

Alpine Garden Club
of
British Columbia



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Summer 2011



Alpine Garden Club of BC

Internet Home Page: www.agc-bc.ca

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Meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month except, July and August, in the Floral Hall, VanDusen Botanical Garden. Doors and Library open at 7:00 pm and the meetings start at 7:30 pm. Please bring plants for the plant draw; the proceeds of which go toward paying for the hall rental.

Front Cover: *Viola congesta* in habitat, Laguna del Laja, Chile: Photograph by Alan Tracey

PROGRAMS

David Sellars

September 7: **Note date change.** This is the **first** Wednesday of September.

Gordon Mackay will speak on **Dwarf Conifers: The Backbone of the Rock Garden.** Gordon trained at Threave School of Gardening in Scotland and Pershore College in England. He came to Canada in 1994 and worked at Island Specialty Nursery. He now owns and operates Alba Plants in Cowichan Bay, albaplants.com and also works as a teacher/mentor in [Horticulture Therapy at Providence Farm](http://HorticultureTherapyatProvidenceFarm). Alba Plants strives to be a traditional nursery in the sense of raising plants on site. Gordon will have plants for sale at the meeting.

October 12: Paige Woodward will tell us about **Lilies of Western North America.** Paige Woodward is co-owner of Pacific Rim Native Plant Nursery, www.hillkeep.ca. She grows plants from around the temperate world and sometimes organizes study-tours to visit them in the wild. Species lilies are a highlight of the nursery's display garden.

November 9: Bill Terry will give a presentation entitled "**The Lizard of Oz, and other stories of plant hunting in South East Australia**". Bill and his wife, Rosemary recently spent three weeks botanizing in the 'Southern Alps' of S.E. Australia. Their travels took them into the highest regions of the country with lovely alpine meadows, as well as along the coastal forests. Bill lives in Sechelt and many of us visited his marvelous garden on an AGCBC tour last Spring. Bill specializes in plant propagation and has a splendid collection of Asiatic poppies featured in his recent book *My Blue Heaven*. More information at www.meconopsis.ca.

PLANT SALES

Mark Demers

The Fall sale will be on Sunday, September 25, at VanDusen Gardens floral hall. The sale will be open to the public from 1-4 PM. A wide variety of unusual plants from specialist growers are expected.

SEED EXCHANGE 2011

Marilyn Plant

The deadline for receipt of seeds this year is FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21.

Because of printing deadlines, seeds must reach us by that date. If for some reason your seeds might not reach us by that date you may send a list of your seeds, alphabetized if possible, by mail or e-mail (marilyn.plant@gmail.com). This list must reach us by the deadline. If seeds are wild collected please send information about where they were collected and any information about flower colour, height, etc., especially for unusual plants or plants that cannot be completely identified. A description of a garden grown plant that exists in more than one form or again is not completely identified is also useful to us. If it is possible please send an alphabetical list of your seeds. This helps enormously.

Seed donations should be sent in an envelope marked Flower Seeds Of No Commercial Value and mailed as early as possible to:

ALPINE GARDEN CLUB OF B. C.
c/o 4049 West 36th AVE.
Vancouver B.C..
Canada V6N 2T1

No permit is needed to send non-commercial seeds to Canada.

Any club member may order seeds but Donors get special privileges. To qualify as a Donor a minimum donation of five different species is required. North American members should donate this minimum in seeds native to North and South America. After that seeds from any region are welcome. Overseas members receive donor status for seeds from any area. The success of the exchange depends on the donors so they do get special privileges. They are able to order up to 60 packages (30 for non-donors) and get priority where seeds are in short supply so it does pay to make the effort to become a donor. Detailed ordering information will be sent out with the Seed List in the Fall Bulletin

Many thanks to all the donors who sent in so many interesting seeds and who made last year's Exchange a success. I hope that you are all

keeping the Exchange in mind as you enjoy your gardens and your Summer travels and I hope that we all have a good seed harvest.

Happy collecting.

OPEN GARDENS

Lisa O'Donnell

May14. This garden tour to south Surrey included the gardens of David and Wendy Sellars, Ann and Peter Jolliffe and Free Spirit Nursery, owned by members Lambert and Marjanne Vrijmoed.

Naturally, being a bit of a plant-a-holic, I went to the nursery first. After all, the rest of the Alpine Garden Club members were going to descend and I was keen to find some specific plants! Having visited the nursery only 2 weeks before and purchasing considerably more than I had intended, I knew this was dangerous!

When I arrived, Lambert was still conducting a tour of his garden. Marjanne and Monique greeted me warmly- hugs all round- not a bad way to start a shopping adventure! I found the *Pteridophyllum racemosum* that I had been looking for, and of course got a bit carried away in the 'Special' Section- there is a great selection of interesting and unusual plants, many only available here. I wanted at least one of everything! Lambert has a really great selection of epimediums, one of his favourite woodlanders. And it's not just plants-the plant supports are fantastic and the pot selection is gorgeous. Thanks to Lambert and Marjanne for providing us with such a beautiful, calm place to feed our need for incredible plants!

Next, I ventured off to find Ann and Peter's property- note to city planners- make streets that carry on without blocks of property in the middle! When I finally found their property, I drove up the driveway of freshly spread gravel. This is an indication of the energy here- the Tuesday before a Saturday garden tour, having 33 metric tons of gravel delivered and spreading it by wheelbarrow yourself! Wow.

The front beds are a work in progress- there are a few established plants, notably a large *Sambucus* 'Purple Lace' and many herbaceous perennials and bulbs- my favourite was a narcissus called 'Quail' - 3 flower heads per stem and scented!

Along the side of the house there is a *Paeonia rockii*, irises, martagon lilies, alstroemerias and a huge *Gentiana asclepiadea*, some in cages as there are many voles and moles. A large *Acer griseum* greets you as you round the back of the house, in the distance, a purple weeping beech and a quince anchor the garden. There are many treasures- including a dactylorrhiza that I tried to convince Anne to divide- no such luck!

The garden borders are all rocks- from the property and some traded for plants with the neighbours! Ann has placed every single one!

As one enters the greenhouse, it is obvious where Ann's true passions lie: growing from seed. There are pots on pots of wee and not so wee things emerging. Heat mats in a propagation box are working their magic.

Back outside, there are 70 year old blueberry bushes that produce about 200 pounds/year- sounds like there must be a large freezer somewhere!

Strolling down the other side of the house, through a shade garden under large conifers, it is a totally different feeling from the opposite side of the house. There are many hostas, ferns and other woodland treasures.

A very interesting and diverse garden to be sure, and we look forward to seeing some of those pots from the greenhouse at future sales!

I carried on to David and Wendy Sellars' garden. What a different feeling from the first two stops! There is a very steep drive and, having parked on the road, it is hard not to trip walking down it as you try to take in your surroundings! There is a huge rockery on either side of the drive- including much tufa with alpine treasures spotted over and around! There is a huge rockery on either side of the driveway



The pond in David and Wendy's garden. Photograph by David Sellars.

alpine treasures spotted over and around, in particular a *Lewisia tweedyi* in full flower growing on a cliff. David loves saxifrages, they abound amongst daphnes, azaleas, dwarf conifers and other rare treasures. A waterfall trickles down into a pond. I peeled my gaze away from these dainty delights to look at the surroundings, which include mature plantings of rhododendrons and Japanese Maples including a beautiful 'Koto no Ito'. As I continued along the path down the west side of the property, there is a huge pond, then another, surrounded with rhododendrons, trilliums, podophyllums and other beauties! Rounding the bottom of the property, there is a vegetable/fruit garden and further up, David's bulb frame, Alpine Shed, with potted plants in sand, and a greenhouse full of tomato and meconopsis seedlings. Again, there must be a large freezer somewhere!

There are many *Rhododendron quinquefolium*, which David grew from seed- these garnered much attention!

As I return to the front of the house, Wendy has baked all sorts of goodies for the visitors- all laid out on the verandah. Thanks Wendy!

This garden is a feast for the senses- so much to look at, smell, birds singing, truly stimulating in every way.

Thanks to all for allowing us to visit your beautiful and interesting gardens- it was a wonderful day.

May 28 This garden tour featured the gardens of Lisa O'Donnell and Glen Patterson.

Lisa's garden demonstrates a remarkable use of a small space to create a delightful garden full of interest. Each bed is carefully designed so that nothing looks overcrowded despite the display of hundreds of fantastic plants all beautifully grown. There was something of interest for everybody ranging from several tall *Chamaecyparis*



A portion of Lisa O'Donnell's garden.
Photograph by Elaine Peterson.

lawsoniana 'Wissel's Saguaro' to a tiny *Daphne cneorum* var. *pygmaea* beside a blue and white *Polygala calcarea*. The *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* is an intriguing upright evergreen conifer with sprays of deep blue-green foliage and twisting trunk with arms like the Saguaro cactus. There is an amazing variety of garden beds and a shady bed with a large *Trillium erectum* set off against *Arisaema griffithii* and *Pteridophyllum racemosum* was particularly attractive.

Everything was in pristine condition especially the precise lawn edges which set off the artistically planted garden beds. Although it contains a great number of eclectic plants, this is not just a Collector's Garden, it is an Artist's Garden.

Glen's garden makes an even more remarkable use of a small space than the previous garden! There are wee treasures tucked



Glen Patterson's rooftop garden.
Photograph courtesy of Glen Patterson.

everywhere and there is only barely room to walk around to see them. Glen loves dwarf conifers and there are many dotted throughout the garden. Limbs of larger specimens have been deliberately left over the ponds to prevent herons from fishing! The first impression is how big some of the trees are: all are cloud pruned to combat the constant ocean winds. Another interesting feature is the tufa rock which is planted directly on the deck in places, with holes drilled to hold plants. Glen has an insatiable appetite for plants and some of his favourites include *Tsuga mertensiana* 'Glauca', *Rhododendron* 'Snodrift', *Menzesia cillicalyx*, *Abies*

lasiocarpa var. *arizonica* 'Compacta', *Salix x boydii* and *Acer palmatum* 'Sharp's Pygmy'.

This is the garden of an experienced plantsman who finds much joy in every square inch of his little piece of heaven.

Tufa for DIGA

Bill Bischoff

Tufa is a calcareous, light weight and sponge-like, naturally occurring mineral and DIGA stands for "[Disabled Independent Gardeners Association](#)", a division of the Disability Foundation.

The members of DIGA operate garden plots at Pandora Park and Pearson Park Community Gardens that consists of raised beds where members in wheelchairs have easy access for the purpose of cultivation. The leader of this group of dedicated gardeners is the



Bill Bischoff with DIGA members at the Rock Garden Workshop. Photograph courtesy of Betty Cheung.

most devoted, Betty Cheung. During the past years Betty has invited my wife Carla and me several times to her club meetings to give slide-supported workshops. The latest was a request by Betty to show her fellow members how to make and manage a rock garden-like structure in a limited space. This is where Mirka Vintr entered the scene.

Some time ago, during a garden tour, Carla and I visited Mirka's tufa rock-garden which is constructed on a cement slab as part of her townhouse property. So impressed was I with her set up that it came immediately to mind. When asked, Mirka very obligingly agreed to be part of the planned tufa work shop. During a further conversation with Sean Rafferty, also a member of the Alpine Garden Club, he suggested a visit to Alleyne Cook and his charming wife Barbara of North Vancouver. Not only were we invited to tour their very inspiring garden, we were also treated to a lovely afternoon with sweets, beverages and a lot of gardening information and travel memories. All this in the search of tufa. In the Cook's garden there is a lot of tufa, all well placed pieces of rock and planted with a wide variety of alpine plants. We were also given several blocks of tufa to be used in future demonstrations.

During the seminar "Healthy Living through Nutrition" at the Spinal Cord Centre, where DIGA had a display booth, prepared tufa rocks were displayed, just to see the response we would create. Based on

the overall positive feed-back given to our display, we decided to proceed with the tufa work-shop.

We planned to prepare and plant tufa rocks at a meeting, one for each participating member. The rock pieces were graciously donated by Mr. Bryce Wolferden the owner of [Rocky Mountain Tufa Ltd.](#) Who lives near Brisco, BC, just north of Radium Hot Springs. Prior to our work-shop, the rocks were cleaned and most were pre-drilled with planting holes. Alpine plants were prepared into planting size cuttings. A special mix of a well draining planting mix was also prepared in advance. The accompanying slide show consisted of some 120 slides which were assembled using many sources including the internet. With this show we intended to demonstrate the origin of tufa and its diverse use in several parts of Europe and North America. We also provided pictures of alpine plants from mountainous areas of the world, suited for our purpose; keeping in mind that tufa is a limestone.

On a Friday, in early April, just after noon, the workshop started in the Cedar Room of VanDusen Garden. After the slide presentation, which lasted just about an hour, the

tables were rearranged to allow the participants to place themselves close to the edges of the tables. Because of the differences in shape and sizes of the tufa rocks, lots were drawn to avoid disappointment amongst the participants. Each member received several plant cuttings and a supply of soil.



Planting tufa at the DIGA workshop. Photograph by Betty Cheung

This is when the fun started. Seldom have I seen so much

interest and determination displayed by gardeners as by these members of DIGA. There were frequent calls for more soil, more cuttings, and additional planting holes needed to be drilled. While Mirka, Carla, and Betty were ready to lend a helping hand wherever needed, mostly these new tufa gardeners insisted to do all by themselves. Their determination and fervor was our hoped for gratitude. A fun filled day for everyone.

At this point I invite the members of the Alpine Garden Society to keep DIGA in mind when planning events and special meetings. Let's invite them whenever possible. Plan to visit them at their meetings. Offer help during the Summer with their garden chores. Plants, plant cuttings and seeds would be very welcome at any time. Whatever presentations you have, please offer them to the members of DIGA. Invite them to open garden events whenever practical. Whenever possible, show these so deeply dedicated gardeners that they are part of our views and feelings for the world we all live in.

During all the searching for plants suitable for rock-gardening with an alkaline material, I was rewarded with some new insights into some of the plants I am interested in at this time; the family *Gentianaceae*. There are two readily available species, *Gentiana acaulis* and *Gentiana clusii*. While looking almost alike, each one has a very special requirement, *G. acaulis* needs to be grown in an alkaline free situation and *G. clusii* definitely needs the addition of lime in its soil. The conclusion, when in doubt, plant both and add lime, the survivor will be *G. clusii*. *G. clusii* is the more desirable species, because it produces more flowers.

In conclusion I want to share a note from one of the participants at the tufa presentation, Eva Machelek, a DIGA volunteer-gardener: "thanks Betty for arranging the workshop. As usual, it was informative and enjoyable. The presenters were knowledgeable and personable and so well informative and enjoyable. If you're communicating with them, please extend my thanks. Eva"

***Tricyrtis* Wallich: mystery species from Kyushu Island Grahame Ware**

I am forever falling in love with plants and then delving into and confirming (or rejecting) their authenticity. Are they *really* what that label says they are? This really is the fun of being a lover of plants. Its part of our education as gardeners.

"Know what you grow" is a maxim that I live by. For myself it takes on an added urgency because it is vital that as a horticulturist that I not compound others' mistakes. It goes without saying that we all have a responsibility here in this regard. But for those of us in the business, it is an even greater one.

To this end then, in the latest installment of my garden's "Front Page Challenge" (an old CBC TV game show in case you were spinning in a point-of-reference purgatory), two plants have come into my garden from purchases made at the AGCBC sales.



Plant 1 is likely *Tricyrtis flava*
Photograph by Grahame Ware.

also became clear as the investigation unfolded, that neither of the plants is likely to be *T. affinis*.

(Let me make it clear here that I am not picking on anyone. Hopefully this exercise can and will be repeated in your gardens. And, yes, I'm sure that the shoe could very be on the other foot in the future.)

My [Sony DSLR-A300](#) fixed with f 2.8/50 mm Macro has allowed me to really see distinguishing characters.



Plant 2 is likely *Tricyrtis flava*
var. *ohsumiensis*. Photograph by
Grahame Ware

Here are the key differences between the two putative *T. affinis* plants:

Stalk

Plant #1: hairy, ciliate dark brown

Plant #2: smooth and stem green spotted brown

Leaves

Plant #1: hairy at base (petiole) and blotchy through centre and darkish green

Plant #2: leaves not hairy at base and spotted a brownish colour

Leaf edge

Plant #1: smooth, entire

Plant #2: new leaves ruffled with older leaves minutely serrate

Tony Avent and Dennis Carey in a good article on *Tricyrtis* (and there aren't many) says, "*Tricyrtis affinis* makes a tight clump, and some of the best forms have amazingly beautiful dark spotted leaves."

He also mentions that they are quite tall and get to 2'+. Other gardeners mention the purple and/or maroon stems. The height and size and the colour of the stems would seem to disqualify the plants I received as *T. affinis*.



Plant 1 showing hairy and blotchy leaves.
Photograph by Grahame Ware

Going to the current taxonomic literature (which is as sparse as the horticultural literature), I referred to the RHS Dictionary of Gardening (1999). What it demonstrates is that plant # 1

corresponds most closely to *Tricyrtis flava* Maxim. All of the morphological characters appear to be the best match for plant #1. Most importantly, the stems are hairy and the leaves "oblanceolate" and "blotched". It is also the right vertical dimensions as well getting to 20-30 cm. *T. affinis* as we mentioned earlier is considerably taller.

But what about plant #2?

Could plant #2 be *Tricyrtis ohsumiensis* Masum.? Note that both stems and leaves of *T. ohsumiensis* are described in the RHSDOG as smooth (glabrous). Leaves are described as being "pale green" but

there is no mention of spotted leaves in the RHSDOG. However, it notes that it is a denizen of Kyushu. But Avent says in his article that his *T. ohsumiensis* have spots. The second picture below looks like *T. flava* or a close ecotypical *forma* with its spots.

Avent/Carey say in their article, “*Tricyrtis ohsumiensis* makes a 1' tall clump of wide, lightly speckled, light green leaves, topped just above the foliage in early Fall with large, bright-yellow flowers.” They also believe that *T. ohsumiensis* to be a subspecies of *T. flava*. They both belong to the Section *Flavae* as demarcated by Brian Mathew.

I concur with Avent/Carey. It makes perfect sense and explains that one of the Kyushu plants is a *T. flava* (and hairy) and the other a *T. flava var ohsumiensis* (and glabrous) or a varietal *forma* of the type. As for the differences between “spotting” and “blotching”? Well...I'll leave that flavonoid idiosyncrasy for another time.

For now it is enough to know that it is highly probable that neither of them are *Tricyrtis affinis*.

Returning to the always central issue of the plantsman: “Know what you grow”, I see in the list of synonyms that *Tricyrtis kyusyensis* is a synonym for *T. flava*. This would seem to provide another very big clue?

At this point I await flowering for a definitive answer. The *T. flava* and *T. flava var ohsumiensis* have upfacing, yellow flowers. On the other hand, *T. affinis* has purple or raspberry splotched over white flowers that droop.



Tricyrtis 'Lemon Twist'. Photograph provided courtesy of Mona Larochelle and reproduced with permission.

I realize that the designation of a subspecies here is not an accepted botanical term but rather one that makes sense from a horticultural viewpoint. The fact that research has revealed that they are very closely related on a molecular basis seems to suggest that these two would make good hybrids. Indeed, Darrel Probst has done just that with his fine hybrid, *T. 'Lemon Twist'*.

Synonyms for *T. affinis*

Tricyrtis affinis forma albida (Makino) Okuyama

Tricyrtis affinis var. albida Makino

Tricyrtis clinata J.F.Macbr.

Tricyrtis hirta var. parviflora (Dammer) Masam.

Tricyrtis japonica var. albida (Makino) Masam.

Tricyrtis macropoda subsp. affinis (Makino) Kitam.

Tricyrtis parviflora Dammer

Synonyms for *T. flava*

Compsa flava (Maxim.) Kuntze

Tricyrtis kyusyuensis Masam.

Tricyrtis yatabeana Masam.

From CultureSheet.Org here are the taxonomically correct *Tricyrtis* Wallich. species and their synonymy.

Correct species

Tricyrtis affinis Makino

Tricyrtis chinensis Hir.Takah.bis

Tricyrtis flava Maxim.

Tricyrtis formosana Baker

Tricyrtis hirta (Thunb.) Hook.

Tricyrtis imeldae Guthnick

Tricyrtis ishiana (Kitag. & T.Koyama) Ohwi & Okuyama

Tricyrtis lasiocarpa Matsum.

Tricyrtis latifolia Maxim.

Tricyrtis macrantha Maxim.

Tricyrtis macranthopsis Masam.

Tricyrtis macropoda Miq.

Tricyrtis maculata (D.Don) J.F.Macbr.

Tricyrtis nana Yatabe

Tricyrtis ohsumiensis Masam.

Tricyrtis ovatifolia S.S.Ying

Tricyrtis perfoliata Masam.

Tricyrtis setouchiensis Hir.Takah.

Tricyrtis stolonifera Matsum.

Tricyrtis suzukii Masam.

Tricyrtis viridula Hir.Takah.bis

Synonyms

Tricyrtis bakeri Koidz. = *Tricyrtis latifolia* Maxim.

Tricyrtis chiugokuensis Koidz. = *Tricyrtis macropoda* var.
chiugokuensis (Koidz.)

Ohwi

Tricyrtis clinata J.F.Macbr. = *Tricyrtis affinis* Makino

Tricyrtis dilatata Nakai = *Tricyrtis macropoda* var. *macropoda*

Tricyrtis elegans Wall. = *Tricyrtis maculata* (D.Don) J.F.Macbr.

Tricyrtis esquirolii (H.Lév.) H.Hara = *Tricyrtis maculata* (D.Don)
J.F.Macbr.

Tricyrtis japonica Miq. = *Tricyrtis hirta* (Thunb.) Hook.

Tricyrtis kyusyuensis Masam. = *Tricyrtis flava* Maxim.

Tricyrtis makinoana Tatew. = *Tricyrtis latifolia* Maxim.

Tricyrtis masamunei Makino = *Tricyrtis hirta* (Thunb.) Hook.

Tricyrtis parviflora Dammer = *Tricyrtis affinis* Makino

Tricyrtis pilosa Wall. = *Tricyrtis maculata* (D.Don) J.F.Macbr.

Tricyrtis puberula Nakai & Kitag. = *Tricyrtis latifolia* Maxim.

Tricyrtis yatabeana Masam. = *Tricyrtis flava* Maxim.

Addenda

After I had put the above together, I came across a scientific article in the journal, **Plant Species Biology**. The research article (see link below to read it in its entirety) was published only in January of this year (2011) so the information is very current.

The essence of the article is that *Tricyrtis flava* has comparatively high species variation within its limited geographical range. This was not expected by the long time *Tricyrtis* researchers from Japan. Here's what I derived from the article.

This relict genus which is closely allied- believe it or not- to *Calochortus* has limited geographical scope but *T. flava* and *T. ohsumiensis* are self-compatible and demonstrated high fruit set. Thus, some morphological variation is to be expected and it is also likely to be greater than expected. ***The variations are likely to come from selfing and from zones where T. flava and T. ohsumiensis overlap.*** Given some of the common ancestry and the age of this genus, allopolyploidy (a form of polyploidy) is likely. This gives further impetus to the high likelihood of many forms of *T. flava* and *T. ohsumiensis*.

In turn, and within reason, it makes for any unwarranted pedanticism regarding what's what rather pointless. Thus, the use of the grexy, catch-all **forma** should be used when identifying these plants.

For the botanically curious, here is a link to the whole article.

Full article link:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1442-1984.2010.00297.x/full>

Bibliography

Avent, Tony and Carey, Dennis

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/47411453/Tricyrtis-Perennial-Toad-Lilies-for-the-Woodland-Garden> March 2010

RHS Dictionary Of Gardening, MacMillan, London 1999.

Links

John Jearrard has a good pictorial of *Tricyrtis* along with some cryptic observations about certain cvs., etc.:

<http://www.johnjearrard.co.uk/plants/tricyrtis/genus.html>.

A Wisconsin photographer, **Kris Chan**, has some good pics here:

<http://www.krischanphoto.com/gardens/tricyrtis/tricyrtis.htm>

Carl Jung, Shade-Loving Plants and Garden Variety Self-Realization

Grahame Ware

Carl Jung, the Swiss scholar and psychotherapist, was famous for his wide ranging interests and activities. In the field of psychology, he developed the idea that we all have a shadow side which is code for unrealized and repressed fears. Jung believed that real mental and spiritual health came about when we “owned” those fears. Jung asserted further, that after this acceptance (ownership of our fears as a core motivation of our behaviour) that the key lay with then *dis-identifying* with our shadow side. By doing this we could unshackle and liberate ourselves and become healthy human beings.

In the parallel world of gardening, we are all faced with shadow sides to our houses and property. As owners, the Jungian question is: how to embrace it and honour that shadow space and, in the process, beautify it.

Kindly take a seat (a ‘couch’ is sooooo Freudian) and let me see if I can play the role of the therapist/horticultural consultant and show you that you need have no fear of your dark spaces because your shadow friends await your kindly spade and trowel. You only need be Jung of heart!

Denizens of the Dark: Have No Fear, Your Shadow Friends Are Here!

The west coast is full of forest dwellers that regale in the shade, native plants that revel in shady situations. Where possible use those plants but don’t restrict yourself in unlocking the beauty of the dark side of your house and property.

Trees

At the top of the dark list is the hemlock (*Tsuga*). Our local species *mertensiana* and *heterophylla* are large trees. We don’t want timber trees in a small yard so let’s restrict ourselves to the dwarf and semi-dwarf cultivars. Thankfully, with *T. canadensis* or eastern (North American) hemlock species, there are many suitably smaller possibilities. At the top of the list for me is ‘Gentsch’s White’, a beautifully white variegated form that has been in the trade for quite some time. The creamy white variegation gives this globe form a lively and lovely look. Expect it to grow anywhere from 6’ -12’ in 10 years. ‘Jeddeloh’ is widely available and reliably dwarf. For a good

groundcover, one should seek out 'Cole's Prostrate'. When it gets happy it will form big sheets of soft-needles which on a slope or uneven ground can be very effective. 'Everett's Golden' is likely the best golden cultivar. I had an exquisite individual in my garden. It was a star for all seasons. It needs light shade to look its best. Too much sun and it will scorch.

There are some hemlock species available from time to time that one should keep an eye out for. They are: *Tsuga yunnanensis* or *T. forrestii* from Yunnan and Sichuan; *Tsuga diversifolia* from Japan; and *Tsuga caroliniana* from the eastern US. I've seen all of these in their native habitat or in my gardens. All of these species are great trees and will not get too large.

Western yew (*Taxus brevifolia*) is a fantastic tree for the right situation. It loves streambanks and the deep shade of cedars. Some of the best examples of this native are to be seen along the eastern trail of [Little Qualicum Falls Provincial Park](#). There- cloaked in mystical moss- they reach upwards of 40 feet in gnarly height. In a private garden they will probably get to 15'.

Podocarpus alpinus 'Blue Gem' is doing very well in my current and very new garden in Yellow Point. It gets a little sun late in the morning and that's it. It has blue spiral needles and a carpeting habit. New growth is lovely on this New Zealand native selection. It is a great plant with other glaucous (blue) plants.

Shrubs

Over the years, many rhododendrons, daphne, euonymus and boxwood have done yeoman service in the shade. Often times, the commonplace is taken for granted and given short shrift. Let us look at a few plant platitudes a little more deeply where, to paraphrase another psychologist, R.D. Laing, '*the obvious is not so obvious*'.

This is especially true of *Aucuba japonica*, the Rodney Dangerfield of shady shrubs. It grows well in poor soil and deep shade and is one of the toughest broad-leafed evergreens around. It also looks good throughout Winter especially the females carrying large, oblong, light-yellow berries. Neither Graham Stuart-Thomas, nor Roy Lancaster nor Pamela Harper mention one of its most important attributes- namely, that it is wagging-tail-of-dog proof. My late golden retriever

had been known to make many a man drop to his knees gasping for breath when his errant tail hit him unsuspectingly in his nether regions. Not exactly with the force of an alligator but still...the stoutly branched *Aucuba* was unfazed by his waggy whacks. Some of the gold variegated cultivars are worth seeking such as 'Crotonifolia' and its offspring such as 'Lightning Strike' or 'Gold Strike'. Remember to have both male and female plants in your grouping. Do not be afraid to shear it in Spring to maintain its shape and boundaries. It really is a lovely plant and no dark and dingy space should be without its zesty and classy presence.

Pieris: This has to be one of the most useful shrubs. In fact, plant guru Michael Dirr says that is "*a plant of the first order that deserves to be in every garden*" ([Dirr's Hardy Trees and Shrubs](#), 1997, Timber Press) They are broadleaf evergreen shrubs used in landscapes for the pitcher-shaped white, pink or maroon flowers in Spring, the colorful young growth of some cultivars, and the colorful young flower buds in Winter. Depending upon species and location, common names vary from Andromeda to Fetterbush to Lily-of-the-Valley Shrub. *Pieris floribunda* is native to the eastern United States; *Pieris formosa* is native to the Himalayas, Nepal, Burma, Vietnam and Southwestern China; *Pieris japonica* is native from the southern Japanese Islands north through Taiwan and eastern China. There are many hybrids between the species and within the species and they all have long flowering periods. A well grown old cultivar like 'Wakehurst' is a joy to behold on a warm day in may clothed in white bells and standing 10' high by 6'-8' across. Naturally, most of us just don't have that much space so we'll go for something smaller. About 30 years ago, some classy, compact Pieris cultivars of the *yakushimensis* varietal persuasion of *P. japonica* began to appear courtesy of the gifted horticulturist from Holland, Robert De Belder. These include the very lovely 'Debutante', 'Cavatine', 'Sarabande' and 'Prelude'. Others *Pieris* that are compact and worth seeking are 'Little Heath', 'Flaming Silver', 'Spring Snow' and 'Karenoma'. Oh, did I mention that they are deer proof?

Perennials

We are spoilt for choice when it comes to shade-loving perennials. I'll leave hostas aside for now but they are rank with tantalizing possibilities. So, let's start with ferns. Ferns are to shade what grasses are to sun. One that you should have is the Japanese painted

fern (*Athyrium niponicum* 'Pictum'). There are now many named cultivars of this species selection. They are all good. They work especially well with *Bletilla*, a hardy orchid with lovely bright magenta flowers that bring out the veining on the painted fern. *Bletilla striata* var. *albostrigata* is an excellent one to seek out as it has a strong clear white stripe on the edges of its strappy leaves.

Another fern that works well are cousins to the sword fern, our local stalwart. The *Polystichum* genus has many good ones and the Alaskan sword fern, *P. setigerum*, has wonderful texture and presence. Most of this genus are worth experimenting with. The male fern, *Dryopteris filix-mas*, is another dependable and beautiful sort. It is also more drought-tolerant than most and will work well with other plants in the open garden.

These are two wonderful attributes when you are an active gardener that doesn't want to fuss too much with special needs and compatibility problems. This is another genus loaded with great species and I encourage you to try any and all of them.

Unlike the recent past, there are now many sources for ferns. Experiment with them and if you find yourself enjoying these photosynthetic bohemians, I'd encourage you to join the Hardy Fern Foundation to get take your passion to the next level. At the HFF you'll get a wealth of information as well as a spore exchange so that you can grow your own. Here is the link: www.hardyferns.org/join.php

Saxifraga stolonifera is a marvellous shade plant. It goes by the common name of Strawberry Geranium- the reference of which is useless as it is neither. Point of reference purgatory or not, it is a handsome plant that has excellent foliage much like some of the better *Heuchera* or *Pelargonium*. Add to this its



Saxifrage 'Jade Dragon'. Photograph by Grahame Ware.

distinct strawberry-like runners and voilà, you have a plant that can colonize easily in poor soil and establish itself and if I had to come up with a common name would call it, ummm, Strawberry Geranium!

For those of us alpine-partial gardeners that are always looking to get the biggest bang for the buck space-wise, nothing can do it better than *Saxifraga* 'Jade Dragon'. Its a doughty character that struts his flowering stuff come late September and then continues through the cool months of Fall. Just a few inches wide and little taller, it sends up stalks to 5"-6". This selection is often attributed to Dan Hinkley. However, he says (pers. comm.) that it is not his despite what the Sax Society website says or Malcom McGregor in his excellent [saxifrages book](#) (Timber Press). To add to the confusion I bought the plant at the AGCBC sale named as 'Green Dragon'

Toad lilies (*Tricyrtis*) are great plants for the shade AND end-of-the-Summer/early Fall flowering. They can put on an impressive display of flowers ranging from golden yellows to magentas usually with jazzy spots on the inside. They too are not demanding. Just watch them for a little while and 'mother hen' them with rain water and an organic slow release fertilizer just to get them happy. After that they will make it on the humus of the needle and leaf litter from your woods.

Hosta: This is an indispensable and long-lived perennial. I've had so many hostas through the years. The first hosta that I flipped over was 'Francee'. It is still very good when stacking it up against the newbies and is the parent of a couple of greats. As a guide remember that generally speaking the blue are shade-lovers and the golds take a little more sun.



Hosta 'First Frost'. Photograph by Grahame Ware

Here's a few that you should consider.

First, let's start with the big ones- the type that will get 3'-4'. Top of the list goes the old-timer 'Krossa Regal'. 'Blue Umbrella', 'Regals Splendour' and 'Big Daddy'.

Medium sized ones include: 'Great Expectations', Paul's Glory', 'June', 'August Moon', 'Hadspen Blue' and the [2010 Hosta of the Year, 'First Frost'](#).

Smaller ones include: 'Masquerade', 'Cherish' and the wonderful 'Blue Mouse Ears'.



Mini hosta 'Masquerade'. Photograph taken by Grahame Ware.

This list is by no means comprehensive but will, I trust, allow you to make your walk in the shadows a happy one where fear has been put on hold. And when you have created your shade garden, somewhere up in the boughs on the north side of your trees, a benign Carl Jung will likely be smiling. He'll be smiling because you have owned your shadow side and your garden is much fuller and more beautiful for it. More importantly, you'll feel lighter.

Chilean Andes Alan Tracey

This Winter, Jan 2011, I, together with some companions, traveled throughout parts of the central Chilean Andes mountains. The Andes Mountain range stretches some 8,000 km north to south and is home to many thousand endemic plants. Since there was a spare page at the end of this Bulletin I have provided a few photographs from the central Chilean region of these mountains. Many photographs, from various regions of the world,



Chloraea alpina. Photograph by Alan Tracey

provided by Club members can be found in our Club webpages.
www.agc-bc.ca/gallery



Ourisia microphylla , in rock crevices, near Laguna del Laja, Chile.
Photograph taken by Alan Tracey.



Cruckshanksia hymenodon, Rio Yesu valley, Chile. Photograph taken
by Alan Tracey