

## ARMCHAIR TOUR - PART 6

by Ian Cameron

Part 5 of this series, which appeared in the Spring Newsletter, looked at the London Plane tree in the Northwest corner of the Park. Behind that large impressive tree is a much smaller, far less impressive tree, *Taxus x media* Hatfieldii, or Hatfield yew, or Anglojap yew.

The Hatfieldii refers to botanist T.D. Hatfield, who developed a hybrid of *Taxus baccata* (English yew) and *T. cuspidate* (Japanese yew) *ca* 1911 in Massachusetts and called it *Taxus x media*, *media* meaning 'between'. Not very imaginative, and maybe not even an accurate history, since various other claims have been made as to the source of the original hybrid.

There are many cultivars of this cross, varying in size, but all have two outstanding characteristics:



they are winter hardy and they prune well, which makes them an obvious choice for hedges and topiaries. In fact, they are almost always used for that purpose, to the point that before 1990 finding one growing in its natural shape and size was rare, and found mostly in botanical collections.

In 1964 it was discovered that an extract of the bark of *Taxus brevifolia* (Pacific yew, found mostly in British Columbia) produced a substance called taxol, which has cancer fighting properties. But Pacific yew bark has only a tiny amount of taxol, and the trees are very slow growing, which presented a problem. Then *ca* 1990 it was discovered that *Taxus baccata*, English yew, produced a variant of taxol called taxotere, which was more potent. And *Taxus media* did as well, and was far more frost tolerant, to the point that there are now *media* plantations dedicated to the production of taxotere.

All of which makes this rather unattractive shrubby tree one of the more interesting in the Park.



## FLAVOUR TRAILS 2024

The North Saanich Flavour Trail takes place on August 17 & 18, offering a self-guided tour to enjoy local farms, markets, tours, tastings, and more. [www.flavourtrails.com/north-saanich-flavour-trails-2024](http://www.flavourtrails.com/north-saanich-flavour-trails-2024)

On the morning of August 17 guided tours will be offered at the:

**Centre for Plant Health:**  
9:00, 10:30 and noon.

**Dominion Brook Park:**  
10:15, 11:15, and 12:15

This is an opportunity to learn about the Centre's research on grapevines, fruit trees and small berries and to learn about the research legacy found in the unique horticultural collection that grows in Dominion Brook Park.

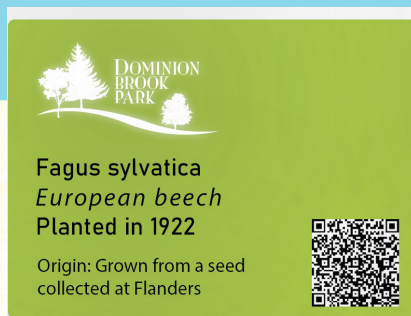


Grateful to North Saanich Parks for the fresh coat of paint to our picnic shelter!

## COMING SOON!

Have you ever wanted to know the name of one of the plants that grow in Dominion Brook Park? Are you curious about their age? Or maybe you have wondered where they came from.

This summer we are installing some plant labels in the Park. Starting with twenty interesting specimens, we plan to add more labels over time. Let us know if you have a favourite tree or shrub in the Park that you'd like to see labelled.



## CELEBRATING SAFETY

In mid-June, PCL Lab Solutions, the Construction Manager overseeing construction of the new CFIA facilities in North Saanich utilized Dominion Brook Park for a safety event. The event was held to recognize the effort and commitment to safety of the workers on site as the project progresses to its finish. Over 140 workers attended the event. A local restaurant, Adriana's The Whole Enchilada, catered food for the event. With beautiful weather, the Park served as a perfect spot for workers to enjoy the greenery and reflect, away from the bustle of the construction site.



## FEATURE PLANT

### Impatiens omeiana

### Hardy impatiens

This plant was first noticed in the park in 2021. We spotted its dark dramatic leaves growing among thimble berries and ferns at the edge of the waterway, below the new bridge. It has recently shown signs of new growth. We have no record of it being planted so do not know its origins.

An herbaceous hardy perennial that is grown mostly for its bold foliage, it is often used as groundcover. The leaves are lance shaped and toothed, the new stems are red which make a nice contrast. In late summer it produces small light-yellow flowers which look a bit like a snapdragon (or a dried goldfish, depending on your perspective). Expected height is 18" but ours seems to have exceeded that. In some parts of the world the common name is Busy Lizzie.

This species was found in south central China in 1983 on sacred Mt. Emei in Sichuan province. This mountain, long a popular spot for plant explorers, is also a place of pilgrimage for Chinese Buddhists. Over 70 temples adorn the mountain. The impatiens was found at about 8,000 feet in a cloud-shrouded forest of firs and tree rhododendrons.

It is propagated by stolons (similar to rhizomes but at the soil surface) and can also be grown from seed. It is not considered to be invasive. It thrives in moist loamy soil with partial shade. If you need an easy plant that thrives in shade this species provides a good alternative to hostas and rhododendrons.



*Staff this issue: Jody Aylard, Nancy Johnson, Ian Cameron, Dawn Gould*

www.dominionbrookpark.ca | Box 20007, Sidney, B.C. V8L 5V9 | contactus@dominionbrookpark.ca