



HeatherDrift

news and information from the
Vancouver Island Heather Society,
Chapter of the North American Heather Society

Issue #13

Winter – Spring 2006

About our Society

The Vancouver Island Heather Society links heather enthusiasts on Vancouver Island and provides opportunities for them to meet and share experiences with other heather gardeners, and to learn more about heathers and their companion plants. We meet monthly for study sessions or garden visits.

How to join the Society

Membership dues, \$10/year (cheques payable to Vancouver Island Heather Society), can be mailed to Doreen Wheeldon, VIHS Treasurer, PO Box 82, Duncan, BC, Canada V9L 3X1. For additional information contact Membership chair, Willie McDermot-Bruce at 743-5312, <wmb@shaw.ca>.

Society Information

President Marj Fowler can be contacted by phoning 748-0595 or by e-mail at <mfowler@island.net>. The Society publishes *HeatherDrift* twice yearly. Contact editor Joyce Prothero, <jprothero@saltspring.com> or phone 537-9215. Finally, www.bcheathersociety.org, our Society's website, is an excellent source of local and worldwide heather information; webmaster Bryan Taylor can be reached at <bryan@bcheathersociety.org> or by phone at 658-0446.

Tips on Growing Heather

Heathers offer many advantages to the home gardener

- Year-round colour achievable by selecting a variety of heather cultivars
- Ground cover qualities
- Evergreen, hardy, little maintenance, withstand salt spray
- Relatively free from pests and disease
- Variable heights, habit, and foliage colour

Requirements for growing heathers

- All heathers prefer lime-free, well-drained and well-cultivated soil.
- A pH of 5.5-6.5 is ideal.
- Amend soil with peat moss, leaf mould, sawdust and garden compost — anything organic to attain a light, workable soil. Incorporate amendments at the time of site preparation. Avoid putting manure in the planting hole (it will burn the roots).
- Heavy clay soils must be amended by improving the drainage with the addition of organic material or perlite. Heathers cannot tolerate wet feet so drainage is important.
- Soil preparation should include thorough removal of all perennial weeds as they are extremely difficult to eradicate upon completion of planting or when heathers have become established.
- Plant with lower foliage resting on the ground.
- If spring planting is carried out, ensure that plants are kept moist during the first growing season; this is essential to establish the plants.
- They are light feeders, and don't need much fertilizer. Use 6-8-6, rhodo food, or osmocote 14-14-14 or a liquid fertilizer.

Containers

- Heathers can last for several seasons in containers.
- For a stunning seasonal effect, try planting white and purple varieties of *Calluna vulgaris* bud bloomers together.
- Winter-flowering varieties are best for pots.
- Stone troughs make great containers; use plants such as dwarf heathers, sedums, lewisia.
- Try 3x4" heathers, 3x4" mini shrubs, 2x4" violas in a low clay pot.
- Plant some with tall purple kale, variegated vinca or mums.
- Plant spring-blooming types with combinations of plants such as dwarf bulbs, crocus, dwarf narcissus, and iris reticulata.

Problems

- To stop plants from developing an open centre, prune regularly when young. Do not prune back to woody stems as plant will not resprout.
- Fungal problems are rare. *Pythium* is a fungal disease in which one branch at a time turns reddish-brown and dies. Pathogens require high soil temperatures and moist conditions, so usually only container-grown heathers are affected. Drainage is probably the culprit and needs to be corrected. No chemical treatment is available.
- The most common cause of death in new plantings and containers is drying out. Heathers are shallow-rooted and need even moisture, including summer irrigation.

The preceding information was excerpted from notes provided by David Wilson at his October 22, 2005 workshop organized by Dinter's Nursery. NOTE: On February 25, 2006, Dinter's will offer another heather workshop, this time presented by members of the Vancouver Island Heather Society (see page 4).

**Heather
Sale**
Saturday March 25
Mill Bay Masonic Lodge
(details on page 4)

President's Report for 2005

First, thank you for this past year for looking after things while I was recovering from surgery, especially those who pruned my heathers.

Perhaps the most exciting project we are undertaking is to make local arrangements for the **2008 International Heather Conference** to be held at Harbour Towers Hotel in Victoria the first weekend in August 2008. (The North American Heather Society is the overall coordinator for the event.) This means that all of us will need to be busy on various committees and activities for the next two and a half years. So 2005 has been a 'quiet before the storm.'

Programs in 2005 have included:

- Parlour Shows to judge heather spikes;
- a study of *Calluna* cultivars,
- and a discussion of how each of us looks after our plants, cultivation and pruning.
- A power-point program prepared by Bryan Taylor
- a challenge to prepare a planter with various heathers and companion

plants for use as a display at the 2008 conference.

Our outings included visits to:

- Fraser's Thimble Farm and the gardens of Susan Evans, Elna Gravell and Joyce Prothero and on Salt Spring Island (in April)
- Dan Cooke Memorial Garden and Murray's Rhododendron Garden at Cobble Hill and Elaine Scott's garden at Mill Bay (May)
- the Horticultural Centre of the Pacific (June)

Bryan Taylor also reported on the condition of the heather bed at the HCP. And, in looking through past minutes I saw that more than a year ago Bryan asked us to record our favourite heathers in our gardens. I wonder how many have done this. Early in 2006, let's try to make a list of VIHS's forty or fifty favourite heather cultivars.

Other Chapter events were:

- two very successful heather sales
- an info table at the Nanaimo Garden Show in March and, on the same day, assisting with heather sale at HCP

- a display at the Peninsula Garden Club's Golden Anniversary Garden Show in Sidney
- an information table at David Wilson's workshop at Dinter's Nursery in October
- A slide presentation and discussion last winter at the Quadra Island Garden Club by Elaine Scott and Joyce Prothero.
- Preparation of display material for use at the Sidney show, and David Wilson's workshop, and future displays. Photos of your heather garden would be welcome for the display album.

Again, thank you to all who assisted by acting on committees, helping with sales, the Board, attending meetings and events, buying heathers, planting heathers, learning about heathers—in fact, all of you. And a special thanks from all of us to Ina McDowell for the wonderful goodies at meetings and sales,

Respectfully submitted,

Marjorie Fowler

(This report has been slightly condensed. Ed.)

THE ELLEN NORRIS MEMORIAL FUND COMMITTEE

The Committee would like to thank everyone for their generous donations to date. All funds will be used to continue Ellen's work with heather.

In 2004, the Committee was in charge of and prepared the invitations, programs and signage for the dedication ceremony of the Ellen Norris Heather Garden at HCP. The Committee also provided the Cowichan Lodge with 23 heather plants for one of their spring flower beds. The donated cultivars included: *Erica carnea* 'King George' and 'Foxhollow' and *E. x darleyensis* 'Ghost Hills', 'Jack Brummage', 'George Rendall', 'Furzey', and 'Silberschmelze'.

In 2005, the Committee updated VIHS's display materials for use at garden & flower shows by providing plastic table skirts with clips, table covers, a tartan table runner, plastic sign and picture holders, and a free-standing display unit. It also provided Joyce Prothero with materials for making transparencies.

On an on-going basis, The Committee also enlarges the photos of members' heather gardens to create photo albums to be used, as needed, with display units. Any pictures of heathers, heather gardens, heather beds, and so on, that members are willing to donate for the displays will be gratefully accepted.

Members are encouraged to submit ideas for support by The Fund.

Further donations may be sent to "ELLEN NORRIS MEMORIAL FUND," P.O. BOX 82, DUNCAN BC, V9L 3X1.

Report by Willie McDermot-Bruce

The Cobble Hill garden is 2½ years old. Lots of bloom & looking good!! Drop by!

If travelling on the Trans Canada between Duncan and Mill Bay,

TAKE A DETOUR and visit the

DAN COOKE MEMORIAL HEATHER GARDEN,

Cobble Hill at the Farmers Institute (corner of Fisher Road and Watson Avenue)

NAHS Annual Conference August 18-20, 2006 Salem, Oregon



BOILER BAY, ON THE OREGON COAST

Plan to participate in a unique opportunity to meet the heather enthusiasts from the eastern and western coasts of North America and from Europe. Hosted by the Oregon Heather Society, the 29th annual North American Heather Conference will feature knowledgeable speakers, visits to gardens and nurseries in the northern Willamette Valley plus a heather show and plant sale. Kurt Kramer, the noted hybridizer of many heather cultivars (including 'Kramer's Rote', 'Rotes Juwel', 'Isabel', and the bud-blooming Garden Girls®) will be a keynote speaker and conference participant. Also available is a four-day pre-conference bus tour of gardens, nurseries, and scenic highlights of the central Oregon coast and southern Willamette Valley. For more information, visit the www.northamericanheathersoc.org, contact the Conference Coordinator Ella May Wulff through the NAHS website or at 541-929-6272. Information is also available from Joyce Prothero at 250-537-9215 or jprothero@saltspring.com.

Heathers DVD now available

Heathers, a multi-media DVD developed by VIHS member Bryan Taylor, is a learning tool that can be used by the individual at his or her computer, by small groups clustered around a TV or DVD-player. The DVD addresses all aspects of heather selection, growing, pruning, and propagation. Bryan's



scholarly discussion of heather has been divided into five beautifully-illustrated chapters—*Starting Out*, *Calluna*, *Daboecia*, *Erica*, and *Planting and Growing*.—which can be viewed in any order. During February and March, the DVD will be available at VIHS functions in exchange for a \$10 donation to VIHS. For further information, contact Bryan Taylor at 658-0446 or bryan@bcheathersociety.org.

Library Holdings

As a service to members, VIHS maintains a lending library. Our librarians bring selections of these books and journals to the Society's monthly meetings, and accept requests from members wishing to borrow specific publications. For more information, contact Sheila Yaremko (743-6570) or Louise Yaremchuk (743-1105).

- GUIDE TO THE NAMING OF PLANTS.** David McClintock, 1980.
- HANDY GUIDE TO HEATHERS.** David & Anne Small, 2001. Updated third edition. (*Now out-of-print; Fourth Edition expected in 2006 – see note on page 4.*)
- HANDY GUIDE TO HEATHERS.** David & Anne Small, 1998. Updated second edition
- HANDY GUIDE TO HEATHERS.** David & Anne Small, 1992. Small paperback.
- HARDY HEATHER SPECIES.** Dorothy Metheny, 1991.
- HARDY HEATHS.** A.T. Johnson, 1955.
- * **HEATHERS: A GUIDE TO DESIGNING A HEATHER GARDEN.** David & Betty Lambie.
- HEATHERS: ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO VARIETIES.** Andrew Mikolajski, 1997.
- HEATHERS AND CONIFERS.** Sue Phillips & Neil Sutherland, 1998.
- HEATHERS AND HEATHS.** Alan Toogood, 1989.
- HEATHS AND HEATHERS.** F.P. Knight, 1972.
- HEATHS & HEATHERS: CALLUNA, DABOECIA & ERICA.** Terry L. Underhill, 1971.
- LEGENDS IN THE GARDEN.** Linda Copeland & Allan Armitage, 2001.
- THE WOODLAND GARDEN.** Roy Forster & Alex Downie, 1999.
- * **THE WORLD OF HEATHERS BOOKLET SERIES #1: EVERYONE CAN GROW HEATHERS.** Daphne Everett, 2000.
- * **THE WORLD OF HEATHERS BOOKLET SERIES #2: RECOMMENDED HEATHERS.** David Small, Ron Clevely, 1999.
- WILD PLANTS OF SOUTH-WESTERN IRELAND: Kerry, West Cork and Limerick.** Charles Nelson, 2001.
- WILD PLANTS OF CONNEMARA and WEST MAYO.** Charles Nelson, 2001.
- WILDFLOWERS OF THE FAIREST CAPE.** P. Goldblatt & J. Manning, 2000.
- * *These publications also are available for purchase from our heather society – details on page 4.*

VIHS Activities scheduled for 2006

Workshop, Sat. February 25, 10-noon. Dinter's Nursery. (see p.4)

Outing, Wed. March 1. Visit to Russell Farm Nursery (just north of Duncan, meet at 2pm) and Sandpiper Garden Centre in Chemainus (formerly Mill Bay Garden Centre); also Extraordinary General Meeting to adopt 2006 budget

Display table, Fri-Sun, March 10-12. Nanaimo Flower & Garden Show

Heather Sale, Sat. March 25, 10 – noon, MB Masonic Hall (see p.4)

Outing, Wed, April 5. Visit to Norman Todd's Nursery, Saanich

Outing, Tues, May 2. Visit to Fraser's Thimble Farm and private gardens, Salt Spring Island

Outing, Wed. June 7, Visit to the Tom Thumb Nursery and a native plant nursery in Nanaimo, then a picnic lunch at Elizabeth's.

Study session and Tubie Test. September 6, 2-4 pm, MBMH

Heather Sale. Sept 30, 10 – noon, MBMH

Monthly program (details TBA). Wed. October 4, MBMH

Monthly program, AGM. Wed. November 1, 2-4 pm, MBMH

Holiday Lunch. Wed. Dec. 6, 11:30 am, Silver Bridge Inn, Duncan

Heather Sale

Saturday March 25

10am to noon (unless sold out sooner)

Mill Bay Masonic Hall, 2742 Lashburn Street, Mill Bay

(just north of Mill Bay Shopping Centre—travel directions below)

Hundreds of heathers for selection

The selection of heathers available will include a large number of “unusual” cultivars not generally available on the retail market. We will also have a variety of heathers in full bloom or with colourful foliage. Come early for best choice—plants often sell out before the advertised closing time. Society members will be available to offer advice on plant selections and to respond to individual questions.

Starter Kits to be available

The Starter Kits, complete with complimentary planting diagrams, were first introduced at the Spring Sale in 2003. For each sale, the kits are newly-designed and contain different heather combinations. Newcomers to heather gardening can use these kits to incorporate this versatile and colourful shrub in their gardens so they they will be a source of year-round pleasure.

Travel Directions to Mill Bay Masonic Hall

When travelling north on the Trans-Canada Highway (TCH), first turn right at the lights for the Mill Bay Shopping Centre turn-off, turn left at the stop sign and the hall is on your left just beyond the Mill Bay Food Bank. When travelling south on the TCH, turn left at the lights for the Mill Bay Shopping Centre, follow the above instructions.

For more information

Elaine 743-0965, Doreen 743-1716, Marj 748-0595

www.bcheathersociety.org

Visit the website for information on the activities of the Vancouver Island Heather Society.

Books on Heather

The following books published by The (British) Heather Society will be available both at the Feb. 25 workshop and the March 25 Heather Sale. More information: Joan Taylor, 658-0446, <joan@bcheathersociety.org>.



Handy Guide to Heathers. David and Anne Small, 2001.

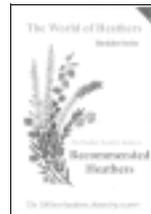
Updated third edition lists more than 1100 currently-available species in cultivar order. Also included are distribution maps, colour chart, 41 colour photos of cultivars. 168 pages.

TEMPORARILY
OUT OF PRINT



Everyone can grow Heathers. Daphne Everett, 2000.

This 20-page publication, Booklet #1 in *THS' Booklet Series*, provides an intro to heather gardening. Topics range from choosing plants, to planting, and aftercare. Numerous colour photos. \$10 (Chapter members, \$8)



Recommended Heathers. David Small and Ron Cleevly, 1999.

Booklet #2 in THS' booklet series lists 100 heathers recommended by THS members. It includes full descriptions for these heathers plus 28 colour photos. To help in plant selection, groupings by foliage and flower characteristics are included. \$10 (Chapter members, \$8)

ALSO AVAILABLE –



Heather Notecards. Les Harper, has been a life-long artist. He worked as a free lance artist, for newspapers, ad agencies, as a book illustrator and fashion designer, and with the provincial Queen's Printer for 28 years. His notecard design has been generously donated for our fundraising efforts. \$5 per packet of four notecards, with envelopes.

Heather Workshop

Dinter's Nursery (5 km south of Duncan on the Trans-Canada)

Heather: Care, Pruning, and Propagation

Saturday February 25, 10 am–noon

Following the success of last October's workshop by David Wilson (see page 1), Dinter's Nursery invited VIHS to participate in its 2006 program of *Seminars for Gardeners*. This free workshop by VIHS members will help you “to learn all about growing heathers” through demonstrations, discussions and Q&A sessions.

Topics to be addressed include the many aspects of heather culture such as selection, planting, fertilization, pruning and propagation. There will be hands-on demonstrations of pruning techniques and propagation strategies.

Also available: a display of various materials available through VIHS (including *Heathers*, Byran Taylor's newly-developed multimedia DVD on all things heather); and information on the characteristics of various heather cultivars, those for sale at Dinter's as well as the “unusual” cultivars expected for VIHS's Heather Sale on March 25.

For further information on workshop content, contact VIHS member Michael Kreiger at 391-6225 or <kriegerm@telus.net>.