

# THE NATURAL GARDENER NEWSLETTER

I'm still in shock from the snowfall we had this morning (March 28<sup>th</sup>). Is winter never going to end? I am just itching to get out into the garden so I can move a few plants, plant a whole lot more and generally just get my hands dirty. So far I have managed to at least check on everything and I am pleasantly surprised with what is returning this year, even with this cold weather. My biggest surprise and pleasure is that both clumps of cypripediums are coming up this year. This is their second year so hopefully there will be a several blooms this year instead of the one bloom I had last year. Also, my tecophilaea cyanocrocus is coming up and hopefully will be blooming soon. Lisa O'Donnell, Susan Koelink and I along with Laura at David Hunters Nursery obtained these rare bulbs last fall and we are having a bit of a contest to see whose does the best. I'll let you know in next month's newsletter.

As you know, April is the month when gardening really gets going here on the coast and that means there is a lot to talk about in this month's newsletter. I'll be talking about Nematodes again because they are so effective against root vine weevil, talking about Sea Soil which I am finally able to bring into the store because they lowered their minimums, the Plant of the Month, Garden Tours which has expanded this year to include even more wonderful gardens, April classes, our 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration and of course the good 'ol To Do List.

Enjoy!

Bob



**Tecophilaea cyanocrocus** – how beautiful is that!

## PLANT OF THE MONTH

**Glaucidium palmatum – Japanese Wood Poppy** – This rare and highly prized Japanese woodlander has large, silky purple-pink flowers over rounded clumps of maple-like leaves that appear in April and May. Mature plants can have multiple blooms that can last for up to three weeks. It prefers part to full shade in moist, humus rich soil and will reach a height of 30 inches. This is such an exceptional beauty that any gardener who has a woodland garden simply must have this as part of their garden.

Zone: 4 – 8

Light: Part shade to shade

Soil: Moist, humus rich

Height: 30 inches

Width: 18 inches



## Grow Pleiones in Your Own Backyard!

Pleiones are exquisite hardy orchids that you can grow in containers outside or in your garden, provided you plant them in partial shade and ensure excellent drainage. I prefer to grow them in pots and believe me they add a touch of the exotic to any garden. We will have several different hybrids available over the month of April.

### Planting

Pleiones will grow satisfactorily in ordinary potting soil provided there is good bottom drainage. Most mature pleiones like to be planted with the bottom of the bulb resting just below the surface. Leave about 7 cm of the old roots on the adult bulb to anchor it until the new roots take hold. Planting should be done after fall dormancy and before the first indication of growth appears (from January to April, depending on the species). If bulbs become very wrinkled before blooms appear, start watering from the bottom of the container only ("saucer" style watering) to encourage the roots to grow downward. For garden plantings, the moisture deep in the soil naturally encourages the roots to grow downward.

### Growing (summer) season

Pleiones must be kept moist at all times during the growing season. When leaves are starting to form (shortly after blooming), start watering more heavily and begin fertilizing with liquid organic fertilizer every other watering throughout summer to maintain continuous moisture and fertilizing. In late July, switch to a bloom booster fertilizer such as Raingrow Bloom-a-Long.

### Dormant (winter) season

When leaves start to turn yellow in the fall, stop all fertilizer and water as the plant is going into winter dormancy. At this time leaves will start to fall off. Watch for "bulbils" (see **Propagating** below). For all outdoor plantings, you must also cover the bulbs with approximately 8 cm of coarse mulch (i.e. pine needles) and a waterproof covering supported over top of the mulch (stiff plastic or glass sheeting) for the winter. Because pleiones go dormant in the winter, plants in gardens and containers must be kept DRY until blooming occurs (from March until May, depending on the species). The mulch and waterproof sheeting must stay over the bulbs from leaf fall until bud initiation, at which time you remove the mulch but leave the sheeting on till blooming starts. When the bloom is full, remove the waterproof sheeting and proceed with watering and fertilization—see **Growing (summer) season** above.

### Propagating

Bulbils are tiny plantlets, which form at the apex of the bulbs in the fall and look like skinny tiny green onions with a small "hook" on the top of the leaf. This hook acts like a burr so be careful that the hooked bulbils do not stick to the dead leaves when you are removing them. You can collect the tiny bulbils, store them in paper bags, and plant them out in containers (separately from mature bulbs) in the spring with the bulb end down but not covered by earth. In two to three years, you will have mature plants from your bulbils.

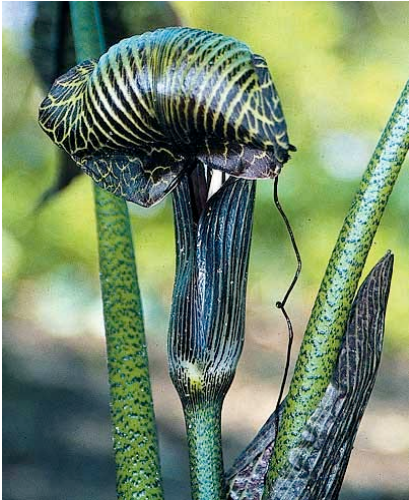


Pleione Tongariro. Exquisite!

## ARISAEMAS

As you probably know I am an Arisaema addict. I love their exotic, almost otherworldly appearance and the vast variety available. I will have many types of Arisaemas available later on in the spring but right now I have three varieties available as tubers. They are:

### **Arisaema griffithii**



This exotic beauty prefers part shade and blooms between April and June.

### **Arisaema Kiushianum**



This amazing arisaema is one of the easiest to grow. It prefers part shade and blooms between April and June.

### **Arisaema speciosum**



This striking arisaema is easy to grow as long as you provide it with excellent drainage. It has an unusual extension of its spadix that can extend up to 3 feet.

## Root Vine Weevil and Beneficial Nematodes.

I'm sure you have all noticed those strange notches on the leaves of your rhododendrons and pieris japonicas. They are not very attractive and can seriously damage the leaves if it is not stopped. A beetle called the Root Vine Weevil creates those notches. It feeds at night and hides out during the day. Its larvae are found in the soil around the base of the plants the adults are feeding on. The larvae feed on the roots of the plants.

The beneficial nematodes *Heterorhabditis* & *Steinernema kraussei* are one of the best ways to control root vine weevil. What the nematodes do is attack the larvae of the weevil and kill them thus preventing them from becoming adults. It is a very effective, safe, non-toxic way of controlling this annoying pest. The *Heterorhabditis* nematode also attacks cutworms and the larvae of the newly introduced Chafer Beetle.

The *Steinernema* nematode can be used when the soil temperature is only 5 C and the *Heterorhabditis* is used when the soil warms up to 10 C. Right now The Natural Gardener has the *Steinernema* nematodes available from our supplier. They are great for getting the root vine weevil grubs while they are still young. We will be carrying the *Heterorhabditis* nematodes starting in May. If you would like to apply nematodes to your garden this year The Natural Gardener is the place to come to. Just gives us a call and we will contact you when the nematodes arrive.



Nematodes



Root Vine Weevil



Root Vine Weevil larvae

## SEA SOIL

I have wanted to carry Sea Soil ever since I opened The Natural Gardener but was unable to because they had minimum quantities too high for my little nursery. Well, all that has changed and I am very pleased to announce that we are now carrying the 32L bags of Sea Soil. In case you don't know much about this wonderful BC product here is a little information on it.

Sea Soil is a composted fish and forest fines soil from Vancouver Island. Sea Soil has **NO** foul odour, has a PH of 6.5, and is free of PCB's, heavy metals & antibiotics.

Sea Soil contains abundant amounts of macronutrients, micronutrients and trace elements to produce healthy plants with good growth, strong roots and scores of bright coloured blossoms. There is no need for additional commercial fertilizer when applying Sea Soil.

Sea Soil has a weed-free status - meaning it will not bring weeds into your garden unlike many other soils like those composted with manure.

Sea Soil increases organic content, is chemical-free and retains moisture. Sea Soil is for use in plants, pots, containers and gardens or just anywhere you would like to grow plants.

Sea Soil is also a value-added solution to responsibly recycling two waste streams. We do not harvest any of our ingredients by excavating from the earth or harvesting any fish from the ocean.

Sea Soil is a truly environmentally sound and **organic** product! It is safe to use anywhere you would grow plants.

Sea Soil is OMRI certified.



## GARDEN TOURS

Oh Boy, oh Boy it's garden tour time. I've managed to set up a series of excellent garden tours and I hope you will be able to find time to join us for at least one of them if not all.

### DARTS HILL GARDEN PARK, SURREY, BC – SATURDAY, April 19, 2008

**Darts Hill Garden Park** is a unique legacy that was donated to the citizens of the City of Surrey by Edwin and Francisca Darts. It consists of 7.5 acres of horticultural richness without equal in North America for its variety of rare and precious plants, shrubs and trees, having been developed over the past 55 years.

We will be taken on a guided tour of this unique, historical garden at prime spring bulb flowering season. Not to be missed. We can only accommodate 15 people so book now.

Cost is \$5.00 for garden entry plus cost of gas to get to the gardens. We will meet at The Natural Gardener at 9:45 am and arrive at the Gardens for our 11:00am start. We will car pool and if you are interested in driving please let me know.

Garden Entry Fee: \$5.00

#### Schedule

Departure time: 9:45am from The Natural Gardener

Arrival time: 10:45am at Darts Hill Garden Park

Tour starts: 11:00am

Tour ends: 1:00pm

Bring your lunch with you.

### FREE SPIRIT NURSERY

Free Spirit Nursery is owned and operated by Lambert & Marjanne Vrijmoed. Lambert & Marjanne are dedicated plants people with a philosophy of gardening that is best described in their own words; **“At the nursery we show and share dynamic planting schemes in which not only colour and flowering time play a role but more so the character, texture and flower shapes in order to create a garden that continuously changes under the influence of light, wind, precipitation and time, demanding different levels of appreciation from the viewer”**.

It has been open to the public for the past ten years and has an interesting way of displaying its plants for sale. On one side of the pathway are mature specimens planted in combination and on the other side of the pathway are the same plants in pots. That way you can see how the plant you are interested in will look in your garden. For more information about the nursery visit their website at [www.freespiritnursery.ca](http://www.freespiritnursery.ca).

Lambert will be taking us on a special, guided tour of their private gardens that should last about an hour and then we can wander the actual nursery and gardens. After that we will take a half hour lunch break at a lovely sitting area in the nursery so please pack a lunch to bring with you.

Date: Wednesday, May 7, 2008

Time: 11:00am

Location: Free Spirit Nursery, 20405 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Langley, BC 604-533-7373

We will meet at The Natural Gardener at 9:45am, carpool out to Free Spirit and arrive at the nursery for 11:00am

We should be back at The Natural Gardener by 2:00pm

### A TOUR OF THE PRIVATE GARDENS OF SUSAN KOELINK, LISA O'DONNELL & KATHERINE NICOL

Due to the kind generosity of these three outstanding local gardeners I am once again able to squire 15 lucky people through their beautiful gardens. Each garden reflects the talents of their creators and both have much to show and teach us about gardening here on the coast. Two of them, Susan Koelink & Lisa O'Donnell have also had their gardens featured in several garden magazines over the past couple of years. Susan's garden was also included on the Ballet BC Home & Garden Tour in 2006.

### The Katherine Nicol Garden

Date: Thursday, May 22  
Time: 6pm  
Location: will be given to you when you book  
Cost: \$5.00

### The Susan Koelink Garden

Date: Thursday, June 14, 2007  
Time: 6 pm  
Location: will be given to you when you book  
Cost: \$5.00

### The Lisa O'Donnell Garden

Date: Wednesday, June 18, 2007  
Time: 6 pm  
Location: will be given to you when you book  
Cost: \$5.00

Each tour should last approximately 1 1/2 hours. Further details will be given to you when you book.

These three gardens are exceptional; I hope you can make it to at least one if not both of them.

## GLENDALE GARDENS & WOODLAND & THE ABKHAZI GARDENS

We will be visiting two very interesting and very different gardens in the Victoria area. The Glendale Gardens consist of 28 different garden areas showcasing different landscape ideas. The Abkhazi Gardens is a stunning 1-acre heritage garden that shows what dedication and plant addiction can produce.

Here is more information:

### Glendale Gardens

Glendale Gardens are located 12 km from Victoria in Saanich. The gardens are located in 8 acres of a 103-acre parcel of land. Here is a description of the gardens.

#### About Glendale Gardens and Woodland

The non-profit Horticulture Centre of the Pacific Society (HCP), which was formed in 1979, operates Glendale Gardens & Woodland. By demonstrating and providing education in sound gardening practices using the diversity of plants that can be grown in this area and by rehabilitating and preserving natural plant and animal habitat we aim to inspire visitors to celebrate the importance of plants in a sustainable world.

#### The Site

Located in the Municipality of Saanich on Southern Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada, the peaceful rural site

The Natural Gardener 4376 West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue Vancouver B  
www.thenatural-gardener.com



includes: 103 acres of land leased from the provincial government and features demonstration gardens, a conservation park and facilities for private and community events.

### **Discover The Gardens**

- 8 acres of spectacular gardens showcase over 10,000 varieties of plants (most labelled) in 28 different areas designed to demonstrate landscaping techniques suitable for the Pacific Northwest
- Some gardens are cared for by local clubs including: Dahlia, Heather, Rhododendron, Lily and Hardy Plant
- Year-round interest includes the renowned Doris Page Winter Garden
- A tea room for lunch

This will be a fascinating and inspiring garden to visit.

From Glendale Gardens we will travel to Abkhazi Gardens.

### **Abkhazi Garden**

The Abkhazi Garden is an exquisite heritage home and garden. Prince and Princess Abkhazi began creating their garden in 1946. This was the year they married and settled in Victoria, after living separate lives touched by both privilege and tragedy. They immediately began to develop their one-acre property, and continued to maintain and improve the garden throughout their lives together.

The garden is very discreet from the street, with only hints of what exists beyond the hornbeam hedge. What the visitor does find is a garden that embraces a natural landscape that is unique to Victoria. The garden is blessed with dramatic glaciated rocky slopes, magnificent native Garry oaks and gorgeous vistas. The garden is designed to make the most of these remarkable features and it is the Abkhazis' response to their landscape that qualifies it as a stunning example of West Coast design. The garden flows around the rock, taking advantage of deeper pockets of soil for conifers, Japanese maples and rhododendrons that over the last 50 years have grown to an impressive maturity. Carpets of naturalized bulbs, choice alpiners and woodland companions provide interest throughout the year to the discerning plantsman, but it is the overall design that leaves the greatest impression.

The Abkhazis worked together on their creation for over 40 years, referring to it as "their child". After their deaths the Garden changed hands, and in February 2000, The Land Conservancy purchased the property to save it from becoming a townhouse development. I have had the privilege of visiting this garden and it is a real joy to explore, especially in mid spring. They have rhododendrons that are nearly 100 years old and are more tree-like than shrubby. It was a unique experience to wander among them. This is definitely a must see garden. Please visit their website <http://www.conservancy.bc.ca/content.asp?sectionack=abkhazi> for more detailed information about the garden.

Garden Entry Fee: \$10.00 Seniors (60 and over): \$7.50

**Further details on the Victoria garden tour will be coming soon. If you are interested please let me know.**

## **THE NATURAL GARDENER 5<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY PARTY!**

**It seems like only yesterday that I had the crazy idea to open a small, urban garden store and now here I am celebrating it's 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It has been a challenging, rewarding, fascinating experience but the best part of opening The Natural Gardener has been you the customers. I believe that gardeners are special people and you have not proven me wrong. I have met some amazing people through this store. Some of you have become my friends and all of you enrich my life every single day.**

**The Natural Gardener would not be here without your support and friendship so to thank you we're having a party. We are going to set up a big tent, have a BBQ on site serving mini burgers, we'll have Caesar salad, dessert, wine, great company and of course lots of plants. There are going to be special draws throughout the evening for items donated by some of my suppliers. Here are the details:**

**Date: Sunday, April 20, 2008**

**Time: 5pm to 9pm**

**Location: At The Natural Gardener, 4376 West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Vancouver**

**Please RSVP by April 16, 2008**



### **SIDEWALK CONSTRUCTION**

I'm sure many of you have noticed the terrible shape the sidewalk in front of the store is in due to the roots from the cherry trees. Well, two weeks ago someone tripped and fell there and the city is FINALLY going to do something about it. What this means is that sometime in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of April the city engineering dept. is coming to repair the sidewalks. The Natural Gardener will still be open and you will be able to enter into the store but for your convenience we have free parking behind the store and you can enter through the back entrance where the nursery is. We apologize for the inconvenience this is going to cause but the construction should only last 3 days (At least that's what they told me).

## APRIL CLASSES

We have three classes for you to partake in this April. They are a lot of fun and informative. I hope you can join us.

April 9

### **Planting an Alpine Container**

Instructor: **Bob Tuckey**, owner of The Natural Gardener

- Alpines are the tiny treasures of the gardening world and they are more widely available now than they have ever been. Using containers of alpines on your patio or deck is a terrific idea since the little plants are easily viewed from a comfortable height, and they have so many interesting features when seen close up. Bob will be talking about alpines and their care and then we will plant up an alpine container. Plants, soil and container are included. Just bring your gloves.

Cost: \$50.00 **Class starts at 7pm**

April 16

### **Planting an Herb Container**

Instructor: **Bob Tuckey**, owner of The Natural Gardener

- With their flavours, textures, culinary and medicinal uses herbs are more popular than ever. Bob will give an overview of the many types of herbs, including some of the more interesting varieties that are available and their cultural requirements. Then we will put together an herb pot for you to take home. Bring a 10" – 12" container, your gloves and secateurs.

Cost: \$30.00 **Class starts at 7pm**

April 23

### **Organic Vegetable Gardening**

Instructor: **Sharon Slack**, Head Gardener at the Vancouver Compost Demonstration Garden

- Growing your own vegetables can be so rewarding. Sweet carrots, luscious tomatoes and delectable peas are just a few of the vegetables you can grow in your own backyard. Sharon will talk about where the best location is to locate your vegetable patch, soil preparation, choosing the right seeds, organic fertilizer, companion planting and natural pest control. There will be an organic vegetable seed pack to take home so you can get started.

Cost: \$15.00 **Class starts at 7pm**

**All classes are held at The Natural Gardener Garden Store, 4376 West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, begin at 7PM, fill up fast and are limited to 15 people. So don't hesitate, book your class(es) today.**

You must pre-register for a class either in person, by phone or by e-mail. When phoning or e-mailing, a credit card number is required.

April 2008

Thank you for taking the time to read through the April edition of The Natural Gardener Newsletter. There is so much to talk about at this time of the year that I'm afraid I may have gone on a bit too long.

It does have to warm up eventually and then our gardens are going to explode with growth. I hope you find as much enjoyment, peace and pleasure in your garden as I do in mine.

Happy Gardening!

Bob



*Hepatica nobilis*

April 2008