

Centre for Plant Health

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) new [Centre for Plant Health](#) (ÍY, NONET, ÁUTW E TFE SJESENEŹ) is now open. State-of-the-art science equipment and information technologies at the new Centre will modernize testing for regulated plant diseases, improving Canada's capability to detect these diseases earlier and more accurately.

The Centre's new name, ÍY, NONET, ÁUTW E TFE SJESENEŹ, was gifted by a council of WSÁNEĆ elders and means "the place that is good for the plants" in the SENĆOŦEN language. The new Centre showcases several artworks created by local First Nations artists including metal panels, a carving, a handcrafted paddle, and a totem pole. The Centre was also designed for environmental sustainability and climate resilience and is one of the first Government of Canada buildings to use a geothermal

field as an energy source. The Centre's net-zero design is also expected to save 200 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e), annually.

This new chapter for the Centre for Plant Health builds upon its important history while advancing plant science, honouring local First Nations, promoting sustainability, and supporting innovation that helps to ensure prosperity for Canada's agricultural and agri-food sector. Read the CFIA's news release, "[Canada's new Centre for Plant Health to benefit wine and fruit industries](#)" and check out the [image gallery](#) to learn more.



AGM and 25 year celebration!

Twenty-five years ago, our community celebrated the official opening of Dominion Brook Park as a District of North Saanich Park. To mark the occasion, our Society is holding its annual general meeting in the Park (which we promise will be short), offering refreshments and Park tours. Please bring a friend and join in our celebration.

When: May 17, 2025, 2:00 pm

Where: Picnic shelter, Dominion Brook Park

What: Celebrating 25 years

- as a District Park
- of volunteer contribution to the community
- of shared stewardship by the Friends, the District, and the Centre for Plant Health



Your membership is important

Every year we send reminders to renew your membership in the Friends of Dominion Brook Park Society. We do this because your membership is important. It sends a message of support for the Park. It signals your appreciation for the work done by the volunteers. It shows that you value this unique historical green space in our community. And your membership dues contribute to the care of the

horticulture collection that grows there.

Please renew your membership and at the same time, why not give a membership to a friend as a gift. It's a great deal and it's easy. Just \$20 for the whole household and you can pay online.

Membership information can be found on our website:

[dominionbrookpark.ca](https://www.dominionbrookpark.ca)

Leaving it to nature

One of the principles guiding our maintenance in the Park is working with nature rather than against it. In the ecological areas of the Park, (the areas of ornamental plantings, garden beds, or native plants) we are encouraging self-sustaining biological processes. For example, we are retaining soil and natural organic matter and adding mulch to support plant health, soil ecosystems and repress weeds. Rather than mowing, weeding, raking, or string trimming, we are leaving soil and organic matter in place to function naturally.

Minimal maintenance and giving ecology space to function also allows tree seeds to sprout and potentially become a new generation of naturalised trees, adding to the diversity and sustainability of the plant population in the Park.

Four seedlings are now growing at the top of the Park. These babies are hybrid cedars, offspring of some of our oldest trees in the Park: Cedar deodora, Atlas cedar and Cedar of Lebanon, which were all planted in the first years of the Park, 1913 -1917. These three cedars can interbreed and each of the resulting seedlings are unique to themselves and could be the first to survive in over 100 years.

Looking to the next 100 years of the Park, we need to embrace and protect the natural native and hybrid regeneration that can be the forest for the future, if left to grow and thrive. You can help by respecting these ecological spaces in the Park and not walking near the large trees where the next generation of trees are trying to grow. Let's give nature a chance.



Armchair Tour of the Park - part 8

By Ian Cameron

Part 7 of this series, which appeared in the Fall Newsletter, looked at the Morinda spruce, or West Himalayan spruce, *Picea smithiana*, which can be identified by the plaque in front of it. Behind it are two shrubs that are the topic for today, both very old. The first one is listed in the park records and on the 1913 invoice from Barbier Nursery in France as *Rhododendron onslonianum*, but that is a misprint: the correct name is *Rhododendron onsloweanum*. It's a mystery shrub, as it doesn't look at all like the plants with that name in various parks and arboreta around the world. All sorts of specialists have looked at it, with no agreement.

The *Rhododendron* Society describes the flowers of *R. onsloweanum* as having a delicate, waxy blush, changing to white with a yellow eye, but the flowers on our rhodo are vibrant pink and match the description of a plant identified as *R. onsloweanum* in the

Burcina Park in Italy, pink with dorsal punctuation, filaments white with light purple anthers, white and pale yellow at the base, stigma dark red. Both our rhodo and the one in Italy were ordered from France about the same time. There may have been a labeling error at the French nursery in both cases, but we'll never know.

Next to the rhodo is another very old plant, this one from Yokohama, planted in 1913. It's *Illicium anisatum*: Japanese star anise, Aniseed tree, Sacred anise tree, or shikimi. It's an evergreen shrub or small tree closely related to the Chinese star anise, but with highly toxic fruit. The dried and powdered leaves are burned as incense in Japan. Its branches and evergreen leaves are considered highly sacred by Japanese Buddhists due to insects' aversion to them and their ability to remain fresh after being pruned. The seeds have been used as a fish poison as well as a natural agricultural pesticide and to repel animals from digging in the

grounds of Japanese graveyards, which is why it is planted in the graveyards of all monasteries in Japan.

The flowers of the Shikimi plant contain various toxins, which attack several organs when eaten. Cases of



product recalls have been reported when products (usually tea) containing Chinese star anise were found to be contaminated by Japanese anise.

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