



MILL BAY GARDEN CLUB NEWSLETTER

Website: www.millbaygardenclub.com

Email: mbgcnewsletter@gmail.com

Next Meeting:

Date: **Tues, January 28th, 2025**

Time: **7pm** (doors open 6:30pm)

Place: **Mill Bay Community League Hall**
(1001 Shawnigan Mill Bay Road)

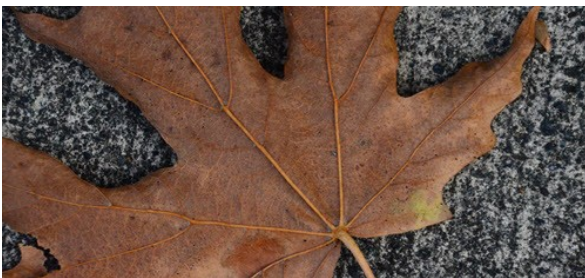
Activities:

**Business Meeting; Members' Forum;
Gardening Q&A; Library; Raffle;
Plant Sales; Guest Speaker;
Socializing!**

January Speaker:

**Kathy Code on
Lessons from an
Ecological Garden**

See page 3 for details



January Brag Table Theme:

What's Coming Up?

With plant and flower identification and commentary provided by Barb Kohlman, the Brag Table is a great part of our monthly meetings. It's a fun and interactive way to share what's going on in your garden. The bonus is a prize awarded randomly to one of the monthly participants. If you've never participated, give it a fling, be it flower, vegetable or fungus!



A little ray of sunshine...

Club member and Flower and Garden show chair Janice Rose sends card on behalf of the Club to members experiencing illness or loss, bringing a spot of sunshine into a stressful time for a club member.

If you know of someone in the Club who is sick, in hospital, or has lost a loved one, please let Janice know and she will send a card on our behalf.



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President's Report

Richard Nelson

Sometimes we get it right . . .

This autumn I set out to do the right thing by growing a cover crop on the vegetable garden. So I cultivated the area (I am not yet at no-till gardening) and I sowed my saved fall rye seed generously over the area. The timing seemed to be good with the weather still warm enough for strong germination and the seed sown on the soil just the day before a soaking rain. What I did not do was to rake the seed into the soil and roll it in with the lawn roller, my usual routine. The seed swelled with the moisture and soon sprouted, diving sturdy roots into the ground. The garden developed a lovely brush-cut of dark green rye spikes. There were plenty of small birds about, mostly Juncos and Black capped Chickadees, helping themselves to the bounty. This natural freeloading was expected and not concerning since there was plenty of seed and it was already growing. The garden was alive in bird activity for a couple of weeks, a delight to brighten the fall days.

The autumn and early winter continued mild and moist so I expected the fall rye to be up several inches, forming a rich, shaggy green carpet to break the force of pelting rain and to hold the soil particles in a tight embrace of root matrix. Instead the garden in mid-winter is mostly brown, dotted green with the few weeds that re-rooted after cultivation and the grey stones now washed to the surface.

Ah well, the bird life had a nutritious start to the late seasons and I am sure those few weeds are hanging on to some of the soil. Come spring I will prepare what soil is left, pick more rocks and think about no-till gardening. Meanwhile I enjoy the bird life flitting around the yard, they are no doubt counting on another bounty of seed to plump up on after the deprivation of winter which may yet test their mettle. Maybe next year I'll get it right.

Richard

January 28 2025, Mill Bay Garden Club Agenda

- 1) 7:00 p.m.: Call to Order
 - a) Approval of the agenda
 - b) Approval of the minutes of November 26, 2024 Club general meeting
 - c) President's Report – Richard Nelson
 - d) Executive Committee reports: Kathleen Mercer - F&G Show Plant Sale
 - e) Brag Table: What's Coming Up?
 - f) Garden-related Questions with our Master Gardeners

Break

- 2) 8:00 p.m. Speaker: **Kathy Code: Lessons from an Ecological Garden**
 - h) Adjournment

January's Speaker:

Kathy Code on Lessons from an Ecological Garden

Kathy Code is currently the MBGC Vice-President and responsible for the Speaker's List. Wielding this enormous power, she has added herself to the Speaker's List. She is also the chair of the Ecoforestry Institute Society and a founding member of the Fairy Creek movement. While working for the BC government, she was inspired to complete a Masters in Environment and Management at Royal Roads University. Fascinated by the power of growing things since a child, she has absorbed some knowledge, although a universe of mysteries have yet to reveal themselves. Inspired by Indigenous ways of knowing, regenerative agriculture and ecoforestry, she has worked to incorporate ecological practices into her own veggie and berry gardens and orchard. There is a lot to be said for just sitting and observing the web of life in built and natural environments.

LESSONS FROM AN ECOLOGICAL GARDEN

Kathy will speak of the lessons and observations she's made over decades of learning how to work with nature, not against it – the magic contained in a seed; enticing natural predators where once there seemed to be nothing; how nature works in an interconnective manner rather than isolation. Foregoing manicured gardens for ecological habitat was one of the first lessons, further strengthened by philosophies of never taking it all and taking only what you need. Nature thrives in a seemingly messy web of life, but the results are delightful if we let Nature do her job. Just looking and listening can sometimes be the most powerful lessons of all.

Committee Reports

From the Newsletter

Membership dues are now overdue. If you've forgotten, please pay your 2024-25 dues of \$20 at the Membership table, or e-transfer to mbgcmembership@gmail.com.

This will be the last newsletter for those not renewing.

Please renew - we want you back!

Executive Members

President

Richard Nelson

Vice President

Kathy Code

Treasurer

Gord Hamilton

Secretary

Carol Goodger-Hill

Past-President

Gill Keir

Committee Leads

Membership

Robin Reid

Flower & Garden Show

Janice Rose

Library

Katherine Miller

Kitchen

Judy Raimondo

Plant Sales

Carrie Nelson

Bursary

Ann Baty

Cont'd next page...

(Continued from page 3)

Committee Leads (cont'd)

Sunshine

Janice Rose

Brag Table

Barb Kohlman

Memorial Garden

Heather Jenkins

Raffle

Stephanie Taylor

Website Administrator

Gord Hamilton

www.Millbaygardenclub.com

Facebook/Social Media

Yvonne Amos

Newsletter Editor

Dave Byrnes

mbgcnewsletter@gmail.com

Committee Reports (continued)

From the Kitchen

Just the usual reminder for folks to bring their own cup for coffee time, and a big thanks to all the volunteers who signed up to bring treats and help in the kitchen.

Judy



Notes from the Library

Thank you to all who returned their library books. Please remember to bring your books back to our monthly meetings and cross off your name in the book. Then browse our selection and find something new!

Katherine Miller

Plant Sales - Flower & Garden Show

Greetings to all & Happy New Year,

Wow, 2025 already!

I am writing to start the conversation about this year's Mill Bay Garden Club Plant Sale. Mark your calendars, our plant sale will be held at the Cobble Hill Hall & Fairgrounds on Saturday, May 31st with setup on Friday the 30th.

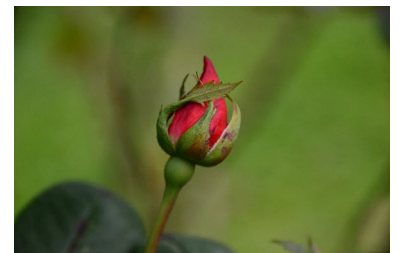
Sadly, I must let you know, I won't be able to continue as Plant Sale coordinator for the MBGC Plant Sale. I am hoping to find someone that would be interested in taking over as coordinator. I've really enjoyed being a part of the plant sale for the past 3 years but I need to step back. A huge thank you to everyone who has contributed to making it a success.

I promise to give you all the guidance and help you need to get the plant sale organized. With almost 4 months until the sale there is plenty of time. And thanks to Janice Rose's kind offer, we have a plant yard ready to go for taking in the plants until the sale date.

I will also be speaking to everyone at the upcoming January meeting and bringing along a sign up sheet for Plant Sale volunteers. My contact information is enclosed below, if you wish to contact me before the meeting.

Thank you,

Kathleen Mercer



Social Media

If you use Facebook, don't forget to check

us out and "LIKE" us at:

www.facebook.com/

[millbaygardenclub](https://www.facebook.com/millbaygardenclub)

Yvonne Amos

Facebook Coordinator

From the Plant Sales Table

I don't like the cold. I grew up in Alberta where I got frostbite on my toes, fingers and cheeks as a kid. I was playing hockey on an outside rink and by the time I got home I was so frozen I didn't even know my face had been slashed by a skate! So, even though it's only -3 C at Shawnigan, I bundle up big time to go outside. But I still get out!

So you might ask, what can a gardener do this time of year in the cold? Well, even if the ground seems frozen it's only the top couple of inches and that's easy to break through. This week we had to move several vines, perennials and shrubs, including a rather large rhodo, it's roots entangled with fig, cherry and fir roots. A job for the tractor. I heeled the shrubs & peonies into the vegetable garden until I can decide what to do with them.

I took the other exhumed Betony, Monkshood, Primula, Cranes-bill Geranium, Phlox, hardy Fuchsia and Mondo grass to the unheated greenhouse, divided them, potted them up, watered them in & I'll check on them in a month. The key to division this time of year is to be careful teasing the roots apart as they are more brittle. I'm sure I'll get a good survival rate & I think there will be a few to donate to the flower and garden show plant sales table.

Another thing you can do, which I mentioned last month, is take hardwood cuttings of almost any deciduous shrub or tree now and insert it in the ground in a sheltered spot or in a pot in a garden frame, use a mix of garden soil and peat, water in. Move the potted cuttings out of the garden frame or greenhouse in the early spring. Only add fertilizer when root and leaf growth are evident.

To expedite rooting of hardwood cuttings of deciduous shrubs & trees:

1. Take cuttings lower down on a plant, close to the base, never the leader.
2. Choose thin shoots rather than thick stems.
3. Take cuttings from the shady side of the shrub.
4. Take cuttings in the early morning.

NOTE: Conifers can be started in containers in a garden frame or in plug trays of perlite, in good light, watered from the bottom & misted.

Have a walk around your garden & see what you might be able to divide and pot on for your own use or to donate to the MBGC plant sale.

Bundle up and dig in!

Carrie Nelson



2025 Community Flower and Garden Show May 30/31

Mill Bay Garden Club Presents

2025 Community Flower and Garden Show May 30/31, 2025

At the Farmer's Institute, Cobble Hill

While it is still only January and our plants are snoozing and remaining (mostly) dormant the organizing committee has been hard at work hammering out the details for our 76th Show.

Our Flower and Garden Show is our club's biggest event of the year as it brings our members together in a very special way. It is time to begin daydreaming about entering an exhibit, helping out with our Plant sale and/or volunteering in any capacity. The more hands we have on deck the lighter the load!

The Silent Auction is definitely one of the great highlights of our show. The Silent Auction adds a delightful and interesting dimension and the proceeds from it actually fund the entire event.

This year we need a Silent Auction Co-ordinator to lead a small team of willing helpers. Mentorship for the Silent Auction itself will be provided by Carol Goodyear-Hill. Please see Janice Rose if you can help out.

Janice Rose
Flower and Garden Show

Upcoming Seedy Weekends...

- **Qualicum Beach Seedy Saturday:** February 1st 2025, 10:00 am-3:30pm, Qualicum Beach Civic Centre, 747 Jones Street, Qualicum Beach.
Learn more: <https://www.qbseedysaturday.ca>
- **Victoria Seedy Saturday:** February 15th, 11am-4pm, Crystal Gardens, 713 Douglas Street, Victoria. Admission by donation.
- **Nanaimo Seedy Sunday:** Sunday, March 2nd, 10am-3pm. NDSS, 355 Wakesiah Avenue, Nanaimo. Questions: seedysunday@nanaimofoodshare.ca
- **Cobble Hill Seedy Saturday:** March 15th, 10am-2pm.
Cobble Hill Community Hall & Stu Armour Hall, 4550 Watson Avenue, Cobble Hill.

Gardening Tips for Jan-Feb 2025

by Barb Kohlman

Hi all cold weather has probably got us all inside perusing gardening books and planning next year's plantings. Which is/could be a good thing to be doing now.

BUT-----

Planting: Put in new trees and shrubs, and bulbs for spring flowers.

Clean up: Remove broken limbs and clean up downed plant material.

Mulching: Surround trees and shrubs with a layer of mulch to help keep rodents away.

Spend some time in your garden harvesting winter greens, berries, pinecones, grasses, and other seasonal cuttings for winter displays.

Ideally, you set out bird feeders earlier in fall. By December, it's time to check them to make sure they are clean and full of seed. You should clean bird feeders roughly every two weeks to prevent buildup of bird droppings and other contaminants that can make birds sick. To clean bird feeders, remove any remaining bird seed and clean the feeder with soap and warm water. It's also a good idea to disinfect feeders with vinegar or an all-natural spray.

Make sure your hummingbird feeders are brought in at night if frost is predicted and put them out first thing in the morning.

Try Your Hand at Plant Propagation. Plant propagation isn't as difficult as it sounds, ...

Late fall and early winter are good times to prepare soil because many of the annuals and perennials have either been removed or have died back. This means you can more easily access soil around plants. Adding 2 to 4 inches of compost this time of year also provides ample time for the nutrients to begin to work their way into existing soil before you begin planting in spring. Use organic compost from your compost bin or a local nursery.

Store all your tools after cleaning and oiling wooden handles.

Store tender plants or any in pots that may suffer from the cold in an unheated garage or greenhouse or under the eaves near the house wall.

And dream of how your garden will look in spring!!!!!!!

Cheers Barb Kohlman



Holy Rhododendron! Why are their leaves curled and drooping?

By Fran Benton

Oh boy, I fret for my Rhododendrons at this time of year. I always hope for a cool winter but not anything severe. Last year's horrible weather was very hard on my Rhodo friends. To make matters worse, the bomb cyclone brought a huge branch down. It smashed the life out of my prettiest rhodo! What can I say - they grow under big fir trees. When I replace the poor dead rhododendron I will make a little wire cloche for winter protection for the new rhodo. Its cold out today and when I look at them, their leaves are all rolled up and hanging down. Oh they look desperately cold.

Why do they do this and how does it work? Well now there is a bit of controversy over this issue. And its all about water, temperature and sunlight. The theory has been that Rhododendron leaves roll up in cold weather as a protective mechanism. The leaves curl up to reduce the surface area exposed to cold, dry winds. This helps prevent water loss from the leaves. When the ground is frozen there is no water available for the roots of the plant to move into the leaves. The curling action allows the leaves to hang down, further protecting them from harsh conditions. Good plant advice says that "Typically, rhododendrons will uncurl their leaves once the weather improves, and they are usually fine afterward, provided the plant is adapted to the local climate and the cold period is not unusually severe."

Well now that is the old philosophy! The new philosophy breaks the leaf issues into two parts- the drooping of the leaves and the rolling of the leaves. The drooping is thought to prevent too much sun from burning the leaves. When you think about it, over winter the deciduous leaves of the trees above are not present to protect the plant from excess sun radiation. If they get burnt they will not be able to sustain the plant in the spring rush of growth.

The curling of the leaves is a different phenomena. Scientists think that leaf curling is related to temperature. Great danger to plants happens when night time temperatures create frost followed by a thaw when the temperature warms up in the morning. Rapid thawing causes ice crystals that have developed in the leaf to pierce the protective membrane around a cell, seriously damaging it. A leaf that is curled will only open gradually thus avoiding rapid thaw and cell damage.

Not all rhododendrons have leaf droop and curl. Plants that grow in the high mountains or the arctic rely on a thick blanket of snow to protect them. This keeps them at about 0 degrees under their snow blanket. However those of us who live here in god's country know what a disaster snow can be for rhododendrons. That is because unlike the lovely fluffy snow of the dry interior of our province, coastal snow is wet and heavy. That snow can weight down branches and snap them. The other snow issue here is that the wet snow sometimes freezes and holds branches down. When the snow starts to melt if those branches are locked in ice they will snap off. When it snows I always go out with a stick and bash the heavy snow off my rhododendrons. As the snow starts to melt and leave I go back to the plants and break them loose from the snow load.

And the last nugget of information? The first person to write about this phenomenon was Charles Darwin in 1880. He had noticed that plant parts, especially leaves, move under the influence of light, water and temperature. Oh that Charles! What a guy!



GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

7:00 pm, October 22, 2024

President Richard Nelson called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Norman Redcliffe moved adoption of the agenda; seconded by Sally Emory. Passed.

Norman Redcliffe moved adoption of the minutes of October 22, 2024; seconded by Cecile Healey.
Passed

President's Report: One week from tonight December 3 will be the Christmas Party here in the Mill Bay Community Hall. Doors open at 5 PM.

Committee Reports:

Vice President: Kathy Code announced that the speaker tonight is Danielle Bellefleur.

Treasurer: Gord assured us that all is well.

Membership: Robin introduced four new members who joined tonight. Name tags can be ordered from Robin for \$15 each.

Memorial Garden: Heather has suspended work parties until the spring.

Yearbook: Yvonne is working to become an administrator.

Library: Katherine showed us a new donation tonight. "The New Science of Plant Intelligence: *Planta sapiens* by Paco Calvo with Natalie Lawrence. New York, Norton, 2022."

Raffle: Stephanie has received several donations tonight

Bursary: Ann said that all bursaries have been claimed for this year

Plant Table: Carrie showed us a group of corkscrew willows that will grow if you just put them in the ground. They are also good in plant displays. There is also some beautiful holly.

Kitchen: There is one empty spot for January and Judy needs folks to sign up for February so she is passing a sheet around.

Brag Table: The theme tonight is Fall Foliage . Barb Kohlman and Fran Benton described several bouquets, ferns and a large mushroom. There were roses, calendula, snap dragons, nerine and several other species still in bloom. There was also a tray of lichens, blown down by the storm with identification notes.

Questions for Master Gardeners:

Can fallen lichen be reattached to the tree it falls from? Yes but you must do it quickly. Reattach with a cotton thread.

Minutes continued on next page

An avocado tree has been sunburned and needs to be pruned. When is a good time? Cut it early before it gets too big

Christmas Party: Dustin encouraged everyone to come next Tuesday to the Christmas Party. Bring a dish to share. There will be a gift exchange, carols, a prize for Bubbles and Bells centrepieces (no candles). also bring your own cutlery, plates, cups, no alcohol.

The meeting broke for refreshment at 7:27 PM and resumed at 7:53 PM.

Kathy Code introduced Danielle Bellefleur who spoke on How to Plan an Orchard. Danielle has worked as a biologist and was a park warden for Parks Canada. She currently owns Fruit Forest Farm on Aros Road in Cobble Hill. (Fruit Forest Farm | u-pick farm.) which is a pesticide free orchard that has over 30 varieties of apples, cherries, peaches, raspberries, strawberries, blueberries, figs, quince and more. Danielle lived for a while in Ucluelet but that is not a good place to plant an orchard. When she moved to the Cowichan Valley she was looking for a location with good drainage and good exposure. To have an orchard that produces well the trees need to be a bit stressed. If the trees have good nutrition and lots of water they will grow well but not produce much fruit. The trees need a balance of nutrition and water, but not too much. On just over 2 acres she has planted 17 rows of fruit trees. She keeps them short so that the fruit can be easily reached. She has 200 apple trees of many varieties. The cherry trees are planted in the middle of the orchard. She irrigates the trees every few days using a drip method. She clears away any grass because it steals the water and nitrogen from the trees. She keeps the ground covered in landscape cloth or well mulched. The cloth works best.

The best varieties for this area are Belle de Boskoop, Golden Russet, Gravenstein, Liberty, Bramalea, Prima and Prism. Gala and Honey Crisp do not grow well on Vancouver Island.

The big problems are codling moths and tent caterpillars. Danielle hand picks the caterpillars off the trees and feeds them to her chickens. Last year she lost 30% of her crop to codling moths. There is not an adequate control for the moths.

Gill Keir moved adjournment at 9:02 PM.