

# Squamish Gardeners Newsletter

## February 2007

### Down the Garden Path

*"If you truly love Nature, You will find beauty everywhere"* Vincent Van Gogh



The above quote comes from a tiny book called Flowers for My Friend. I had admired it one day at my sister-in-laws and she entrusted it to my keeping. My aunt, Myrtle Herndl, had given it to her many years ago and now I have decided to share various reflections on gardening and friends from the volume. My aunt introduced me to native plants when I was a pre-teen. She had pre-empted land at Edith Lake and every summer she

would treat her nieces and nephews to a camping holiday which included clearing shrubs from the shoreline, hauling wood, cleaning up items left behind by the Merrill and Ring logging company, swimming in the lake and learning amazing botany lessons from this remarkable woman. Indian paintbrush, Labrador Tea, Briar roses, Monkey moss and Twin flowers were just a few of the plant friends we made as we tramped through the area that is now the Four Lakes Trails. How pleased she would be that the latest craze in garden landscaping is now the native flora that she always treasured! These plants are particularly suited to our climate. Seldom do they need extra watering in the summer or extra protection in the winter. These species don't require fertilizing or pesticides. Her rock garden had plants from all over the Pacific North West that she had brought back as seeds and nursed to maturity. Pine trees to columbines, each plant came with a story. Many of the plants were characters in the children stories she wrote for an American magazine for several years. So the little book with its literary garden references has a very special meaning for me. I hope that you will enjoy the quotes too.

Today we are back in winter mode. After ten days of sunshine and moonlight it is snowing again. But at least we didn't have Vancouver's fog! Three years from now I wonder how we will appear to the world as we face the international media. Will it be a month of blooms as it was last year with rhodos and winter cherries bursting forth in bloom under-planted with purple heather and snow drops or will the route to Whistler be frosty white and winter-like. In my garden only the witch hazel doesn't seem to react to the weather. The red variety is just about finished its time of glory and the yellow version is in full flower. I still have a Hellebores blooming. It started in October and has just started to bloom again as the snow and ice retreat. The first snowdrops are adding their nodding heads to the beds.

Even though the Ground Hog has declared that the last half of winter will be relatively mild we can still have some nasty weather ahead of us. Whistler, on the other hand, is thrilled with the snow. They will be happy to repeat this season in three years.



Winter has a special talent of allowing our vision to expand beyond the garden plot to take in the distant trees, mountains and outward to the sky. As the sap begins to return to the branches watch the trees take on colours long before

the foliage unfurls. All shades of browns, greens, reds, yellows and oranges intensify along the trunks and burst like peacock feathers into the twigs. The willows, dogwoods, maples, alders herald the coming spring. Seen against the dark evergreen they subtly echo the hues of autumn. And with the leaves still dormant, the panoramic views of our mountains are breath-taking now. From every garden the backdrop scenery wows visitors and residents alike. The clarity of the air so close to a major city is remarkable. Even though the predominant wind has been from the south-southwest this winter (hence the damage to trees) we still manage to escape much of the pollution that plagues the Fraser Valley. Then there is the sky, unblocked by all the greenery of summer. I've often thought that we should have a "CloudBurst" celebration named for the mountain in the Upper Squamish area. The winter clouds in this valley are very dramatic. Laden with all that rain they can be the deepest navy blue/black. Sometimes they are rimmed in gold or slashed by ribbons of strawberry pink. Seldom is the whole sky a solid type of cloud. Usually several different textures move about like some giant kaleidoscope or like flowers in the sky that need no weeding.

While I'm thinking of the white stuff fall outside my window, the latest home decorating theme seems to be "back to white". I remember trying a white garden about twenty five years ago and discovering that it was very dull on sunny days. At dusk, however, it was magical. I ended up spreading the white around the garden and adding other colours for daytime interest. I may just try it again. This time I'll try to use some of the home decorating ideas such as: vary the hues of white to give some contrast;

add different textures with different types of petals and leaves; use flowers and leaves of different sizes: use groupings instead of scattered plantings; and I'll try to keep the cool whites and the warm whites separated. Maybe I'll finally manage to come up with a scheme that I like.

Our new executive started the year with a great speaker. I came home feeling a bit sheepish about harboring some of the rogues of the plant world. Many are demons that I got from plant sales, from "friends" and even from nurseries. And worse I have been guilty of passing them on. It is almost like "if it is too good to be true, it is probably a weed or an herb". I know that some things that grow as well controlled plants in my shady, clay-based soil multiply amazingly next door at Glenda's. Just remember to warn others when they ask for a piece of rampant spreaders. I wish I had known long ago about gout weed and bishops weed and one of the clematis that reseeds itself all over the yard,

We are all looking forward to a year full of gardening speakers, trips, and sharing. If you have some suggestions please pass them along to the program committee. I, personally, would like to have an expert on bonsai or topiary as a speaker. I have tried with limited success to force trees to conform to my will. Every culture has shaped growth into cloud forms (Japanese) spirals and globes (Europeans) and animals (Disney). Suggestions for group trips have included trips to Dez Kennedy's garden, to the Japanese Garden at U.B.C. and to Erikson's Point Grey garden and several garden centers on the Lower Mainland. Part of the local sharing of our common pastime is the annual Garden Tour in June. If you or anyone you know is interested in sharing their creation with others please let the Garden Tour committee know as soon as possible. It will be hard to out-do last year's tour but somehow we always manage to find new, unique and

exciting gardens to view.

Yes, two of my amaryllis will be flowing at Valentines Day. Sitting in the dining room window with the motion sensitive frog I received at Christmas I have spring now regardless of the weather outside.

### **Marina Escapes to Sunshine**

If the newsletter looks a little different this month it is because Marina, our usual publisher, has taken a well deserved holiday in the sun. Phyllis Carter is taking her place. The new members' list has not yet been published so we will simply e-mail members on the old list and try to contact those without e-mail. Hard copies of the newsletter will be available at the February meeting. Remember that all newsletters are now on our website at <http://www.squamishgardeners.com> Please add this site to your list of favourites.

### **Speaker for the February Meeting**

January's presentation by Andrew Appleton on the topic of Invasive Species generated a lot of questions and discussion. Many of us were chagrined to learn that we are actively encouraging the growth of such species in our gardens. To follow up on that discussion more of a local emphasis, at the February 19th meeting Meg Fellows, Director of the Squamish Environmental Conservation Society, will give a brief talk on the situation with regard to invasive species here in Squamish. This will be followed by a facilitated discussion among the membership, with the aim of developing a rational strategy in regard to these plants in our home gardens and in the community as a whole.

**Squamish**

**Gardeners' Club General Meeting**

**January 15, 2007**

Carol Robson, the new President, greeted those present. She asked them to wear name tags, and to complete a questionnaire; the information from this will be useful to the Programme Committee. She also asked that people check their contact information on the list available.

The previous executive members were introduced and thanked. The new executive was then introduced.

The Executive has proposed a **Garden Tour date** of June 24<sup>th</sup>. The Relay for Life is also that weekend. The motion was seconded by Meg Fellows. Passed.

A **Family membership** of \$25 was proposed by the Executive, seconded by Dawn Milne. Passed.

Beth Fitzpatrick asked whether/how the **club scrapbooks** should be maintained. Dave Colwell suggested that now the website existed it was less necessary to maintain hard copies of club

pictures. It was decided that the scrapbooks should be retained for publicity purposes (at the Fall Fair and Garden Tour). Ellen Grant mentioned that the Communities in Bloom Committee had been impressed by the club's record. Dorte Froslev showed the album she had made from last Year's tour, and offered to maintain the albums to the same level. This was approved by all. Pictures taken can be sent to Dave, who will pass them on to Dorte.

It was decided to agree on an official photographer at the next meeting.

Carol apologised to anyone who had been disturbed by having their e-mail address listed on messages in the past.

**Treasurer's Report.** Judy Crowston (last Year's Treasurer) presented her report. Revenue for 2006 was \$4,407.25; expenses were \$4,458.73; bank balance on December 31 2006 was \$2,249.93. Dorte presented the proposed budget for 2007. Projected revenue; \$4,450; projected expenses: \$4,250; estimated year-end balance: \$2,328.13.

A motion to approve these figures was moved by Diddi Price and seconded by Ellen. Motion approved.

Dorte was thanked for offering to have the end-of-year social at the BAG. Judy circulated the list for providing refreshments at future meetings.

Dave talked about the expanded website and outlined the different sections. It could become a device for communication if it is visited frequently. There was some discussion about having a domain name to make it easier to locate. This will likely cost money; Dave will research it for the next meeting.

The question was raised as to whether the club should order new T-shirts. One extra large one remains from the last batch.

Marie Lamontagne (in the absence of Nairn Stewart) introduced the evening's speaker, Andrew Appleton, Common Grounds Manager with Evergreen, in Vancouver. He welcomed the opportunity to address the club on the topic of invasive species, which have social, economic and health impacts. His organization deals mainly with stewardship and restoration services in urban green spaces, but invasive species, which impair natural diversity, are of concern to all areas. He felt that garden club members – as local experts – can raise and champion the issue locally.

Plants of particular note in Squamish are:

Goutweed (bishop's weed)	invasive, exotic
Horsetail	weedy, native
Morning Glory	invasive, exotic
Creeping buttercup	weedy, native
Japanese knotweed	invasive, exotic
English ivy	invasive, exotic



English holly, Buddleia and Bishop's weed are all potentially a problem in B.C. His organization

works with nurseries to promote garden alternatives.

He gave an interesting power point presentation. More information on the topic can be found at [Evergreen.ca](http://Evergreen.ca)

## **Bears in Brackendale**

Yes, we have a bear who will not hibernate. It manages to stir up the dogs at night as it strolls around looking for food. Although there is plenty of rotting salmon down on the river, it still persists in searching the neighbourhood. Two neighbours have bee hives but they are protected by electric fencing. However the bear has ripped open some honey frames left outside. I love to feed the birds in the winter but I have kept the feeders inside expect for one small one that I refill each morning will a daily ration. And my hummingbird feeder it tucked high up under the eaves, hopefully out of Mr. Bruin's reach.

## **Recipes**

Looking for recipes from the garden...can you help? Do you have a great rhubarb dessert, a soothing salve for garden scratched hands, a bug deterrent, a poppy seed cake batter, soil mixtures etc? Share the secrets from your garden with other members of the Club. Jot them down and forward them to the newsletter staff or Dave at our web site.

