A Fine Relationship!

Now that the leaves are off the trees, my favourite wild plants take centre stage. Lichens!

These fascinating primitive plants are found around the world from the frozen barren rocks of the Antarctic to the bark of the tropical palms. Lichens thrive in a way that is instructive to all of us. They are actually two plants that live together for mutual benefit. The body of the lichen is fungal and a thin layer under the upper surface is algal. How does that work? The fungus is like a car and the algae are like the gas. The algae provides energy through photosynthesis; and is protected by the structure of the fungus. This kind of relationship is called symbiotic - basically everyone gains benefits. Politicians, governments, and religious leaders would gain greatly from emulating the lifestyle of the lichen!

Lichens, let's face plants. There shrubby, and year when it is up. They show are easier to see

it, are pretty cool are three types – leafy, crusty. At this time of so wet, lichens plump their true colours and and admire.

If they grin in yourself lucky. indicates clean not grow in on your roof do damage. They will outcompete lichens on your indication that

your garden consider The presence of lichens healthy air. Lichens will polluted areas. Lichens not do that much are slow growers moss them. If you have roof that's probably an it's high time to get a

new roof! Lichens do exude a mild acid that, over the centuries, can break down stone. They were the first plants to colonize Vancouver Island 10, 000 years ago as the last ice age retreated. Cowichan Valley would have looked like the high arctic back then. I always think that it would be so cool to be transported back to that time to stand on the exact spot of the Mill Bay Centre. Then I remember that there would be no coffee and that dream vanishes.

Remember to come out to the Mill Bay Garden Club meetings on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 6:45 pm. There is no December meeting as we are all busy lecturing Santa Claus about poinsettias. I'll save that for a future rant!

Fran Benton