



HeatherDrift

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

Issue #17

Winter-Spring 2008

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 Michael Krieger can be contacted at <kriegerm@telus.net> or 250-391-6225. The Society publishes *HeatherDrift* twice yearly. Contact editor Joyce Prothero, <jprothero@saltspring.com> or phone 250-537-9215. Information on the VIHS chapter can also be found on the NAHS website, www.northamericanheathersoc.org, by following links. VIHS Chapter.

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN – DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE PRIOR TO APRIL 30, 2008

Third International Heather Conference

Victoria BC - July 31-August 4, 2008

hosted by the North American Heather Society

with local arrangements by the Vancouver Island Heather Society

Register before April 30 to obtain your “early bird” discount

- VIHS members intending to help before and during TIHC should register through the VIHS treasurer. Contact Doreen Wheeldon at <seniorcurler@shaw.ca> or 250-743-1716
- All others should register by contacting the Conference Registrar, Norma Dirom, at 250-746-1994 or <nd2_nndirom@shaw.ca>
- For more information and a downloadable registration form, visit the NAHS website – www.northamericanheathersoc.org

Participate in the Garden Display Poster Board competition by contributing to the VIHS entry



- The VIHS entry will be competing with poster displays from other NAHS chapters and the European heather societies.
- Sharon Martin is coordinating the planning for the VIHS entry
- VIHS members are invited to bring garden photos to the March meeting so that we can plan our display.
- For more information, contact Sharon Martin, <s.r.martin@shaw.ca> or 250-748-8700

Be part of the festivities in Victoria

Other VIHS activities

Heather Sale – and much, much more:

Saturday, March 29, Farmers Institute Hall, Cobble Hill. See pages 2 & 4 for details

Scheduled monthly meetings:

Wed. March 5, 2-4 pm, Mill Bay Masonic Hall. Talk: South African heather, tubie test

Wed. April 9, outing to Saanich Peninsula includes visits to the Native Plant Garden, Brentwood (noon) and Glendale Gardens (1:30 for lunch, then guided tour)

Wed. May 7, brown bag outing to Victoria: Abkazi Gardens, Government House Garden

Tues. June 3, outing to Saltspring Is: gardens, nursery. Take 9:30am ferry from Crofton

VIHS website revamped; check it out at www.bcheathersociety.org:

Several months ago, Margo Johnston volunteered to be the VIHS webmaster. Since then, she and Michael Krieger have worked together to update the website. It is still a work-in-progress because it needs more photos (yours?) and archival material.

How to utilize COMPANION PLANTING in your heather garden

by Elaine Scott, VIHS Heather Sales Coordinator

Heath and heather gardens are wonderful. They give you foliage and flower colour twelve months of the year, are easy to maintain and generally not bothered by deer. With *companion planting*, one can make a heather garden “magnificent” by including plants with varying heights and colours, different leaf structures and interesting forms.

In general, heathers and heaths prefer lime-free, well-drained, well-cultivated soil and about half-a-day of sun. Therefore, when one is considering what types of plants to use for companion planting, one needs to choose those plants that require the same environment.

Below, I have listed some of the plants that I have found to be useful in adding further interest to my heather garden. The deer do not touch any of them in my garden, and they all have environmental requirements similar to heather.

Pieris japonica

You will soon see *Pieris* (commonly known as the Lily-of-the-Valley bush) out in flower, and what a wonderful show it puts on! Today, there are many *P. japonica* hybrids. Some of the ones that I like are ‘Flamingo’, with its dark red buds, and ‘Little Heath’ which is a compact plant with slightly variegated leaves.

Rhododendron

There is such a wide variety of hybrids that one will be able to find the hybrid with just the correct colour and size to suit your needs. [Don't forget that the Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society annually hosts a wonderful sale in Duncan, this year on May 3 from 10am to 2pm. There are always knowledgeable volunteers on hand who will give you good advice to assist you in selecting hybrid(s) to add to your heather garden.]

Styrax japonica

This is a graceful deciduous tree that bears pendant bell-shaped flowers in the late spring. Look for a

smaller hybrid such as ‘Pink Chimes’.

Olearia

This is commonly known as the New Zealand Tree Daisy. I grow it in my Mill Bay garden in a sheltered spot as one is pushing its limit in our climate. *Olearia* holds its leaves all year and has flowers during the summer. Try to find a relatively low-growing species (3-6' high) such as *Olearia x haastii*.

Cryptomeria japonica

The common name for this tree is Japanese cedar. This is an evergreen coniferous tree that has lovely foliage. Be very careful that you search out a smaller hybrid such as ‘Tansu’ or ‘Elegans Compacta’. Otherwise, you will have a very large tree in your garden!

Grasses

Many of the ornamental grasses will also provide you with wonderful interest. Two grasses that I would particularly recommend are *Miscanthus sinensis* ‘Morning Light’—because of the narrow white leaf margins which give a silvery effect—and *Stipa gigantea* (giant feather grass) which bears tall spikelets in the late summer.

Additional suggestions

by Michael Krieger, VIHS President

Some of the companion plants I use in my [fenced] garden are:

Arctostaphylos uva-ursi (kinnikinnick); *Camellia*; *Corylus avellana* ‘Contorta’ (Harry Lauder's walking stick); *Gaultheria shallon* (salal); *Hamamelis mollis* (witch hazel); *Kalmia latifolia* (mountain laurel); *Mahonia aquifolium* (tall Oregon Grape); *Mahonia repens* (short Oregon Grape)

Any more suggestions for companion plants?

Send your recommendations to the *HeatherDrift* editor, <jprothero@saltspring.com>.

VIHS Spring Heather Sale⁺ Saturday, March 29

NOTE NEW LOCATION → → Farmers' Institute Hall, 3550 Watson Avenue, Cobble Hill
(follow the signage to Cobble Hill)

The Heather Sale begins at 10am. There will be a wonderful selection of flowering winter-bloomers, summer bloomers with coloured foliage, tree heaths, and starter kits complete with planting diagrams.

⁺Starting at 9:30am, demonstrations on pruning, planting, and propagation will provide guidance for using heather in the garden, and flower-arranging demonstrations will show how to utilize heather in floral displays. **Photo collages** will supplement the demonstrations, and **Master Gardeners** will be on hand to answer general gardening questions.

For more information: Elaine 743-0965, Doreen 743-1716, Marj 748-0595 or www.bcheatherwociety.org.

2007 President's Report

by Michael P. Krieger, VIHS President

Meetings. VIHS held regular meetings throughout the year. Special topics of discussion included:

- *Phytophthora*, A Deadly Fungus
- Presentation by David Wilson
- *Cryptococcus gattii* on Vancouver Island: Island – danger in the forest?
- Discussion: A Cold Winter: Did our heather suffer? How to prevent damage?
- Planning Sessions for the 2008 conference
- Pruning work party: Dan Cooke Memorial Garden
- Tubie tests

Garden tours. During the year VIHS visited:

- Saltspring Island, hosted by Joyce Prothero
- Thimble Farm Nursery
- Ellen Norris Garden, hosted by Bob Norris
- Sharon Martin's Garden
- Glendale Gardens, HCP
- Government House
- Dan Cooke Memorial Garden

The VIHS chapter has been very active in helping the NAHS plan the 2008 Third World Heather Conference. Our involvement has included arranging facilities, publicity, catering arrangements, registration, entertainment, conference displays, garden tours and audio-visual arrangements. Many members have donated their time to ensure the success of the conference. The VIHS President's Trophy will be awarded for the best Chapter photo display at the conference.

Our chapter was invited to send representatives to the official opening of the Pemberton Chapel Garden at Royal Jubilee Hospital. The Ellen Norris Memorial Fund donated 72 heather plants to the garden.

The ENM Fund also purchased a digital projector for VIHS use during our educational programs.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members for their help during my first year as president. Everyone has been most kind. The board members have given their time for the meetings needed to keep VIHS going. Everyone has helped with our heather sales which keep us financially healthy. Let us not forget those who set up the meeting hall and clean up after the meetings. Thank you also to those who nourish us with their efforts in the kitchen.

This coming year will be exciting. We will have the honour to host heather enthusiasts from around the world at the meeting in Victoria.

Other 2007 Reports

Ellen Norris Heather Garden, Glendale Gdns

by Joan and Bryan Taylor, Volunteer custodians, Ellen Norris Heather Garden

For two reasons the heather garden is coming into the best shape it has been in for quite some time: a major injection of more than 100 new plants (many mature plants from our own garden) was made at the end of summer, and a new soil acidification program has been carried out over the last 18 months.

❶ **New plants:** There have been endless problems with some varieties of heathers in the beds at Glendale Gardens. Double *Calluna* and *Erica cinerea* are difficult to grow at this site. One reason may be that the site is very hot on account of the daytime heating from the lake surface that causes strong, scorching air currents by summer afternoons. This seems to be unfavourable for heathers in general. However, single *Calluna* and *Erica* species other than *E. cinerea*, manage quite well. The new plantings have been made with this in mind and also focus on augmentation of summer blooming varieties in certain areas of the beds. There has also been some modest extension of the *Erica x darleyensis* collection at the expense of *E. carnea* cultivars that have more limited flowering periods.

❷ **Soil acidification:** The program has two components. Firstly, well-rotted leaf mulch has been applied over the last two winters. A very heavy covering has been made with about 10 cubic yards used on the bare areas of the beds where access to the soil was feasible. Secondly, aluminum sulphate has been used to chemically modify the soil acidity. The starting acidity was about pH7 in some parts. The target of pH6 is now being approached through multiple light applications but a 10-times reduction of acidity (pH7 to 6) is certainly not achieved easily. A subjective assessment indicates that only *Calluna* is really sensitive to the less-acidic soils in this area of the Glendale Gardens. The problems with *E. cinerea* may be related to acidity but we have no way to verify this.

Work in progress: We found that Fall pruning of *Calluna* advanced its flowering time about two weeks so we have continued this practice. *Daboecia* can also be pruned in the Fall with no adverse effect. Summer-blooming *Erica* is not pruned until spring as this practice seems to limit frost damage.

We are continuing the practice of setting young plants in the heather beds for acclimatization. In effect, this is a form of on-site nursery. The plants are initially quite crowded but if they do well, are moved a year later to a permanent location. This is another measure to attempt to combat the unfavourable aspects of the site.

Ellen Norris Memorial Committee

Ongoing project

- Collecting and enlarging photos of members' heather gardens for VIHS photo album, to be used as needed on display units.

2007 projects

- Jubilee Hospital Garden – now known as the Pemberton Chapel

Report continues on page 4, column 1

Ellen Norris Memorial Committee - cont'd

Garden was completed this year and we were invited to be at the dedication ceremony

- VIHS New membership kit completed and in use
- Digital Projector & screen purchased for use of VIHS and those members giving talks to Garden clubs

New Projects 2008.

- Possible new project – pictures of heathers, enlarged and laminated for display on the trays, sold at our spring and fall sales. This will show prospective buyers what heathers will look like when in bloom. Mairi Bruce has offered to undertake this project. Does it come under Heather Sales advertising or the ENMF mandate of education? (Needs to be decided by the VIHS Board.)
- New projects are needed; they must be presented to the ENMF committee in writing by the general membership in order that the ENMF committee can vote on them

Other

- Current members of Ellen Norris Memorial Fund Committee: Heather Schyf, Marj Fowler, Jan Maandag, Doreen Wheeldon, Willie McDermot-Bruce (chair), Michael Krieger (ex officio)
- New members required

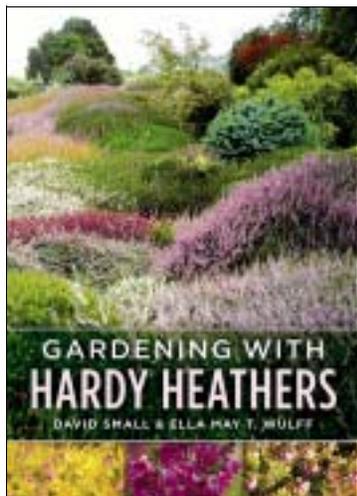
Library Services

As a service to members, VIHS maintains a lending library, available at monthly meetings. Sheila Yaremko, our librarian, brings at selection of books and journals to meetings, and also accepts requests from members wishing to borrow specific publications.

For a general listing of holdings, contact VIHS librarian Sheila Yaremko (743-6570), or visit the revised VIHS website at www.bcheathersociety.org.

Soon! A new book on heather

Years in the making, *Gardening with Hardy Heathers* (c\$40, 360 pp., hardcover) will be published by Timber Press in August 2008. If Timber Press can deliver books to Victoria by August 1, authors David Small and Ella May T. Wulff will hold a **Book Launch Party** at the Third International Heather Conference being held in Victoria from July 31 to August 4.



For more details, and to order *GwHH* at 30% off + free shipping, visit the [forthcoming books page](#) at www.timberpress.com.

IMPORTANT REMINDER

VIHS Spring Heather Sale⁺

Saturday, March 29

Farmers' Institute Hall

3550 Watson Ave. Cobble Hill

NOTE NEW LOCATION

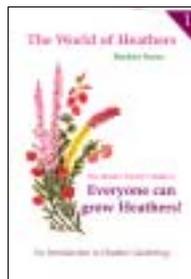
⁺ **Doors open at 9:30am** for demonstrations on pruning, planting, and propagation plus flower-arranging demonstrations using heather in floral displays. EXPANDED Heather Sale also includes a display of heather photos, also Master Gardeners to answer general gardening questions.

Heather Sale begins at 10am for buying winter-blooming heaths, summer blooming heather with coloured foliage, tree heaths, and starter kits complete with planting diagrams.

For more information, see p.2 or phone: Elaine 743-0965, Doreen 743-1716, Marj 748-0595.

Heather Books for Sale

The following books published by The (British) Heather Society will be available Heather Sales, and through Willie McDermot-Bruce, 743-5312, <wmb@shaw.ca>.

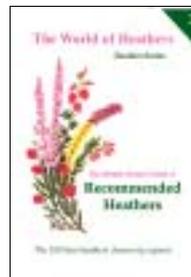


Everyone can grow Heathers

Daphne Everett, 2000

This 20-page publication, Booklet #1 in the *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 Cleveley, 1999

Booklet #2 in the 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.