

*April 2019!*



Hurray! It's April at last!

So many plans to make, so much work to do, so many things to plant in the months ahead! And yes, so much fun! Let's go outside!

During her winter trip to sunny Puerto Vallarta, Wendy became interested in the history of Vanilla. She has provided a write up and picture she took, of this amazing spice. Thank You Wendy!

### *Vanilla*

Vanilla is the only edible fruit of the orchid. The Totonacs of Veracruz, Mexico are credited as its first cultivators. The Totonacs considered vanilla a sacred herb and used it in ritual offerings, as a perfume and for medicine, but rarely as a flavoring. By the early 1400s, the Aztecs added to the mystique of vanilla by combining it with chocolate. When the Spanish explorer Hernan Cortez first met Emperor Moctezuma, during a religious ceremony, Cortez was offered a very exotic, special and original drink, which was named "Xocohotl". The drink was basically Chocolate and Vanilla. It so pleased Cortez that he inquired as to its special original flavor and fragrance; he was told it was Vanilla (Little Sheath) which describes the shape of the Vanilla pod. Cortez was so impressed that he returned to Spain with a supply of Vanilla beans to add this special flavor and fragrance to the palate of the Spanish King. During that period of time, because of the rarity and extraordinary cost in shipping, it soon became the exclusive beverage of all Aristocrats and Royalty in Europe. During the next 300 years, Mexican Vanilla was transplanted to various tropical regions throughout

the world, without success.

Vanilla, a species of a climbing Orchid, grew beautiful foliage and flowers in each of these regions, but never produced any Vanilla pods.

A mystery to the world until 1836, a Frenchman observing very closely the original Vanilla plant, in Mexico, discovered the reason. Each of the orchid blooms was visited by the small Melipona bee. This specialized little creature provided the pollination which produced the fruit! Only in Mexico is the Melipona bee found.

The most rich and authentic vanilla grows in the state of Veracruz, Mexico, near the Gulf of Mexico.

Since this discovery, Mexican Vanilla has been produced in other tropical regions of the world, but only through artificial pollination.

This is the reason why Mexican Vanilla is the finest for flavor and fragrance throughout the world, and truly is the King of Vanillas!

It takes approximately 18 months for a vanilla cutting to produce its first flowers. The small yellow-green orchid blooms for only a few hours before wilting unless it is naturally pollinated. The pollinated orchid will produce a long green bean in a few weeks, but the bean must remain on the vine for nine months to develop its complex flavor and fragrance profile. Yet when the beans are harvested, they have neither flavor nor fragrance until they go through an arduous curing and drying process.

Methods of curing and drying vary, but in all cases, the enzymatic process in the live beans must be halted to prevent fermenting. This is accomplished through heating in ovens or blanching in hot water. The beans are then placed in the sun each morning for weeks, or sometimes months, before being placed in large wooden boxes and allowed to sweat. The beans will lose nearly 80% of the original moisture content before their more than 250 natural flavor and fragrance components are completely developed. The entire process from pollination to shipment takes about one year.

Vanilla is the second most expensive spice (after saffron) due to the extensive labor required to grow, harvest, and cure the vanilla beans.



~ photo by Wendy

Remember, if you have anything to share, - stories or pictures that you think our BRAGS members might enjoy, please send them on! If you've been on a vacation, or visited a local attraction, and saw something of interest, don't be shy. We'd love to hear all about it!

Send to Cheryl Fiddis @ [ecfiddis@telus.net](mailto:ecfiddis@telus.net)

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***Your April Birth Month Flower***

Since this is the April issue, this month we wish all those with their birthdays in April a sunny day!

***Daisy and Sweet Pea***

Cheerful daisies, like *Leucanthemum 'Darling'*, represent April birthdays. While they often symbolize beauty, innocence, love or purity, they can also mean, "I'll never tell." Sweet peas are also birth flowers for April.



***31st Annual  
Rhodo Festival & Plant Sale!  
Sunday, May 5th, 2019  
New Name: Burnaby Blooms!***

We have met with the City and are pleased that they have responded to our discussions. The City will move forward with a plan to generate more attendance and excitement in the Rhodo Festival. To that end, they have decided to rename and rebrand the event, so welcome to the 'Burnaby Blooms' Festival! The theme will be more broadly flowers and gardening but will still feature the city flower prominently. They haven't yet finalized the finer details but wanted us to be the first to know. They have also secured the involvement of the Horticulture division of the City to ensure the event is supported well by subject experts.

On our end, we are hoping that our newly purchased aprons will not only look smart but also be functional. We still need volunteers on **Saturday, May 4** for setup and **especially on Sunday, May 5** at the Festival. The tasks required are diverse (i.e. distributing posters, picking up and organizing plants, skirting tables, directing traffic, cashiering, answering questions, cleanup etc). If you are able to volunteer, please sign up at the next meeting or contact Verna Adamson at: 604-544-4006, by email at [v\\_adamson@shaw.ca](mailto:v_adamson@shaw.ca) , or Bev Glover at: [bglover@telus.net](mailto:bglover@telus.net).

Thanks! Verna

***And our Plant Sale...***

Thank you to Linda's sister Lorraine who has offered to be the Plant Sale Assistant! See you there!



## **BRAGS EXECUTIVE**

### **President**

Wendy Thompson

### **Vice-President**

Bev Glover

### **Treasurer**

Susan Brandl

### **Secretary**

Linda Cholette

### **Past President**

Verna Adamson

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## **STANDING COMMITTEES**

### **Membership**

Anne Forsyth

### **Nominations**

Verna Adamson

### **Publicity**

Evelyn Crawford

### **Rhododendron Festival**

Verna Adamson

Bev Glover

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## **OTHER COMMITTEES**

### **Plant Sale**

Linda Cholette

### **Newsletter**

Cheryl Fiddis

Anne & David Forsyth

### **Welcome Desk**

Judy Wellington

### **Refreshments**

Faye Kilpatrick

### **Speakers**

Beth MacLaren

### **Website**

David Forsyth

## **BRAGS Membership**

Still only \$12 per year, BRAGS members share various gardening interests and enjoy monthly guest speakers, plus are entitled to discounts of regularly priced items at GardenWorks and other garden centres, simply by presenting their membership cards. Monthly meetings (excepting July & August) start at 7 pm at the Burnaby Village Museum, - Main Building, up on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Easy to get to with ample free parking and refreshments are served! Please join us! Also, if you wish to switch to 'digital only' newsletters to keep our costs down, please speak to David or email him at [info@brags.ca](mailto:info@brags.ca).

## **Upcoming Meetings Events/Club News**

### **April 3, 2019 Meeting**

Well known to the BRAGS group, Barry Roberts, 'incorrigibly obsessive about Hydrangeas', will give a presentation talk on the fascinating Hydrangea. You won't want to miss this one!

### **May 1, 2019 Meeting**

Pending...stay tuned!

### **May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019 – 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Rhododendron Festival, Now known as Burnaby Blooms!**

Save the date, as it's getting close! All members are encouraged to help once again. More details to follow at both our upcoming meetings, our website, and this newsletter.

### **June 5, 2019 Meeting**

Pending...stay tuned!

## **Out & About Etc...**

### **Gardenworks Customer Appreciation Days**

*April 18, 2019*

Mark the date for 15% savings all day!

### **Tuber Sale – April 13, 2019**

The Vancouver Dahlia Society's annual tuber sale will be held from 10 am to 3 pm, April 13, 2019 in the Floral Hall, VanDusen Botanical Garden, 37th and Oak St., Vancouver, BC.

Free admission (doesn't include admission to the Garden).

More information is available from Norm Sharp at:

[nssharp@gmail.com](mailto:nssharp@gmail.com) or [www.vancouverdahliasociety.com](http://www.vancouverdahliasociety.com).

