

## Ernest Henry Wilson Plant Hunter Extraordinaire

Excerpt from a letter to George Fraser, Ucluelet, BC from C.S. Sargent, Director of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, Boston, MA, June 30, 1919, given to me by Bill Dale, a Fraser historian, was the first indication we may have some very special specimens in Dominion Brook Park. Subsequently, a search through Sidney Archive and Centre for Plant Health records confirmed the shipment.

*I wish I had known you a few years ago for I could then have sent you a set of Chinese evergreen Rhododendrons which we raised here from seed collected by Wilson in western China. Unfortunately these plants have now all been distributed. A considerable number of them were sent to the experimental gardens established by the Canadian Department of Horticulture not far from Victoria where I suppose they are now growing.*

Wilson was born in Chipping Campden, England, in 1876. He went to work at 16 in the Birmingham Botanical Gardens and studied at the local Technical School. His studies were rewarded when in 1897 he obtained a position at Kew Gardens.

In 1898 the Managing Director of the famous Victorian Veitch Nurseries asked the Director at Kew to recommend a young man to travel to China to find a source of the Handkerchief tree, *Davidia involucrata*. Wilson was recommended. The choice was either a fortunate guess or a piece of inspired intuition and in 1899, the man who was later to be known as Chinese Wilson set out for China. Having traveled halfway around the world tasked with finding this once sighted extraordinary tree, Wilson discovered it had been cut down to build a shed. According to his diary, he was devastated. Meanwhile he discovered the Kiwi Vine fruit, *Actinida deliciosa*, known as the Chinese gooseberry along with 400 additional new plants. He continued his search and eventually stumbled on an entire grove of *Davidia* in the mountains of Northwestern China. The first trip, of five, lasted for three years.

In 1903 Wilson returned to China, once again sponsored by Veitch. Such was his reputation that in 1906 his ties with Veitch were severed when he was recruited by the Arnold Arboretum in Boston. Professor Charles Sprague Sargent, Director of the Arboretum, used Wilson's talents all over the world in search of new species for the Arboretum: Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, India, Africa and, of course, China.

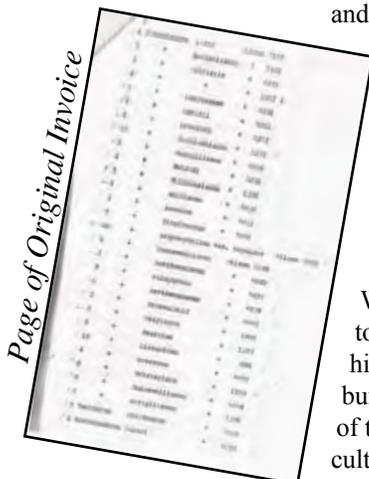


At one point Wilson was estimated to have introduced 2000 new species and much of the original material collected can be seen

at the Arnold Arboretum or on the web: [http://www.arboretum.harvard.edu/programs/eastern\\_asia/explorers\\_wilson.html](http://www.arboretum.harvard.edu/programs/eastern_asia/explorers_wilson.html). Dominion Brook Park is fortunate to have some of these specimens. Because of the detailed records found at the Sidney Archives and the Centre for Plant Health, we are able to identify a few of the remaining plants, e.g. *Berberis Julianae* and *Triacanthophora*, *Ilex Pernyi* and *Wilsonii*, *Rhodos Strigiliosum*, *Augustinii*, *Yunnanense* and *Sutchueneuse*. A new *Davidia involucrata* was planted in the Northwest corner of the Park in 2006.

Wilson succeeded Sargent as Director at Arnold in 1927. It was quite an achievement for Wilson to be appointed Director at age 50 and a long and distinguished career seemed to stretch in front of him. Unfortunately, Wilson and his wife were tragically killed in a road accident in 1930. They are buried in Mont-Royal, Montreal where he had been recognized as the 'prime mover' in the founding of the Montreal Botanical Garden. When you consider that at least 600 Wilson introductions are still in cultivation, you realize just what a legacy he left behind.

This issue can be viewed on-line - in colour - at [www.dominionbrookpark.ca/newsletter26.pdf](http://www.dominionbrookpark.ca/newsletter26.pdf)



### BED 7A

- 00905 Ginkgo biloba 'Munchkin'
- Unidentified conifer
- Soleirolia soleirolii – ground cover

### BED 7B

- 144422 Chamaecyparis pisifera minima aurea
- 00401 Garrya elliptica
- Rhodo Unique (2)
- Soleirolia soleirolii – ground cover

### BED 7C

- 00901 Acer palmatum 'Crimson Queen'
- 00907 Hydrangeo aspera
- 8299 Picea abies 'Nidiformis'
- 9138 Pinus pumila glauca
- 6461 Pinus mugo pumilio
- 11665 Euonymus Fortunei vegata
- Unidentified Rhodos (6)
- Unidentified Heathers (2)
- Unidentified conifer
- Unidentified Azalea
- 00913 Rodgersia

### BED 7D

- 14204 Chamaecyparis obtusa Coralliformis
- 14791 Aucuba japonica 'Lanceolata'
- Unidentified conifer

### BED 7E

- 7514 Chamaecyparis pisifera filifera Nana
- 9121 Ilex crenata 'Golden Gem'
- 00821 Acer palmatum dissectum 'Seiryu'
- 00903 Clerodendrum trichotomum var. fargesii
- 00904 Distylium racemosum
- 00906 Hamamelis 'Diane'
- 00909 Picea abies acroncona
- 00914 Rhodo auriculatum



The renovation of Sam's Garden (Bed 7) is in full swing. Clearing of noxious growth and unwanted plants plus mending the pool leaks were completed earlier in the year. New and exciting specimens were planted in June. The same volunteers who had such a good time messing about in the wet and mud repairing the pool will attempt to fix the leakage problem in the stream. When this has been completed, the remaining material will be installed along with ground covers to help with weed suppression.

This project has been made possible by the generous donation of the Arrowsmith family through Verna (daughter) and Gerry Warren. A memorial plaque was installed in June at the east entrance of the Garden. Sam Arrowsmith was a long time employee of the Dominion Experimental Farm as Foreman from 1941 until retirement in 1976. His special interest was the planting and upkeep of Bed 7 which came to be known as Sam's Garden. He was also well known for his greenhouse work with Begonias which at one time were planted out in great swaths in the Park.

### BED 7F

- 00902 Azara microphylla (to be planted)
- 00908 Paeonia 'Kinshi' (to be planted)
- Unidentified Rhodos (2)

### BED 7G

- 15366 Magnolia 'Kobus'
- 15367 Magnolia 'Kobus'
- 15368 Magnolia 'Soulangeana'
- 15177 Prunus serulata 'Kwanzan'
- 8458 Pieris japonica variegata
- 8093 Fatsia japonica
- 6692 Ilex crenata 'Longfellow'
- 8334 Juniperus Chinensis pfitzeriana
- 8339 Juniperus Chinensis pfitzeriana
- 8338 Juniperus Chinensis pfitzeriana
- 6402 Aucuba nana 'San Jose'
- 6493 Cotoneaster congesta

### POOL

- \* Nymphaea 'Lemon Mist'
- \* Nymphaea, unknown

### LEGEND



Unidentified rhodos



Unidentified conifer

**DOMINION BROOK PARK BED NUMBER 7, A THROUGH G**





The Board of Directors of the Friends of Dominion Brook Park Society are pleased to announce that John Ashton (left) and John Dawson have been awarded Honorary Life Memberships in the Society.

John Dawson was instrumental in forming the Society and has played a major role as a Director and steadfast volunteer in many aspects of the rehabilitation and restoration of the Park. His good friend, John Ashton, has also served as a Director and in many capacities as a hands on volunteer since the inception of the Friends.

We thank them for their dedication and just plain hard work which has taken the rehabilitation of the Park to its current level.



### *Recent Events*

In July 2009, the District of North Saanich and the Federal Government signed a 25/25 year lease agreement guaranteeing community access to the park for many years to come.



## *Featured Plant*

### *Clerodendrum trichotomum var. fargesii* *Glory Bower Tree*

A vigorous, large shrub or small tree comes into its own in late summer and early autumn with very fragrant cream coloured flowers enclosed in maroon calyxes which are followed by bright turquoise and hot pink berries in the contrasting setting of the persistent calyxes. Found in Western China and introduced in 1898 by Père Farges, 1844-1912, French missionary and naturalist.

Our specimen is one of the new plants in Sam's Garden.



*Staff this issue:*

*Joan Gibb  
Edna Ralston  
Ed Johnson*

For more information on Dominion Brook Park, please visit [http://www.dominionbrookpark.ca/Dominion\\_Brook\\_Park.htm](http://www.dominionbrookpark.ca/Dominion_Brook_Park.htm)  
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