

FRIENDS OF DOMINION BROOK PARK

Newsletter No. 24

November, 2008

First Major Planting in 35 Years

On October 15, volunteers, new recruits, donors and guests gathered in the Park to begin the first major planting in over 35 years.



Volunteers at work: (l-r) Jamie Cox, John Dawson, Bob Williamson, Andrew Nowllett, John Ashton, Stu MacDonald, and Bob Parr.

Our magnificent, hard working volunteers joined by representatives from the Centre for Plant Health and the District of North Saanich and donors of plant material spent a beautiful sunny Fall morning planting two sets of low-growing conifers (*Taxus cupidata* 'Monloo', *Sequoia sempervirens* 'prostrata' and *hydrangea anomala* subsp. *petiolaris*) along the embankment to help with erosion and traffic. Six trees (*Liriodendron tulipifera*, *Stewartia pseudocamellia*, *Acer palmatum dissectum* 'Seiryu', *Ginkgo biloba* 'Autumn Gold', Hickory and *Quercus Dentata*) plus a *Buddleia globosa* were added to the Park's inventory.

With teamwork and assistance from the Centre and the District, we were able to plant 24 specimens. However, without our special donors the additions to the Park would have been much smaller. A special plant acquisition fund was created to allow for Park enthusiasts to contribute towards its long term restoration.

Stu MacDonald, our tractor guy, his wife **Joan**, **John Dawson**, **Bob Parr**, **Verna** and **Gerry Warren**, **Barry Hall**, **John Ashton** and new recruit, **Brian Rowe**, made up our small but hardy group. With **Cliff Halliday** from the District offering his expertise and supplying the 'power tool' element, we were able to accomplish almost all our projected 2008 Work Program.

None of this work could be done without the commitment and dedication of our small band of volunteers. This year

Our volunteers are not all Wednesday morning workers. We have special people who do what they can. **Driesji Schmid**, a woman of certain years with a stroke disability, wants to contribute as a thank you for the enjoyment she derives from walking her small dog each day in the Park. Not only does she pick up after other people's dogs but has, on her own, decided to keep the Picnic Shelter in order. A broom brought from home which is kept hidden under the ivy (it was once stolen) is used to sweep the shelter clear of debris and the counters and sink are cleaned. Every effort is helpful and appreciated.

Another volunteer effort this year was the assistance of the Master Gardener Association in helping with the inventory and cataloguing of plant material in the Park. Five members from the Association took on three different areas of the Park: rhodo ravine, Sam's Garden (Sunken Garden) and the trees. Each team, with records supplied from the Friends, endeavoured to identify specimens still untagged. Their work will enable the records to be completed as much as possible. It is hoped we can establish a presence with the MGA to help support the ongoing work in the Park.

Shortly we are expecting the students from Camosun to be part of team which will begin clearing the area around the main pond. The students have helped in previous years and their youth and energy is put to good use.

Donors Made This Event Possible

Many of our plants were donated by people who have a connection through family to the Park or simply love being able to enjoy its ambiance all year round.

Jim and April Cumming have been generous supporters of the Park with monetary contributions which allowed us to purchase two *Sequoias sempervirens* 'prostrata' and the *Stewartia pseudocamellia*. They attended the Planting Party with their dog, Honey, and their photo was in the Peninsula Review News next to the year-round interest tree.

Through a chance meeting at Russell Nursery with employee, **Laurie Acheson**, she learned why I (Joan Gibb) was purchasing the Cumming donation. She told me of her family's connection to the Park. Could she donate a tree? By the time the transaction took place, she and her family had donated three trees. Laurie then became a member of our planting team and was able to oversee her donations placed in their location.



The Hickory, which once graced the Victoria Conservatory of Music building, was a gift from **Ann Schau**. Records research tells us there had been several Hickories in the Park and Arboretum.

The *Quercus dentata* (like the big leaved Oak at the top of the Park) was also donated. It has an interesting history as being grown from seed collected at the Ming Tomb outside Beijing.

There have been other monetary donations which have allowed us to purchase new material for the Park. We are using the old records as a guide to replanting whenever possible but new specimens will be introduced into the planting plan so future generations can enjoy the variety of plants available to this generation.



Jim, April Cumming and Honey in front of their donated Stewartia.

A Special Donor Gift

Ginkgo biloba with donor **Laurie Acheson**.

The Sunken Garden which was created in the early years became the special project of **Sam Arrowsmith**, a long time Experimental Farm employee.

In need of renovation both in plant material and hardscaping, Sam's Garden became one of this year's projects. The small pond leaked which then allowed the water to disappear. It was tackled by our volunteers (and the District) who pumped it dry, removed the muck and patched the leaking cracks in the concrete walls. Our team of volunteers actually enjoyed the muck, wet and dirty conditions and had a great sense of accomplishment when it was completed. Removal of unwanted growth took place and we are now ready to complete the renovation of this very special area of the Park.

To accomplish this next task, we are grateful to **Verna and Gerry Warren** for their very generous donation which will enable us to have a pruning specialist to rejuvenate the older plants and to purchase new material to bring Sam's Garden back to its former glory.

It should be noted that Verna is the daughter of Sam Arrowsmith and the granddaughter of John Marshall (Marshall Road) who was one of the original land clearing team in 1912. Verna and Gerry Warren have committed to overseeing the garden upkeep after the renovation which keeps it in the family for almost 100 years.

(a short video of the planting party is available at www.pennywhistle.ca/dbp.html)

Fieldwork Focus 2009

The primary focus of next year's fieldwork will be to finish Sam's Garden renovation, renovate the Marshall Road entrance and begin plant restoration work in and around the large pond. Some of the species rhodos around the pond are from seed collected by Ernest Wilson in Western China during the early part of the century.

Plans are already underway to put together a comprehensive rehabilitation program for the entire Ravine and surrounding area. This is a long term, costly project which will need professional input on the best ways of tackling the entrance to the ravine, brook and pathways before replanting can begin.



Brian Robinson, Superintendent, Works Department, North Saanich, and Ray Johnson, Acting Director, Centre for Plant Health lend a hand.



David Lye, Facilities Manager, Centre for Plant Health, with students and teachers from Kelset Elementary School.

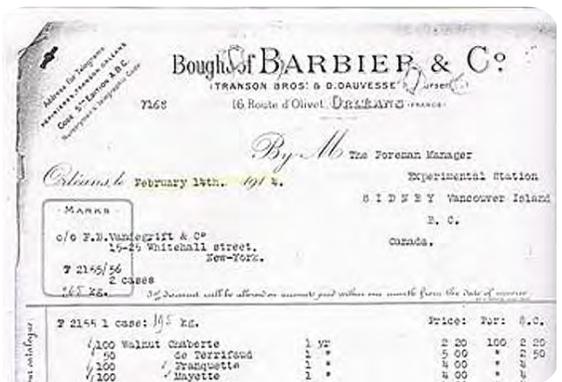


Joan MacDonald's wheelbarrow improvisation.

Park Records from 1913 Discovered

Recently, an unexpected and fascinating find was unearthed at the Centre for Plant Health. Sometime, probably in the 80's, a staff member of the Experimental Farm took it upon herself to save a few of the early records along with an assortment of photographs. Of special interest to the Friends of Dominion Brook Park are letters from William Macoun, Dominion Horticulturist and architect of the Farm and Park, giving planting instructions. There is a multi-paged document with details of the planting plan for the entire Experimental Farm area. Unfortunately it is in deplorable condition due to general deterioration and lunch for mice.

What has survived intact are orders/invoices from the earliest suppliers of plant material. The Spath order from Germany, December 31, 1913, is ten legal-sized single spaced pages of plant material at a cost of \$1598.50. In most cases, two were ordered for each item but for reasons unknown 198 named Spiraea were requested. There are Spiraea in the Arboretum which may be survivors from this order. An invoice, on their letter-head, from Barbier & Co. in Orleans, France, a company which is still in operation, was a February, 1914 shipment which included 125 named varieties of Syringa (lilac). The order to Yokohama Nursery, Japan, October 1913, listed 108 Paeonias and Iris Kaempferi, 8 varieties in 100 clumps. Unfortunately, most of this material has long since disappeared but the experimental work on the specimens would probably have allowed these plants to have been distributed to other locations both private and public.



One of the most important discoveries is the invoice of plants presented to the Experimental Station, Sidney, B.C. in 1914 by the Arnold Arboretum, Harvard University. It confirms the information found in the journals at the Sidney Archives of Ernest 'Chinese' Wilson's collection of rhodos and other plants from China. We have been able to identify four of the rhodos from the shipment. With further research, we can add to that list with other Park survivors.

There are a half dozen letters from William Macoun written to the Foreman Manager of the Farm giving detailed instructions for planting. The earliest, May 29, 1913, concerns vegetables: beets, carrots, onions, parsnips and early turnips. He concludes because their growth in the West was more luxuriant than in the East, it may be desirable to have different planting distances for different parts of the country. He goes on to write: beets, 2 inches and 4 inches apart and carrots 1 ½ and 3 inches apart and so on.



The iris bed as it looked in 1930

Other letters describe plans for 108 varieties of roses ordered from Dingee and Conrad Co. of Philadelphia. A local nursery, Layritz, supplied fruit trees and an order for 100 Liriodendron (Tulip) trees, 6-8 feet to be planted along Saanich (now East Saanich) Road. There is one rather sad Liriodendron under the power lines near the Park entrance remaining from the original order. You will note one of our newly planted trees is a Liriodendron. Without the discovery of the material at the Centre, the story of the 100 would not have come to light.

Apart from valuable archival material, the historical documentation will be helpful in the Society's ongoing restoration and replanting programs.

Featured Plant



Cotoneaster Franchetii

Cotoneaster Franchetii - A species native to southwestern China and adjacent northern Burma and northern Thailand named after French botanist, Adrian Rene Franchet (1834-1900).

It is an evergreen or semi-evergreen shrub with arching branches growing to 3 metres. In July it is covered in small white/pink flowers. By October, masses of red-orange berries - a boon to berry eating birds - will cover the branches most of the winter.

Our four mature Cotoneaster Franchetiiis are in the North Border (northeast corner) at the very bottom of the Park across from the last Island Bed. There had been earlier specimens (1915) in the Park but the current shrubs were obtained from Layritz Nursery in 1953 and transplanted to their present location in 1955.

Recent Events

Volunteer Pizza Party November 6, at John Dawson's was a full house.
The planting party video was shown (see page 2).



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