

## ***VIMGA Open Gardens – Vanisle Volunteers Relaxing Together***

This summer's gatherings brought together members from all the districts, beginning with 3 in June. On June 14<sup>th</sup> a group from 2 districts (Parksville-Qualicum and Nanaimo) drove a few miles north of Courtenay in the North Island District to visit the Kitty Coleman public rhododendron gardens. These woodlands cover 24 wooded acres and were developed by one man to showcase over 3,000 rhodos. Even after rhodo bloom time walking through the woods featuring the many native plants and water features reveals the true beauty of the Kitty Coleman.

On the way home the group visited the newly created gardens at the Kingfisher Inn then spent time at Anderton Nurseries. Anderton Nursery built a wheelchair accessible therapeutic garden centre behind the nursery which is managed by the Anderton Therapeutic Gardens Society, and is open to the public. Their next fundraiser is August 19, with old time fiddle and ukulele music, and an arts and crafts fair.



Kitty Coleman Public Rhododendron Garden.



Anderton Therapeutic Gardens, Courtenay



Cowichan Valley,  
Judy Raimondo, host

On June 23<sup>rd</sup> in the Cowichan Valley District, Judy Raimondo opened her home in Cobble Hill, where she and her husband designed their house and gardens on a ½ acre of bare land. Judy led her 8 guests through the various sections of the yard while giving a running history of why she chose certain plants, the challenges she's met through the years, and some consequent changes she's made. It was evident that much forethought, especially getting the right plant in the right place, went into this beautiful garden. The group spent a fair amount of time in the vegetable garden area discussing various pests and problems, and the benefits of pest covers and raised bed design. At the pot-luck lunch (always the case in our gatherings) members brought questions from their own gardens, making the party – as is so often the case – a learning opportunity as well.

And speaking of vegetables, on June 24<sup>th</sup>, Beth Walrond in Nanaimo opened her mixed garden to the public through the Horticultural Society. Roses, rainbow chard along the walk, fruit trees, a greenhouse, sun and shade loving perennials provided the perfect surroundings to some of Beth's paintings. Yet, in true master gardener spirit, the only image she submitted here was of her favourite cabbage.



Gabriola Island, Wendy Strachan's garden



Tree peony from Vancouver chapter's plant sale in its new home on Gabriola Island



Gabriola Island, Wendy Strachan, host

On July 18<sup>th</sup>, Wendy Strachan hosted a gathering that included MGs from Nanaimo and North Island Districts. Her country home is a show case of the truly Mediterranean climate on Gabriola Island. She wanted the Vancouver Chapter to enjoy their work so sent an image of her newest child, a tree peony.

Our last gathering was on July 27<sup>th</sup>. The day began at Sally Shiver's garden in Qualicum Beach with coffee and a garden walkabout. The group then headed up-island to the Horn Lake area, about half-way between Parksville and Courtenay, where about 3 years ago Jim and his partner Jerry bought a large piece of second growth forest, built a house and started a garden. The MGs enjoyed lunch outside looking at their beautiful plantings of purple verbenas and purple and white liatris. Jerry talked about his collection of rare and exotic chickens before sending us home with a selection of eggs.



For all Master Gardeners summer goes at double time. In addition to our own gardens and families, with all their accompanying chores, albeit happy work, our volunteer commitments demand much. In VIMGA there are only 80 of us (including a baker's dozen MGITs) strung out along the Island for about 205 kilometers (128 miles) from Duncan to Campbell River. Getting together just for fun is not always easy, but we've learned the best way to keep vibrant our message of "the greener the better" is by making time to relax together in our own gardens, to share and learn.