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Lesser-Known Plants & Qualicum Beach

Going on a hunt for some lesser-known plants; and a sad state of affairs in nearby Qualicum Beach!

by Art Drysdale

by **Art Drysdale**

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Art Drysdale, a life-long resident of Toronto and a horticulturist well known all across Canada, is now a resident of Parksville, British Columbia on Vancouver Island, just north of Nanaimo. He has renovated an old home and has a new garden there. His radio gardening vignettes are heard in south-western Ontario over two radio stations: Easy 101 FM out of Tillsonburg at 2 PM weekdays and CD98.9 FM out of Norfolk County at 11:40 AM weekdays.

Art also has his own website at <http://www.artdrysdale.com>



July 25, 2010



Above: Angel's Fishing Rod (*Dierama pulcherrimum*) sought by my friend Louise. Photo by University of British Columbia. Below: Campanula takesimana 'Beautiful Trust' and two shots of Campanula 'Sarastro' (Author photos); followed by French honeysuckle (*Hedysarum coronarium*), photo courtesy Wikipedia.



It is difficult actually to guess just what week is the middle of summer, but it seems to me we may be there now. Most of the U.S. and Canada (with the possible exception of here on Vancouver Island!) seems to be in the middle of a heat wave so allow me to call it the middle of summer anyway!

It's at this time of year that I like to re-visit many of the nurseries and garden centres—now at a time when they are far less busy and rushed than they were during the spring planting season. Here on Vancouver Island we did visit most of the garden centres (and a few nurseries) in late June and early July, and now three of us have decided to go to the lower mainland for a day next week. In talking with my friend Brian Minter, he agreed with me that we would be able to visit Valleybrook Gardens (Heritage Perennials) in Abbotsford (wholesale growers of the blue pot plants), Minter Country Gardens in Chilliwack, and finally Phoenix Perennials and Specialty Plants in Richmond.

Only the last named will be new to me, and I am quite looking forward to seeing their operation. They mounted a significant ornamental garden (called The Paisley Garden) indoors at the World Rose Festival in Vancouver, June 19-21, 2009.

By visiting Valleybrook I expect we will be able to look at some or a good number of the new cultivars they are planning to introduce next year. We'll also likely see some other items that we have not been able to see or buy at local garden centres. My friend Louise is hoping to see some *Dierama pulcherrimum* (Fairy's Wandflower or Angel's Fishing Rod) which she has been searching for since the spring. Valleybrook do grow it so we're hoping she'll be returning with a couple. It blooms with light to deep pink flowers at a height of 120 – 150 cm (4 – 5 ft.) from mid- to late-summer. Not sure that it would be hardy in Ontario, but certainly is here.

For me, I have been searching for *Campanula punctata* 'Pantaloons' and *Campanula takesimana* 'Beautiful Trust'. 'Pantaloons' comes from the folks at Heronswood in Warminster, Pennsylvania, so I guess we won't be travelling that far if we cannot find it out here somewhere! It is somewhat like the fairly well-known C. 'Sarastro' with hanging bell-shaped flowers in a dark blue colour, 'Pantaloons', has pink flowers. The 'Beautiful Trust' plant is completely different from these other two, in that the flowers are white with petals

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somewhat stick-shaped. I have had one here, and still have a tiny plant, but would like to get another one.

I also have a small list of other perennials I am on the lookout for that I'll be taking along. That includes the shrubby herb called French honeysuckle (*Hedysarum coronarium*) that just may come home with me if I find it!

* * *

Slowly but surely, many municipalities in British Columbia are 'tumbling' for the phony (as a three-dollar bill) sales pitch of the enviro-maniacal Canadian Cancer Society, and in particular its rep in these parts, Nancy Falconer. Just this past week, the Parksville/Qualicum Beach *News* reported on a discussion at the Town of Qualicum Beach Council meeting, wherein the Council voted to move ahead with a proposed ban on the cosmetic use of pesticides. How-ever, as has been the case in some other municipalities, it was far from unanimous. At least one of the four councilors (the Mayor makes the fifth person on Council), objected to the ban. The anti-pesticide crusade didn't sit well with Councilor Jack Wilson, who said "I like to go as natural as possible, but on the other hand, I have an infestation of horsetails, and I've found a selective herbicide that works. If I just let it go, it looks like I don't care." Wilson said a ban on cosmetic pesticides would be a disservice and an insult to Qualicum Beach residents, many of whom are ex-pert gardeners.

On the other side of the coin, agreeing with enviro-maniacal Canadian Cancer Society's Nancy Falconer, Councilor Barry Avis said a mixture of rubbing alcohol and water, or hot sauce works well and is not toxic.

Now let's get this straight. In the over 40 years that I've been gardening and writing/broadcasting about it, I have encountered hundreds of "home-hade" suggestions for almost every task imaginable. Almost none of them works as well as they are said to work; and none of them works as well as the properly registered products currently on the market.

And, many of them are not nearly as safe as the chemical products on the market.

I have told the story before about a not-too-knowledgeable garden writer who recommended that if you have a smoker in the house, you should have him (her) put all cigarette butts in a small glass of water, and after a week or so of having them "steep" the mixture could be used as a very effective, safe insecticide. Basically that was the chemical Nicotine sulphate which was sold as an effective insecticide for years and years, but was removed from domestic shelves decades ago! And, the mixture created with the cigarette butts in water would have been far more powerful than any of the Nicotine sulphate garden chemical sold from stores.

It is also interesting to contemplate that Qualicum Beach Councilor Barry Avis in recommending the home-made remedy is in violation of federal law. It is a violation of federal law to recommend products for controlling pests that are not registered under the Pest Control Products Act. If someone recommends or sells material with the claim that it controls pests, it technically becomes a pest control product. Such a claim, in either verbal or written form, regarding an unregistered product becomes technically a violation of federal law. The illegal recommendation to use rubbing alcohol and hot sauce as a means of controlling pest invasion is in violation of federal law in Canada.

Barry Avis is in violation of federal law in Canada!

Barry Avis should publicly withdraw the illegal recommendation!

Meanwhile, most of the other Councilors and Mayor merrily carry on with their intent to saddle Qualicum Beach's expert gardeners with silly regulations based on enviro-maniacal rumours.

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