

I've missed doing the homework assignments from the class. I loved researching a topic and explaining my answer. Poor Betty. I didn't write a book for her to mark but neither did I write 3-word answers (unless she asked specifically for one). Once I started volunteering at the clinics, and speaking with my mentor, I very quickly learned that volunteering doesn't just mean volunteering at clinics. There are so many opportunities available for us through VIMGA. I've now signed up to help with the website, answer Garden Advice Line questions, and write for the newsletter. As Mike O'Neill explained it, we all bring different life experiences to the table and VIMGA has strived to ensure there are volunteer opportunities to suit everyone's skills and experience. I feel so blessed to be a part of this amazing group, full of such knowledgeable and generous people.

Kelly Husband

A Note from the President

Hello and welcome to another hot summer of advice clinics and gatherings for VIMGA. We have plenty of advice clinics this year and we have done quite a few to date, with more to come. Each district has a good number of Interns with a total of 30 joining us. I have had a chance to meet most of them. In Nanaimo District I was glad to join with five of our eight Nanaimo Interns in recent advice clinics. A very hard working and studious group who have

impressed all of our clients and members in service.

All of our CMG members have dedicated themselves to mentoring our newest members and interns in helping them to get to know our organization and service to the public. I want to thank you for that and I am certain I speak for our new members and interns as well. I am very proud of the work we do and how we do it and it speaks for the reputation of our organization wherever I go.

I want to spend a moment bragging about our dedicated board and committee members as we head into the summer “administrative” break. Work will continue for the board and committees but we will not meet again officially until September. From our first meeting in December 2025 through June 2026,

25/26 VIMGA Board Highlights to June:

Forty students joined our VIU Advanced Gardening Course and the participation by members and mentors was strong with excellent leadership to completion with 100% passing the final exam with thirty students deciding to become VIMGA Interns and work to complete the CMG Certificate program over the next two years.

Volunteer engagement remained strong through plant sales, projects, clinics, special events, educational events, Garden Advice Line, district projects, and VIRL presentations. We embarked on a logo refresh to be presented at our AGM November 7, 2026. We have greatly improved the look and information from our VIMGA website for members and the public. Our Webmaster formed the Website Editorial Board (WEB) to assist in updates and improvements. We celebrated our 2026 SED with a record number of attendees and guests. We continue to

work on these and other governance matters including: succession planning; board and committee recruitment; bylaw and governance updates to include membership categories for consideration by VIMGA Members at our 2026 AGM in November. Current bylaws have been published on our members' website for your reference.

The board thanks all members, mentors, interns, volunteers, committee members, clients, and district leaders whose efforts and participation continue to strengthen VIMGA and support gardening education across Vancouver Island. You are what makes all of this possible.

We are all looking forward to our annual summer picnic 2026, (changed to August 22), hosted by North Island and it is shaping up to be another outstanding event for our VIMGA community. I hope many of you are looking to join in the board and committee work to continue to strengthen our wonderful organization.

Sincerely,

Mike O'Neill, President

District News:

North Island

We have not yet filled Marion's shoes with a new North Island Rep. so we have no formal report this time. (We miss you, Marion!) However, at a recent clinic (CVHS plant sale), intern Laura told this charming story which I asked her to share in the newsletter:

Hi Marion, There are similar tales from other areas, Ireland, Washington State, this is from my Transylvanian village.

The soil temperature test in spring

The Romanian farmers in Transylvania often used an ancient farming method to test the soil temperature in the spring, to determine if it is warm enough to sow the seeds. Contrary to the AI information 😊, the farmers would simply sit down on the soil, fully clothed, either in pants or skirts, and wait for a few minutes. They would be likely resting for a few minutes in between the spring tasks in the field, not stripping of their clothes in their bare bottoms! Transylvanian villages were densely populated, with typical small farmplots, with many farming families working the fields nearby. During the short breaks, the farmers would consult with one another about the soil temperature.

I experienced this test in my grandmother's village, as a child. The adults would discuss it as they would be sitting down for a break. The younger adults would sometimes be impatient; it would be the older adults that would pronounce whether the seeding could start or not. There was no shortage of field work, so the test would be conducted again in a few days . The elder farmers experience was invaluable in this test, based no doubt not just on how cold the soil felt as they were sitting, but other signs in the environment, the birds and insects activity, the plants that would be poking out in the

adjacent fields etc. I have heard of younger farmers that decided they knew better, and struggled with the crop failure as they ignored the ancient methods!

Warmly, Laura

Parksville/Qualicum/Nanoose

Membership:

- 14 CMGs: lost 1 CMG due to relocation
- 5 Alumni
- 1 Lifetime
- 5 Interns

The spring has been busy with clinics, plant sales, garden tours and GAPs. We also welcomed five new interns into our district and they are busy getting involved in clinics and settling in.

This year, we are offering clinics with a new farmer's market at the McMillian Art Centre focused on food producers. In addition to participating in the clinics, our interns are putting together some

educational activities/displays that will be used at the market. Some of the topics so far include attracting pollinators to your vegetable garden and “The Dirt on Soil.” We are hoping that these educational kits can be reused at different clinics and venues.

The NI group working on the Butterflyway Project, led by Whitney and including one other CMG and four interns, did a GAP at the Parksville Museum. They advised on how to incorporate native pollinator plants into the garden and Whitney will be providing a list of suitable plants and a planting scheme. She also shared many resources which will help with developing educational signages and information materials, another way for interns to be involved. It was a fun and informative visit and a great way to collaborate between districts.

On the social side, we had a wonderful tour of Mariah’s gardens in May.

Mariah and Tim introduced us to some very unique vegetables. The taste samples of oka and mashua were a highlight! There were also big smiles from those who were brave enough to go for a swing in the woods. The rain held off and the sun even peeped out at one point. It was a great event enjoyed by all.

This is oca, a perennial herbaceous plant that overwinters as underground stem tubers. Much like yams and sweet potatoes, the tubers can be prepared either sweet or savory and have been a staple of rural Andean diets for centuries.

Mashua is another long-cultivated Andean root crop grown for its nutritious tubers. It is a close relative of the nasturtium, with tubers that are sharp and peppery when raw, similar to nasturtium flowers.

Angela tries out the big swing!

Nanaimo

Nanaimo held a social Saturday, May 30, where we enjoyed getting to know our Nanaimo interns. Eighteen of us gathered at Dorothee's house for a tour through her garden, looking mostly at her started veggie plot: tomatoes; beans & broad beans; peppers; beets; peas; and lots of fresh greens (lettuces, Swiss chard, assorted mustards) but we also looked at the Viburnum bushes devastated by cutworms and learned how to tell female from male kiwi flowers. We also had some enthusiastic next generation gardeners come along (Shanora's daughter and Heidi's boys). Everybody enjoyed the food and door prizes and lots of books found a new home.

Clockwise from left: Shanora and daughter Kahanu, Cathy, Peggy, Heidi, Cameron, Sheny, Jan, Dorothee, Ruth (feet only), Beth, Jill. We are all looking at a sadly defoliated Viburnum.

Two of our 2026 interns, Kelly and Heidi, and I (Dorothee, not pictured) enjoyed the wealth of flowering plants at a Canadian Tire clinic on June 6.

June 7 GAP Pawson Gyro Park

One of three tables laden with books for members to take home.

Intern Shanora and daughter Kahanu

Cathy bringing goodies and peonies for the occasion.

Cowichan

April and Gwen at the Duncan Rotary Garden Tour at Saison Market Vineyard on Mays Road.

Board and Committee Members Celebration 2026

June 6, 2026 – Hosted by Ruth and Chris

Having held meetings all year on Zoom it was wonderful to gather in person with VIMGA board and committee members (and their plus ones) to celebrate a year of teamwork and achievements. Ruth and Chris hosted us at their lovely home and garden in PQN District and everyone brought a dish or two to share. Fantastic food and fellowship. Missed you Gail, Fern, Marion, Marion, Jen, Chris, Cathy, Ute, Beth, and Jo.

Notes from the Board

VIMGA CODE OF CONDUCT:

In 2021 VIMGA developed and adopted a code of conduct which we often allude to in our documents in many different ways.

Although it was intended to be put in our Members' Manual (our policy document) for reasons unknown it was overlooked in the 24/25 iteration of our manual. That has now been corrected and our newest version of the manual, posted on our website, now includes the following Code of Conduct. Although our members have been practicing it all along it is now available to our newest members as well.

VIMGA Code of Conduct:

The VIMGA Code of Conduct is intended to support and encourage ethical and respectful behaviour within the Association for the safety and well-being of all members.

Respectful Community

VIMGA strives to create community volunteer activities where all participants are treated with dignity, respect, and without discrimination. We value diversity, inclusivity, and courteous communications. Disrespectul behaviour, harassment, and bullying in any form will be addressed within the Association.

Ethical Behaviour

Members are required to represent the Association with integrity while participating in all VIMGA activities. Members are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner that enhances public trust and confidence in VIMGA.

It is the Mission Statement of VIMGA to educate the public using current science-based horticultural knowledge and environmentally responsible practices. Members are expected to provide research-based information at all VIMGA events, and cite references when using written formats.

(Adopted 2021)

VIMGA 2026 AWARDS:

Reminding you of our Silver Spade and District Awards coming along with our AGM on November 7, 2026. (details TBA). These are important recognitions for our members. Contact your District Rep or any board member for criteria and other information if you are curious. We will send out the nomination information before the AGM.

Silver Spade Past Recipients:

Dorothee K. – 2018

Chris S. –2019

Karen B. – 2021

Jo C. – 2022

Angela E. – 2023

Kay H. – 2024

Cameron S. – 2025

SUCCESSION COMMITTEE:

Mike will chair a VIMGA “Succession Planning Committee” which will be a project to create VIMGA continuity strategies, including developing transitions, assessing and documenting administrative and governance gaps/criteria, and developing a secure knowledge repository for backup in key areas. The details will be further refined by the committee. If you are interested in joining, please contact Mike, president@vimga.org

BY LAWS and CONSTITUTION:

I know many of you have been looking for our by laws and constitution to read over, so you will be happy to know it has been published now on our web site under the Members' section for your viewing pleasure. Thank you WEB team!

Greenhouse Tips

Many of the pest problems and temperature extremes that greenhouse growers must deal with can also apply to the home gardener, especially if you have a mini-greenhouse or indoor plants. The image of the scalded raspberries is a case in point. This damage can happen out in the open garden as well if overhead watering was done on a heat day. It is damage that you may see in clinics. Enjoy!

Jo Canning

Greenhouse Canada newsletter@email.greenhousecanada.com

Photo by Jo Canning

Links to new articles on the VIMGA website!

An interview with Dr. Caroline Josefsson about restoring Garry Oak Ecosystems

https://www.vimga.org/garry-oak-ecosystems/

https://www.vimga.org/2026-fall-into-gardening