

Adventures at the Plant Sale! by Fran Benton

You are given a notice that says the Perennial Society is having its annual sale of plants at the local hall. Oh boy, you say, I love perennials! You put the date on your calendar and contact a friend who likes to carry heavy objects without complaint. You promise coffee and pastry afterward. You arrive at the plant sale and there is a line up around the block. You notice that some of these people look vaguely deranged. Do that many people in Cowichan Valley really like perennials? No, they just want plants, badly! There is always a feeding frenzy generated by the crowd. These plants are inexpensive and there are great deals to be had. Its chaos inside as people blunder around. And what are people buying? The pretty plants in bloom. Sadly when the flowers fall off in a week the plant will probably get forgotten. Usually their owners do not know where to plant them OR how to care for them. Curiously the plants left on the table are often the best plants for their yard.

To amuse myself I characterize the types that attend these sales. The most hated group is the cell phone obsessives who try to look up each plant they see on the table. Then there are the grabbers who dive around scattering the elderly and small children in their wake. Or the chatters who have come to the sale to connect with old garden friends and have long conversations right in the centre of the plant snatching mêlée. Then you need to pay for the items. The general rule seems to be to take the least competent person in the perennial society and put them in charge of sales. Why do I know this? Because I am the least competent and I always get asked to do sales. Oh but wait! What about the customers who did not bring enough cash to pay for their plants and have to make complex decisions about abandoning a few plants, or the folks who ask if the payment can be MasterCard or VISA? In the church parking lot, where there is no wifi, oh please!

There is one resource everyone seems to forget at these sales – the master gardener table. Take your plants to them before you buy them. You will get the right plant for the right place and you will be the king or queen of the plant sale! And no you can't have the phone number of the friend who carries heavy objects without complaint!

