



# THE LEAF

THE LYNN VALLEY GARDEN CLUB

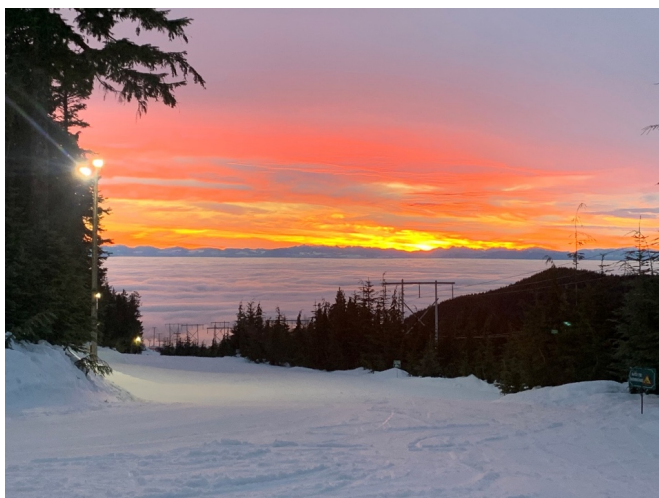
Established 1943

## President's Message – Lorraine Robson

During the recent temperature inversion, warm air up in the North Shore mountains trapped a layer of colder air below, resulting in a layer of fog over the city and ocean. That fog reduced visibility at the elevations where most of us live, but it was possible to drive up above the fog layer to ski in the sunshine above. The sunsets were spectacular! In this photo of the cross-country trails on Hollyburn, it almost looks like we could ski down the Powerline and carry on across the fog to the mountain tops of Vancouver Island. While my husband and I ski there three times a week, I never tire of the natural beauty. Whenever I get to enjoy a few bonus hours of sunshine above the clouds, I am reminded that even on the cloudiest of days, the sun is always shining above us all; we just can't see it.

Likewise, as members of our garden club, we can't always see everything that is going on behind the scenes to make our meetings and other club

activities happen. Our Plant Sale, for example, takes a lot of planning by the Members at Large (MALs), especially under the extraordinary circumstances of the past few years. Those of you who grow seedlings or pot up divisions from your garden for our Plant Sale in May have some insight into what it takes to participate in our club's biggest fundraiser. Some may not be aware of all the work the MALs have done in locating and confirming suitable sites, designating how many and which plants go to each site, organizing them by sun or shade, preparing the cash float, and calling for additional hands to help ID, label, price, and sell them. Without the many contributions of plants and time, we wouldn't be able to afford the calibre of speakers we enjoy or to donate to as many worthwhile garden-related community projects.



Sydenham, Angie Wild (sunset photo)

Similarly, though our Zoom meetings start at 7:00, it may not be obvious that some members of the Executive have logged on 30 minutes earlier to make sure all the Zoom settings are correct and working so that the guest speaker is able to share their screen so you can see and hear the presentation. If we held our business meeting *before* the speaker as a few members have requested, we would have quite a big gap in between while we set up for the speaker. The sequence of speaker before the business meeting minimizes the

### LVGC MEETINGS

Non-Pandemic: 3rd  
Thursday of each  
month (except July  
and August) non-  
pandemically at  
St. Stephen's Church  
1360 E 24<sup>th</sup> Street

Pandemic: ZOOM  
MEETINGS WILL START  
AT 7PM

### SPEAKER

KRISTEN MISKELLY

### MEADOWMAKING

FEBRUARY 17, 7 PM

We have managed to get  
rid of our PO Box as we  
get 99% junk mail.

Consequently, if you need  
to contact anyone at LVGC  
please use email or phone!  
If you must send a thing –  
phone to get the address  
and send it to a VIP (list is  
on the next page)

**PLEASE USE  
ELECTRONIC ACCESS**  
Your emails are welcome!  
lynnvalleygardenclub@gm  
ail.com

## Executive 2022

### President

Lorraine Robson x

### Vice President

Gillian Konst x

### Secretary

Sarah-Jane Gray x

### Treasurer

Donna Wasylik x

### Membership

Barb Downman x

### Members at Large (MAL)

Penny LeCouteur x

Ann McKinnon x

Courtney Mitchell x

Marilyn Bullock x

Brenda Reid x

## Committees

### Newsletter Editors

Maria Issa x

Margaret Campbell x

### Plant Table

Norma Buckland x

### Hospitality

Sharon Carabetta x

Susan Nicholls x

Daphne Page x

### Sunshine / Door Prizes

Rosamond Hughes x

### Website

Aline Burlone x

### Executive Meetings

By Zoom, 1st Wednesday of each month, 7PM

### Next Newsletter Deadline

Beginning of MARCH

If you have material to delight your fellow members - please

submit it *via* the time-honoured routes or email to

<mailto:lynnvalleygardenclubnew>



[sletter@gmail.com](mailto:sletter@gmail.com)

Thanks to all who contributed to this edition: Margaret Campbell, Anna Marie D'Angelo, Barb Downman, Linda Howe, Gillian Konst, Susan Mar, Lorraine Robson, Lauren Saba, Linda Schell, Wayne Smith, Jen

time all our members are waiting. The 5-minute tea break (Did I hear “pee break”?) was implemented to give us all a chance to stretch and top up our mugs. Even if you don’t need a break, I hope no one will begrudge five minutes for the comfort of others. I am so looking forward to hearing **Kristen Miskelly** of Satinflower Nurseries in Victoria speak this month! If there’s an upside to Zoom meetings, it is that we are able to book interesting, knowledgeable speakers from much farther afield than in the before-times.

Thank you to everyone who wrote to say how much they enjoyed the January meeting! Your feedback means a lot to me and the rest of the Executive and Committee members who help make our meetings possible. If you have one or two *photos to share in our Bright Spots segment, please send them to me by Tuesday, February 15* to give me time to organize them so they will be accessible to share from my desktop at our next General meeting.

Our LVGC Facebook Group is waking up to the signs of spring and beginning to post again. Our members post some lovely photos, tips on great plant finds, offers of recycled pots and free plants and seeds, and store) and send a “Friend Request” to me. There are other Lorraine Robsons on Facebook, so be sure to choose the one with the pink peony photo beside the name. When I receive your Friend Request, I can send you an invitation to the LVGC Facebook Group. Since we are a “closed” group, only members of our club can join, and we can stay free of advertising. Please ask if you have questions.

My garden is waking up, too. I saw my first fully open crocuses today (Feb. 6) in my sunny front garden though the snowdrops in my shadier back garden are not quite blooming yet. Note to self: move some snowdrops to the front garden while they are “in the green” just after blooming. Between ski trips up above the clouds and time spent preparing agendas, figuring out how to handle new tasks on Zoom, writing messages for The Leaf, and replying to LVGC email, I hope to trim the tatty old leaves from my *Epimediums* (Bishop’s Hat or Fairy Wings) before the flowering stems appear. Since I haven’t yet trimmed the old leaves on all my *Hellebores*, I need to do that this month to prevent any blackspot from spreading to the new leaves. Some years I can prune my roses in February, but I’ll wait till the Forsythia blooms to know that the worst frost is over and they are less likely to suffer dieback. If you live above the Upper Levels highway (25th), then you might need to wait a week or so longer, but watch for the *Forsythia* in your neighbourhood. Watch, too, for the sunlight and signs of spring. Even though we often see the light only briefly in February as it sinks below the level of the clouds towards the horizon, remember it is always shining and we are turning, turning towards spring!



## SPEAKER

### KRISTEN MISKELLY

#### *“Helping You Help Nature”- Turning Your Lawn into a Native Plant Meadow*

This month we will welcome **Kristen Miskelly**, co-owner of Satinflower Nurseries, who will be sharing her expertise on **Meadowmaking**.

Kristen is passionate about conservation, ecosystem restoration, native plants and native plant propagation.

She is a biologist with a specialty in the botany and ecology of southeastern Vancouver Island. Among other projects she helps coordinate the Haliburton Biodiversity Project and is on the Steering Committee for the Cascadia Prairie Oak Partnership. Kristen teaches a variety of workshops and courses and is a sessional lecturer at the University of Victoria, teaching “Ecosystem Design through Propagation of Native Plants” and “Urban Restoration and Sustainable Agricultural Systems

Check out her website: [satinflower.ca](http://satinflower.ca), to learn more about Satinflower Nurseries, her native plant, seed and consulting business where you will find lots of great information!

## REPORTS

### ***Vice President – Gillian Konst***

(From the Exec Minutes) Gillian has the following great speakers plotted:

March 17: **Maria Valana on Plant Division (Pencilled in)**

April 21: **Kevin Kelly on the 4 Season Garden**

### ***Treasurer – Donna Wasylik***

Bank Balance at the end of Dec	\$ 12453.83
<u>In Petty Cash</u>	<u>\$ 100.00</u>
Total	\$ 12553.83

(From the Exec Minutes) The 2021 Audit Letter was received from auditor Judy Lashley: The contents of the letter, in brief, state that the LVGC's finances for the 2021 fiscal year are in proper order. Donna read a thank-you from Judy Lashley for the \$25 Maple Leaf gift card.

### ***Bank E-transfer:***

We are pleased to offer e-transfer as an additional form of payment for club members. It is important that you state the reason for your transfer so that it can be applied to the appropriate income account: *ie* The Dig, Plant Sale, Membership, etc. Please keep in mind **that e-transfers for membership** must be made during the new membership year. So far Donna has received 4 e-transfers to date for membership dues owed.

The email to use for e-transfer is: [LVGC.Treasurer@gmail.com](mailto:LVGC.Treasurer@gmail.com).

### ***Membership – Barb Downman***

Thank you to all of you who renewed your memberships for 2022! Your continued support for the LVGC during these challenging times is greatly appreciated. With the volume of renewals and the strong uptake from people on the waitlist, we have now reached the 150 member maximum allowed under the LVGC constitution.

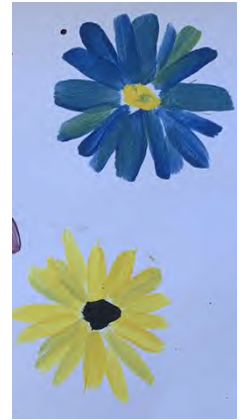
Please join the Executive in welcoming our new club members: Tana Bullock, Randy Cobbett, Geoff Cundiff, Val Cundiff, Michael Curry, Linda Downs, Gwen Dunbar, Shelly Elgar, Stephen Lefroy, Denise Manarovici, Jessica McCulloch, Laura Moxon, Denise Rose and Doreen Wakefield. We look forward to meeting all of you "virtually" over Zoom and "in person" when normal meetings resume.

The 2022 membership cards were mailed on January 24. Please contact Barb by e-mail or by phone if you haven't received your card.

### ***MEMBERS AT LARGE - Marilyn Bullock, Penny Le Couteur, Ann McKinnon, Courtney Mitchell, Brenda Reid***

Ann McKinnon will be taking over from Penny (who is cheering) to lead the MAL team this year. We are confident that we will be able to have our annual Plant Sale in May, although we do not yet know whether it will be a distributed sale similar to last year, but more widely advertised to the public, or if the St Stephen's Church Hall will be available. So, as you dream about gardening on these still cold mornings, please consider the many plants you could plant or divide, to provide to our sale. Remember that **hostas are a hit** and *neither orange day lilies nor grasses will sell well*.

Stay tuned for information in March about the delivery of soil, pig poo, labels, and pots to use for all those plants you are digging up. If anyone has a large stash of pots they want to offer to the club, please contact Ann McKinnon.





## Member Profiles

## - Barb Downman, Membership

Since we still can't meet in person, I thought it might be fun to do a series of member profiles so we can get better acquainted while we wait for in-person meetings to resume. Over the next few months, I will be reaching out to invite you to participate (selected randomly so we get a good mix of interests and gardening experience). However, if you would like to volunteer to be interviewed for a profile, I would love to hear from you.

Because I would never ask you to do something I wouldn't do myself, first up is my member profile followed by that of my friend Susan Mar.

### Barb Downman: LVGC member since May 2016, Membership Committee since 2021

#### What is your earliest garden memory?

There was a small older house in my childhood neighbourhood that had a yard full of naturalized snowdrops and crocuses in late winter. This was followed by masses of bluebells, hyacinths and daffodils in the spring. It was pure delight for a child!

#### Tell us a bit about your garden (location, style, unique challenges)

I garden in Dollarton on a fairly sunny lot. Our garden has an east/west orientation with a slope to the south/east. The backyard has no wheelbarrow access so everything must be carried down (or up) a set of steep stairs. Our unfenced front garden is visited by deer.

#### What garden "moment" gives you a jolt of pure joy each year?

The first snowdrop to bloom is always a moment of joy. In most years I spy the first bloom in very early January (sometimes late December in a very mild year). It is always one of the *Galanthus elwesii* snowdrops that I dug up from my brother's 1940's era garden in Saanich on Vancouver Island. Nothing fancy but lovely with real garden presence due to their good size.

#### In what season is your garden at its best?

Late winter to late spring when the spring bulbs and hellebores are in bloom and the ferns are unfurling their new croziers.



Galanthus naming tutorial here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFrwMt5teVw>

#### Which garden writer, garden book, website, blog, do you find the most useful or inspiring?

I frequently visit [www.greatplantpicks.org](http://www.greatplantpicks.org) for information about plants that will thrive in our climate. I also really enjoy reading Dan Pearson's quarterly online magazine "Dig Delve". There are so many great garden sources both online and at local libraries it is hard to pick only one.



#### If you could change one thing about your garden, what would it be?

I'd have better hardscaping. We need new stairs, pathways and patio areas (the originals from 1969 are falling apart); some type of permeable driveway would also be great.

#### How has your approach to gardening changed over time?

I now garden with a much stronger focus on pollinator and wildlife habitat. I'm also much more aware of

water conservation and proper plant selection (plants need to be more adaptable due to our changing climate: tolerance for extreme winter wet and extreme summer drought & heat is quite a lot to ask of any plant!).

#### Other than gardening, what are your other interests?

Reading; walking; listening to music; watching movies; visiting art shows, galleries and museums; touring gardens; trolling for thrift store treasures that I can repurpose.

"Life is bristling with thorns, and I know no other remedy than to cultivate one's garden" - Voltaire

"Thank goodness for the refuge a garden provides in this mad, mad world! - Barb Downman

***What is your earliest garden memory?***

I have strong memories of my mom working in the garden (she always seemed to be gardening on her knees!). She loved annuals and planted 27 window boxes and tubs each year for North Hatley in the Eastern Townships of Quebec. She also loved roses. While I didn't inherit her love of annuals, I did inherit her love of gardening and roses.

***Tell us a bit about your garden (location, style, unique challenges)***

I garden in the Highlands area of North Vancouver. I'd describe my garden as messy as I didn't start with an overall plan. I just started gardening on what was pretty much a blank slate and the design evolved organically over time. I think of my garden as like walking through a museum filled with interesting plants.

A major challenge I face is a cedar hedge on my next door neighbour's property. This hedge pulls water and nutrients from my vegetable garden. I'm constantly having to dig up cedar roots (I've already dug out roots 3 times this year!) in order to garden in this area.

***What garden "moment" gives you a jolt of pure joy each year?***

The blooming *Sarcococca* (Himalayan sweet box) fills the garden with a lovely scent in January. When I smell that scent, I'm filled with joy and hope.

***In what season is your garden at its best?***

Late spring to early summer when the late spring bulbs are still blooming and the early lilies and roses are coming into bloom. I love roses and grow many different ones including many old rose varieties:

*Albertini* – copper coloured and deliciously scented; *Rosa Felicite-Perpétue* – a charming white noisette which rambles through the ivy hedge; and *Barbier* – a climber which also rambles and has delightful small yellow buds that open to creamy white.

***Which garden writer, garden book, website, blog, do you find the most useful or inspiring?***

I love Monty Don for his passion and interest. He teaches us to really look at design and shape. So many times we just glance at things. Monty really encourages us to look closely and attentively at the overall proportions of shrubs, trees and perennials.

***If you could change one thing about your garden, what would it be?***

More planning and less immediate planting would probably have been good in the beginning. I probably should still plan more but I love my garden just the way it is. I am inspired by my garden and the joy it brings me. During spring and summer you will find me in my garden, my happy place.

***How has your approach to gardening changed over time?***

I don't think it has changed much. I've always loved my garden and love being in the garden. It is a real passion of mine and keeps me interested and challenged. I'm always learning and have enjoyed sharing the enthusiasm of fellow gardeners.

***Other than gardening, what are your other interests?***

Reading; cooking; birding (I had 3 hummingbird feeders in rotation during the cold snap); walking with friends and my dog Willow; spending time with my two daughters and my grandchildren.



*"Little things seem nothing, but they give peace, like those meadow flowers which individually seem odourless but all together perfume the air. – Georges Bernaros*

*"I know that if odour were visible, as colour is, I'd see the summer garden in rainbow clouds." – Robert Bridges*



## *The Joys of Witch Hazel*

- Gillian Konst

Have you noticed the bright yellow flowers adorning that deciduous shrub? It is only February – what is it doing flowering now? And its delicate scent – can you smell that?

It is a genus of flowering shrubs in the family *Hamamelidaceae*, with three species in North America (*H. ovalis*, *H. virginiana*, and *H. vernalis*), and one each in Japan (*H. japonica*) and China (*H. mollis*). Blossoms may be red, bronze or yellow, and flowering times range from Spring to Fall.

According to Wikipedia, “The name *witch* in witch-hazel has its origins in Middle English *wiche*, from the Old English *wice*, meaning “pliant” or “bendable,” and is not related to the word *witch* meaning a practitioner of magic.” Nonetheless, the bark and leaves of the plant have long contributed their “magical” qualities to folk medicine, especially for skin care, and still contribute to some skin care products.

The most popular variety (seen here) is *H. mollis* because of its time of flowering and its yellow flowers. When everything else is grey and gloomy, its bright blossoms offer the promise of spring to come. Hooray!



## *Pruning, weeding, thinking about starting seeds*

- Linda Gilkeson

One of our favourite gardening gurus has sent out her newsletter. Her opening comments:

“Only last week I woke up to the fact that it IS January and that there ARE gardening tasks to get on with as the days get longer and the new season picks up speed. Snowdrops and other spring bulbs were already emerging and showing buds as the snow receded. February is a tricky month, often with at least one Arctic outbreak, so it is likely we haven’t seen the last of cold and snow, but with a spell of dry, mild weather forecast, there are a few things to do outdoors now.”

She goes on to discuss pruning, weeding, starting sweet potato plants, starting seeds.... But as she cautions,

“Don’t get too excited yet, though! It is too early to start veggies yet, but it is not too late to get seeds, pots, grow lights, potting mixes.”

If you do not regularly receive her newsletters, you might find them worth reading, so take a look at [www.lindagilkeson.ca](http://www.lindagilkeson.ca) (- Margaret)

## Tips for Growing Dahlias

sent in by Linda Howe

In April 2021, the Oregon State University newsletter published an interesting article about growing dahlias. As we approach Spring and planting time, here is a quick review of the useful tips offered in that article:

- Amend the soil with organic matter such as compost or well-rotted steer or chicken manure or add it to the planting hole. One of the best things to do is feed the soil.
- Get a soil test to know what nutrients your soil may be missing. Dahlias like a pH of about 6.
- Plant after all chance of frost is over and soil has warmed; April 15 to June 1, depending on where you live. Mother's Day is a great starting point or when you plant tomatoes in your area.
- Site in full sun in soil that drains well with eye facing up. Plant 6 inches deep and 2 to 3 feet apart depending on the size of the plant. Cover with only 2 or 3 inches of soil and fill in the hole as the plant starts to emerge.
- Place a strong stake next to each hole when you plant. The stake should be on the end of the tuber where the eye is emerging so the plant can be tied up in intervals as it grows. Waiting until the plant is growing can damage the tuber and/or the roots.
- Fertilize when plants start coming up with steer manure or a fertilizer with a balanced fertilizer like a 10-10-10 or 16-16-16. After initial fertilization, drop to a lower nitrogen fertilizer (the first number on the label is lower) or even use foliar fertilizer or fish and seaweed fertilizer. Feed again a month after planting and again another month after that. By mid-August stop using fertilizer.
- Water after planting and then only when the rains stop. Once plants are up, keep soil evenly moist but never soggy or the tubers may rot. Check moisture by sticking your finger into the soil up to the second knuckle.
- Snip off dead flowers to keep plant blooming. Disbud if you like long stems with just one bloom to put in a vase. Take the two baby buds off at the juncture of the main bud.



- Slugs love young dahlias. Bait or set out traps two weeks after planting and continue throughout the season. Earwigs can also be a problem. To help control them, keep debris away from the flower bed and don't let the soil get too wet. Some slug baits also are labelled for use on earwigs. Expert gardeners use iron phosphate bait at the beginning of the season and iron phosphate slug baits with Spinosad insecticide when the earwigs come out later.
- Dahlias will bloom until first frost and then turn brown and die back. At that point, you have the choice of leaving the dahlia tubers in the ground or digging them up. If they remain in the ground, cut back to 2 inches, cover with 4- to 6-millimeter black plastic and cover with mulch. They are more susceptible to dying from too much moisture rather than cold, so, again, well-drained soil is essential. Some people will leave the hollow stalks and hold it in place with a rubber band to keep the tubers from rotting.

•Alternatively, once a hard freeze has turned the plants brown, cut back stalks to about 6 inches and dig up tubers. Wash them and let dry for 24 hours in the garage on a tarp or newspaper; don't let them sit on concrete since it wicks away moisture. By now, one tuber will have grown into a clump of them. Divide by removing new tubers from main stem. Keep those with an eye and

store in crates or cardboard boxes with newspaper lining the bottom. Layer tubers in vermiculite.

- For more information, refer to the Extension pamphlet [Dahlia Culture](#) or attend the Portland Dahlia Society show the last weekend in August at the dance pavilion at Oaks Amusement Park in Portland. There's also a society [Facebook page](#) that gives more information and experts answer questions. See also <https://today.oregonstate.edu/news/fall-love-colorful-dazzling-dahlias>





## *In the Veggie Garden*

– *Wayne Smith*



It's so nice to come out and find leeks still fresh in the garden ready for the soup pot. These ones will go with the Turkey soup tonight!

I've been pruning back strawberry runners. These Albion ever-bearing plants just came out of winter storage. The roots are a bit dry. Last year, I found that the runners that were planted into the greenhouse beds early, did better. I'm going to get some seaweed and alfalfa pellets to make a tea for them. Last year I had good success making fish fertilizer for my tomatoes. Once the plants are bearing tomatoes, I will supplement them as needed with granular fertilizer.



This year's blend of organic tomato fertilizer is an all-in-one-bucket effort. I blended all ingredients in a special-for-the-job blender:

**Seaweed:** one Ikea shopping bag full,

**Fish:** two salmon I got for free (past their best-before date),

**Epsom salts:** 25 tablespoons,

**Alfalfa pellets:** six cups.

I did some reading, and I should add an air bubbler to grow the right kind of bacteria. I'm sure what I made will be ok but just in small amounts. Last

year was a very healthy crop. I pushed holes in the tomato bed about two feet apart and poured 1-1/2 cups in each hole, then raked the beds. I did add some extra alfalfa pellets and dolomite lime to the beds. I'll be starting my tomato seeds in early March.

I like to mark the different varieties with coloured tape wrapped around support clamps which clip to the twine holding up my plant. By marking the plants from the beginning this way, I don't lose track of the varieties.





## Midnight Roma: An Antioxidant-rich Purple Tomato

- Linda Howe

Researchers at Oregon State University have come up with a new tomato. Their chief vegetable breeder says:

"*Midnight Roma* is the result of crossing Oregon Star, a big, fleshy tomato good for slicing or paste with excellent flavor, and *Indigo Rose*, a dark purple tomato that contains anthocyanins\*, the same healthy



antioxidants found in blueberries. Both varieties were also developed at OSU.

Anybody into home canning would be interested. Chefs

like it for making sauces. Right now, *Serious Pie* in Seattle is using *Midnight Roma* to make pizza sauce.

For more details, take a look at their website: <https://today.oregonstate.edu/news/osu-releases-new-antioxidant-rich-purple-tomato>



\* Anthocyanins are colored water-soluble pigments belonging to the phenolic group. The pigments are in glycosylated forms. Anthocyanins responsible for the colors, red, purple, and blue, are in fruits and vegetables. Berries, currants, grapes, and some tropical fruits have high anthocyanins content.

## Should we be Gardening with Peat Moss?

- Laurel Saba

A recent article in the *New York Times* put forward a persuasive argument against the use of peat moss "because the consequences of its continued harvest on diverse peatland habitats, and the native plants and animals that inhabit them, are too high." Gardeners have long valued peat moss because of its benefits for growing strong and healthy plants, but the disadvantages are becoming distressingly obvious.

"The loudest argument ... in the call for "bogs, not bags" — as in, don't harvest it from the bog to bag it for sale — is the critical role of peatlands as vast carbon sinks. Peat extraction releases substantial CO<sub>2</sub>, a greenhouse gas, contributing to climate change."

As we have just survived a year that gave us dramatic illustrations of where climate change is leading us, perhaps we need to pay attention! The UK has announced a ban effective 2024, with it extended to 2030 for commercial growers, but there are no such bans for Canada (or the U.S.) so far. Perhaps as gardeners we need to start taking the initiative ourselves....



The article suggests experimenting with alternative soil mixes as we work to get our seedlings started.

"The current poster child of peat substitutes is coir, a fibrous waste product from coconut processing. Because plantations are in tropical and subtropical areas, often near saltwater, potassium, sodium and other salts have to be washed from the fibers. It is a marvelous material if it's of the right particle size and doesn't have the salt in it."

Another idea, a favourite of U.K. horticulturist Monty Don, is to compost some fallen leaves into leaf mold. Segregate a pile, mow over to shred it and then let it age. Screen or sieve the crumbly stuff before using. You can read more about this on [Monty Don's blog](#). We need to find new recipes for our potting and transplant soils. The *NY Times* article offers various suggestions for new "recipes" that we might try. You can read it at <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/02/realestate/gardening-peat.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

## Citizen Seed Trial

- Jen Sydenham

### Have you heard about the Citizen Seed Trial?

“Citizen Seed Trial (CST) is a public science program that engages gardeners and passionate growers in the process of seed saving and breeding. Every spring since 2016, we carefully select, prepare, and deliver hundreds of packages containing varieties of vegetable seeds to people across BC.

Each year we choose different varieties to trial based on particular characteristics that our team has identified as being valuable for BC growers while ensuring varieties are suitable and engaging for home gardeners.

CST participants can request certain breeds during the sign-up process and are encouraged to provide feedback that can be analyzed by our team for continued research and development.

We collect data through Seed Linked. Seedlinked is an online platform that allows our team to track and analyze data from CST participants. Home gardeners and growers enter information about their seeds' performance with guidance from us. The data is gathered and shared back with all participants and the wider plant breeding community through SeedLinked.

Whether it is on a balcony or in the garden, CST provides the public with an opportunity to not only engage with seed breeders but if they chose, to actively save and participate in local seed development. We offer detailed growing guidance, seed resources, and trial updates through our CST Facebook Group and regular newsletters, to encourage home gardeners in the quest to grow their plants. As a citizen science program, we expect real results from real people. We hope participants cultivate their passion for home gardening and help grow BC's seed development community.

**Please note: Sign up for the Citizen Seed Trial for 2022 is now closed.** Registration typically takes place between December and January. Please check back at that time to sign up for our 2023 trial. You are still welcome to join the Citizen Seed Trial Facebook group (Citizen Seed Trial (facebook.com)) and follow along, and to take part in any virtual or in person events/workshops for this season that we promote to participants.

For further details about our projects, see [info@farmfolkcityfolk.ca](mailto:info@farmfolkcityfolk.ca)

## Controlling Slugs and Snails

- Linda Howe

A newsletter from the University of Oregon reveals some startling news: the most successful weapon against slugs and snails is – wait for it – **bread dough!**

After years of experimenting with a wide range of chemical deterrents,

“... [r]esearchers used a range of food in addition to bread dough to determine which would be the most attractive bait, including beer, cucumber, lettuce, strawberries, citrus, tomatoes, hostas and Marmite (a yeast-based food product popular in Great Britain).

“We gave them a choice of food and they consistently went for the bread dough. ...They really, really like it. They went bonkers for it. Bread dough outperformed everything.”

Researchers theorize that it is the fermentation process that draws them. Who knew? Maybe there really is a cheap and easy solution to one of a gardener's most contentious problems after all! You can read the details at <https://today.oregonstate.edu/news/slugs-and-snails-destructors-crops-and-gardens-could-be-controlled-bread-dough>

[Since we're on the subject of fermentation...]



By drinking 130 bottles of wine you could save a bird





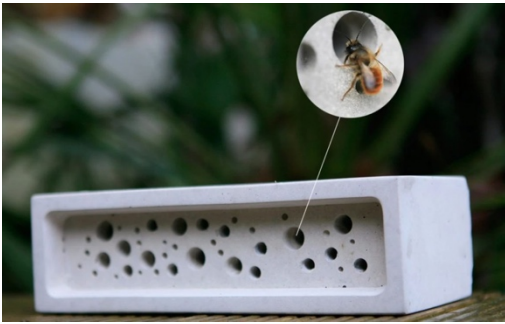
## Did you know about Bee Bricks?

-

Linda Schell

Bee Bricks are a UK product made in Cornwall using the waste material from the Cornish China clay industry. 75% of the brick is made from recycled materials and concrete, making it both strong and environmentally friendly, and the brick is made the same size as housing bricks so that it can be easily used in building. New buildings in Brighton are now required to include bee bricks!

These products are designed to house solitary bees – often referred to as Mortar Bees (or mason bees in Canada). The original intent was to prevent the bees from digging holes in the bricks of human houses, though nowadays there is a more benign focus on Save the Bees.



With solitary bees making up nearly 250 of the approximately 270 bee species in Britain, they play an important role in the natural ecosystem.

You can read more details at <https://www.nhbs.com/bee-brick>.



*"In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt."* - Margaret Atwood

## Ancient Trees

- Maria Issa

Trees – especially old trees – have stolen many headlines over the past months as protesters braved arrest at the Fairy Creek site and a book titled *Finding the Mother Tree* grabbed book lovers' attention. An article in the *Nature Briefing* newsletter has added some academic background.

"Trees can live for many centuries with sustained fecundity and death is largely stochastic. We use a neutral stochastic model to examine tree demographic patterns that emerge over time, across a range of population sizes and empirically observed mortality rates."

The article identifies three age classes of trees – mature, old, and ancient – and this contributes unique evolutionary diversity. The ancient trees are life-history 'lottery winners' that require many centuries to generate and are vital to the ability of forests to adapt. They also provide invaluable data about environmental history.

The conclusion of the study is that "Old and ancient trees cannot be replaced through restoration or regeneration for many centuries. They must be protected to preserve their invaluable diversity."

You can read the article at <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41477-021-01088-5>.

## A wonderful conversation between Jennifer Sydenham and Lorraine Robson

*(This is why LVGC is great: such conversations happen and they are sooooo useful for all of us!)*

"Hello Lorraine - just in case you remember - do you recall that we had someone come and speak on pollinators, and one of the things you were supposed to do was to leave your plants to die off in the winter and then cut them back in the spring? And same thing with leaving leaves *etc* on the flower beds? So my question is: *when is it ok to start the clean up?* I don't want to kill off all my little pollinators just as they are ready to hatch!

From Lorraine: "Such a good question! I worry about this every spring because there's no one right time to do the clean-up. Different species of insects are going to be nesting and emerging at different times throughout the year, so if we clear old stems away at any time, we're bound to be wrecking someone's home. Some people say it's safe to tidy up "when the houseflies emerge" or "when the trees leaf out," but that doesn't really account for the variation in insect life cycles. If you're trying to assist a particular insect,

you can learn about their life cycle and nesting/hibernating needs and try to create the right environment for them.

For example, some of our native bees (Mason bees) that emerge in early spring (mid-March) are looking for nests from April through to early June. They like hollow stems as nests, so it helps to leave about 24" of stem from last year's Joe Pye Weed, for example, as nesting spots for this year's bees. Then the new stems would grow up around them this year and you would leave the 24" stems till late March of the *next* year so those bees could mature and emerge. Other insects will have their own timetable, so you can see that it's not quite so simple as choosing one date when it's safe to remove old stems and tidy up.

The only things I tidy up in the fall are Hosta leaves because they turn to mush which attracts slugs; and peonies because the old leaves harbour disease which spreads to the new leaves if left in place over winter. I let the maple leaves fall on my perennial beds, and then in the spring, I gently uncover the earliest blooming bulbs. But I don't throw out those leaves; I just set them aside. Same thing with the stems that I cut down, in case something has over-wintered in them. I set them aside to give time for any late-waking insects to emerge. I'm not the tidiest gardener (or housekeeper!), and I have a great respect for all the

little creatures sharing my garden, so this works for me.

I think each of us needs to find a balance between tidying up and leaving things be - that works for us. I provide multiple water sources, including very shallow ones that insects can access without drowning, avoid all pesticides, have built low stone walls that provide homes to some insects (and probably serve as slug condos, too!), and grow plants that will bloom in sequence over a long time to provide food/pollen/nectar for insects. I try to be mindful of the possibility that I may be disturbing some insects when I work in the garden, but I try not to obsess about it because I also know that I've created a pretty safe habitat for them. Some people still insist on clearing away every scrap of plant matter as a way of minimizing disease, but if you leave healthy leaves to feed the soil, you can create a healthy ecosystem which helps plants resist disease.

I've attached a link (below) to a very useful site which explains the insect habitat topic in more detail: [Nesting & Overwintering Habitat for Pollinators & Other Beneficial Insects \(xerces.org\)](http://xerces.org/Nesting_and_Overwintering_Habitat_for_Pollinators_and_Other_Beneficial_Insects) I hope you find it interesting, Jennifer, and thank you for your consideration of the pollinators.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND OTHER GOINGS-ON

**Vancouver Master Gardeners 2022 - Spring Affair** - happening on March 27, 9AM-3:15 PM. It is entitled [Horti]Culture in a Changing Climate. You too can participate for a mere \$45, on line. Here is the link. <http://mgabc.org/node/3033>

**The UBC Botanical Garden** - "February in the Garden" can be accessed here: <http://mgabc.org/node/3033>

**The Earthwise Society** has all sorts of interesting webinars: have a look! <http://www.earthwisesociety.bc.ca/>

Apparently it is "The Year of the Garden" The Campbell River Garden Club has plans for an event-packed 2022 — a year that municipalities across Canada, including Campbell River, are proclaiming as Canada's Year of the Garden to recognize the benefits of gardens and gardening.

The BC Council of Garden Clubs' newsletter is here: <https://bcgardenclubs.com/resources/newsletter/>



## The Compost Bin – Maria Issa

Unlike many of the very competent veggie growers of LVGC, after epic failures, I have learned to content myself with an unkillable crop of lettuce and arugula that I chop relentlessly into the daily salad. Yes, I do one or two tomato plants – that yield one or two scrawny tomatoes: I'm definitely not the urban survivalist farmer. I try. Lord knows, I try. I look at Tom's and Bruce's harvest photos with undisguised, bright green envy. But either the soil is not what my veggies want, or the altitude is not to their liking, or the local slug-fest is not helping: the slimy nasties come in from the forest, eat my lunch, then retreat into the night. No excuses: this year – I'm going to get a head start. I've got this! As my 'veggie garden,' alias 3 ancient planters inherited with the house, have disintegrated, and given up their last



lump of dirt out the bottom; I have invested in new containers – check them out. Amazon had 5-gallon bags – complete with handles – so that Letty the Lettuce and I can chase the sunshine together. I have also invested in some nice green hoops and Costco clear leaf bags to go over the hoops: *abracadabra!!!!* I have small, portable greenhouses/cold frames. This year I will plant stuff before May... wait and see. I will have veggies – dammit. Tom, Bruce, watch out!!

As I'm writing this on Darwin's birthday (Feb 12), I must admit that much that I do – gardening or not – is definitely Darwinian. If – whatever it is – doesn't survive my ministrations, I deem it unfit, by definition. Only the strong survive (friends of mine can attest to this). My garden also reflects this. I experiment-plant at least 3 of anything – plug them in whatever holes are still available, into favourable/unfavourable conditions [soil, drainage, shade, what-have-you] and if one of the 3 thrives, I send a mental thanks to Uncle Charles, and don't bemoan the 'fallen' 2 too much. They support a healthy compost pile.

I do like a healthy compost pile – how did you guess? In Hungary, on the farm, we had pigs for home-grown soil amendment. Whatever was left, they got, processed into fertilizer, and grunted happily. In Vancouver, this winter, the snow was 3 feet – and so was the pile of kitchen collectibles. No pig. So having taken my leaky, smelly kitchen compost to said pile for the *n*th time, I cracked. I needed a pig: and I found my new gadget. [I also like gadgets, but that's for another time]. See picture. It's call the Lomi –

and yup, it does "pig". As the Latin saying goes, "*Purgamentum init, exit purgamentum*". [garbage in, garbage out]. You feed Lomi your kitchen collections – and push the button and several hours of gentle grunting later – it delivers pure loam. Nice, dry, powdery soil – that can go straight onto your houseplants – or your veggie plot, as the secret ingredient to success. It doesn't stink, it doesn't drip on your shoes or carpet, and it completes the circle of life.

Pela, who makes the Lomi, does give you some pelleted shots of bacteria to start the composting fermentation with, and apparently the temperature in the gadget is such that the good bacteria stay alive. That promptly reminded me of my microbiology days, and also my yogurt making-days – and the concept of 'inoculum': known to sourdough, kefir, yeast *etc* makers as the 'starter' or the 'mother'. So, I ran my first pile of peelings and kitchen droppings with the supplied bacterial culture, then kept a bit of the product to initiate subsequent processings. Works a treat.



I do remember that just like yogurt, or beer, or other fermented joys that require a starter – *inocula* do tend to 'drift' and change as one or other bacterial/yeast/fungus population outgrows the others. Where have you heard that before? Oh yes, same thing as the viral variants we're currently enjoying – the more they grow, the more new variants appear. If a mutation gives a virus and its progeny a survival advantage [we are back to Darwin here] then it will outgrow its relatives and will predominate – just like the more sour yogurt, or the beer that tastes 'off'. While we are hoping that COVID will become milder with time, the problem is, not all variants attenuate – quite the contrary! – as is now shown by a much nastier strain of HIV that has evolved and is becoming dominant (because there is no vaccine and the virus can multiply unhindered). So, on his

birthday, my Darwin Award will be given to the “irrationally and determinedly unvaccinated” who actively contribute to viral growth and evolution. The virus doesn’t respond to protests, unfortunately. It just multiplies, given the opportunity. And if you’re not familiar with the Darwin Awards – do check out the link. It will bring a smile to your face... and Lord knows, we all need that.

DO YOU KNOW OF ANY POTENTIAL ‘DIGS’ IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD? I’LL HAPPILY CHASE THEM DOWN IF YOU SEND ME THE PHONE NUMBER OF THE DUDE LISTED ON THE BIG DEVELOPMENT PERMIT PANEL.



Artwork by Wayne Smith