

News from Nanoose

Not long after moving into our new house here in Nanoose Bay, we were shocked to discover that the rural peace and quiet could be broken without warning at almost any time of the night or day by noisy renters up the street from us.

Some of the sounds we had not expected to hear included the roar of a Harley racing up and down the street, heavy metal music, dogs barking non-stop and furious invective-riddled arguments. Thankfully, the whole neighbourhood was up in arms and within a month of our arrival, a small delegation persuaded the renters that this area didn't suit them. They left in the middle of the night with a trail of debris spread out behind them.

A day or two after their departure, a friend and I received permission from the owner to take a look at the house because she was interested in leasing it once it was refurbished. We had to hold our breath to walk around the place indoors and out - the dogs had obviously been left alone for long stretches at a time. As we were leaving, I spotted a bedraggled little houseplant beside the door, equally as neglected and pungent as the dogs. Plant-lover that I am, I took it home. I watered it and I fertilized it and put it outside on the deck under the skirt of a large fern until it regained its strength.

Most of my houseplants spend the summer outside from early May until mid-September. Like children, I feel they're better off in fresh air and sunshine (even risking a bit of wind-damage or slight sunburn) than they would be languishing inside looking out the window at the carefree outdoor plants. When the night temperatures drop to around 10C, I know it's time to bring them back in.

It hasn't been difficult finding new indoor homes for my houseplants because this house, built in the early 1970s, has the soaring ceilings and plentiful skylights which were hallmarks of the Westcoast style of that era. The fern now hangs high enough in front of the living room windows not to obstruct the view; the spider plant is on a shelf near the front door where it will do its best to spook children on Hallowe'en. But where to put the new plant? It has such a peculiar smell. At first I thought the bathroom might be suitable - high humidity, you know, but there's that awful smell. Finally moved it under the skylights in the cozy spare bedroom where it grew and flourished.

Even when my son came to stay overnight recently, I did not have the heart to disturb my adopted houseplant yet again. John likes to sleep with the window open, I reasoned - he won't notice the smell. Well, he did notice the smell. The moment he walked into the spare room, before he put down his bag, before he even laid eyes on the lacey-leaved little plant, he blurted out, "Mom, do you

smoke pot in here?" "What are you talking about," I huffed. "I've never smoked anything in my life!" In a matter of seconds he had sniffed out my newest plant and was examining it for bugs. "Not bugs," he corrected me, "Buds! This is a marijuana plant."

Make that: *was* a marijuana plant. Before the day was ended, the helpless villain was cast over the side of Nanoose Hill, never to be seen again. I know, because when I went back the next day to rescue and revive it, it had completely disappeared, eaten no doubt by the deer I observed staggering along the path below.

Margot Moser
Newsletter Editor



"Who, me?"

BRAGS' Newsletter moves into 21st Century

David Forsyth could tell you how many months I've been talking about learning WORD to compose this newsletter rather than rely on my beloved but antiquated AmiPro. No more excuses - AmiPro just added 'Print' to the list of commands it no longer chooses to obey. So now I've embarked on a rather steep learning curve to get the October edition out on time using WORD for the first time. There are several advantages to becoming adept at WORD, the foremost being the opportunity (in the not-too-distant future) of sending BRAGS newsletter directly to members via e-mail. In the meantime, I will be able to send the final draft directly to David and Anne for printing and mailing.

Please overlook clumsy editing for the next few newsletters as I strive to master the intricacies of WORD. MM

My Favorite Plant Today is . . . Aconitum carmichaelii 'Arendsii'



I love perennials that start growing very early in the spring, and then culminate with a glorious burst of colour in the autumn. My favorite plant, right now, is *Aconitum carmichaelii* 'Arendsii'. It is one of the first perennials to start showing its foliage in the late winter, often starting before I have cleaned up last year's dried stems. It keeps growing all season long and when everything else is finishing up, it finally blooms - about mid-September for me.

As you may have guessed, after growing for 6 months, *Arendsii* is one of my monster plants. I have it located in full sun (it will also take part shade) at the bottom of a hill so it is in a very moist, but well-drained location and this, along with an annual topdressing of compost or manure, usually results in a plant that is 8-9 feet tall. This year, even with our hot dry weather, it has reached 7 feet. The stems are straight and strong, but because they are so tall I do put some support around the base of the plants so that when it rains, the weight does not snap them off at the base.

The upper sepal of each *Aconitum* flower develops into a large, helmet-like structure that resembles the hood worn by medieval monks, hence the common name of Monkshood. *Arendsii*'s flowers are the most incredible deep blue-purple that goes so well with all the other autumn colours. Its leaves are a rich, dark green that are deeply divided into 3-5 lobes.

All parts of *aconitums* are poisonous, so it is important to always wear gloves when working with them and to consider this in their placement if you have children around. Being such a tall plant, it is a natural for the back of a border where it should be safe.

Also known as the Autumn Monkshood, this perennial is extremely hardy, surviving temperatures to -45°C. It is a clump-growing perennial that bulks up quite nicely and is easy to divide. I just push the dirt aside, grab onto one of the tuberous segments and gently pull it apart from the main clump - it really is that easy. I was able to remove eight pieces and pot them up for the plant sale and my plant didn't even notice. If you're interested in trying this *Aconitum*, look for some at the BRAGS plant sale.

Diane Allison

Plant Propagation by Semi-Hardwood Stem Cuttings

Propagating plants through cuttings is easy and rewarding. A cutting is simply a small part cut from a mature plant, prepared & treated in such a way that it can grow into a new plant. The four main types of stem cuttings are herbaceous, softwood, semi-hardwood, and hardwood. These terms reflect the growth stage of the stock plant. Semi-hardwood cuttings are normally made from late summer to fall. Many broadleaf evergreen shrubs, woody ornamentals & some conifers are propagated by this method. Visit the BC Ministry of Agriculture's website for complete list at: BC Ministry of Agriculture/Propagation of Woody Ornamentals (PDF file).

Early morning is the best time to take cuttings. It is important to keep the cuttings cool and moist until they are stuck. Cuttings should generally consist of the current or past season's growth. Avoid material with flower buds if possible. Remove any flowers/buds when preparing cuttings so the cutting's energy can be used in producing new roots. Take cuttings from healthy, disease-free plants, preferably from the upper part of the plant.

Remove a shoot about 6 inches long off the main stem so that a thin sliver of bark and wood remains from the old stem. Remove the leaves from the lower one-third to one-half of the cutting. On large-leaved plants, the remaining leaves may be cut in half to reduce water loss.

Trim with a sharp knife, nip out the growing tip and dip the base of the cutting in rooting hormone. Insert the cuttings one-third to one-half their length into the soil. Avoid direct sunlight. Keep the soil moist until the cuttings have rooted. Rooting will be improved if the cuttings are misted on a regular basis. Some cuttings take very easily, such as boxwood, lavender, hebe, rosemary, skimmias, euonymus & senecio and can go straight into the ground. If you have space you should set aside a shaded, cool area in the garden as a cuttings bed. Others are slower and may need some extra help maintaining high humidity around the cutting. A greenhouse is not necessary for successful propagation. However, you can use pots--covered with a bottomless milk jug or covered with a clear plastic bag. Plastic trays can be covered with clear plastic stretched over a wire frames. Trays/pots must have holes in the bottoms for drainage. Or, use either method shown to cover cuttings in your garden bed. Stake so plastic does not rest on the cuttings.

Have fun and be daring - experiment! It's a wonderful way to increase your stock and before you know it, you will have lots of plants to give to friends or PLANT SALES!!!

Susan McDougall

Divide & Conquer!

October is one of the best months to take stock of your garden; deciding which plants need to be 'downsized' before winter die-back. Some perennials have just become massively huge over the summer, with leaves overflowing their boundaries. Now is a great time to split them, either repositioning the divisions within your own garden or setting them aside in a bed or sheltered pot to keep for BRAGS April Plant Sale!

SM

BRAGS' Year at a Glance

October 4, 2006
Bamboos
Ray Mattei*

November 1, 2006
June Hunter - Garden
photography on tiles

December 6, 2006
Elections and
Potluck Christmas
party

January 3, 2007
Still to be decided

February 7, 2007
Les Clay -
Rhododendrons

March 7, 2007
Still to be decided

April 4, 2007
Dave Hutch -
Native plants for the
Home Garden

May 2, 2007

June 6, 2007

Meetings: 7:00 pm
Burnaby Village Museum
(Discovery Room)
6501 Deer Lake Avenue
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* **Ray Mattei** has been growing and producing bamboo in his gardens for over 25 years. He has over 50 varieties ranging in height from 2 to 45 feet in his nursery called Tropic to Tropic in Delta. He not only teaches people how to choose the proper bamboo for their particular gardens, he also teaches how to eradicate the varieties that are not good choices for the urban garden. Peter Barnsdale

Garden Contest Winners Announced

At a lovely Reception held at Shadbolt Centre on September 17, the top 5 winners of this year's Burnaby Garden Contest were announced:

First: Brian & Coni O'Neill

Second: Darlene Johnston

Third: Deanna Harris

Fourth: Moira & Phil Nichol-Haig

Fifth: Jean Burtnick

Honourable Mentions:

Bill & Susan Malkin -
Best natural looking water feature

Dale & Pat Rusnell -

Best chafer beetle garden transformation

G. Zalwnardo -

Best vegetable garden

Helen Vaughan -
Best water-wise colourful boulevard garden

Kristyna Votik -
Best new patio garden

Over 80 invited guests including garden contest and garden tour participants were treated to an exceptional slide presentation of their gardens prepared by David Forsyth with commentary by Heather MacKay. Photos of the garden contest were taken by Diane Allison and those of the tour by David Forsyth.

Also attending were Mayor Derek Corrigan and Parks & Rec Commissioners, Brian Pound, Brenda Wagg and Coni O'Neill.

South Burnaby Garden Club

monthly meeting will be held on October 3rd earlier than usual at 6:30 on the 2nd floor, Bonsor Recreational Centre. This month we will feature a Potluck Dinner and a Fundraising Silent Auction. Guests are always welcome. Bring your favorite Pot Luck dish, enough to feed 6, or those who are unable to bring food can still enjoy dinner for a \$5.00 per person fee. While you munch on some home cooking, you can do some early Christmas shopping at our Silent Auction. You can bid on some lovely gift baskets, glassware, hand knitted wear, and many more surprises. See you there!

BRAGS Photo Gallery

A web photo gallery has been put together by David Forsyth with his photos of the Burnaby Garden Tours of 2004, 2005, & 2006.

Although it is a personal website, it can be accessed from the BRAGS website by clicking on the "Photo Galleries" button.

This section of the BRAGS website will hopefully be expanded in the future to include photos of other BRAGS events and photos by other photographers.

BRAGS 2006 EXECUTIVE

President
Cheryl Fiddis
435-2801
Vice-President
Diane Allison
929-8020
Treasurer
Janice Bobic
298-6164
Secretary
Beverlee Birce
525-0201

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298-9059
Nominations
Val Wuensche
Marti Tutti
Publicity
Maureen Lakness 299-6800
Rhododendron Festival
David Forsyth
298-6350

OTHER COMMITTEES

Garden Contest
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Garden Tour
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Newsletter
Margot Moser
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Anne & David Forsyth
Plant Sale
Anita Werk
437-3838
Susan McDougall
432-9641
Raffle & Greeting
Val Wuensche
298-2836
Judy Wellington
434-8287
Refreshments
Wendy Snyder
937-0556
Speakers
Peter Barnsdale 421-8987
Website
David Forsyth 298-6350

* "Autumn is a second *
* spring when every *
* leaf is a flower." *
* Albert Camus *
* French existentialist *
* author & philosopher *
* (1913 - 1960) *
