



# MILL BAY GARDEN CLUB NEWSLETTER

Website: [www.millbaygardenclub.com](http://www.millbaygardenclub.com)

Email: [mbgcnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:mbgcnewsletter@gmail.com)

## Next Meeting:

Date: **Tues, March 28th, 2023**

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!**



## March Brag Table Theme:

### *March Madness*

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!

## March Speaker:

**Victor Vesely of  
Westholme Tea Farm**

**Growing Tea in the  
Cowichan Valley**

*See page 3 for details*



Following Provincial recommendations, the Mill Bay Garden Club is no longer requiring vaccination against Covid, or the wearing of masks in the Hall. We recommend masking, but no longer require it.

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## Meeting Helpers

**Kitchen Helpers:** Deborah L, Robert L, Laura F



**Bring your mug for  
coffee or tea!**

(If you signed up to help at February's cancelled meeting, please do this one instead! *Please contact Judy Raimondo if you can't make it.*)

*\* Helpers, please arrive by 6:30 \**

## President's Message

Gill Keir

Hello all.

It is Spring! May March go out like a lamb.

The executive has decided not to continue with the vaccination and masking requirement. We hope that many of you will turn up for this meeting and make it a special one.... Special, in that all of us should feel included and free to mingle in our usual big group for the first time in 3 years. Special, in that there are a couple of people to be honoured.

Also, please give some thought to the annual Community Flower and Garden Show. There are many opportunities for volunteers and we always have a good time.

While masks are not compulsory, we are recommending them.

*Gill*

### March 2023, Mill Bay Garden Club Agenda

- 1) 7:00 p.m.: Club Business
  - a) Approval of the agenda
  - b) Approval of the minutes of January 2023 Club general meeting
  - c) President's Report – Gill Keir
  - d) Executive Committee reports
  - e) Brag Table - Theme: March Madness
  - f) Garden-related Questions with our Master Gardeners
  - g) Questions for the Executive?
  - h) Adjournment
- 2) 8:00 p.m. Speaker: **Victor Vesely on Growing Tea in the Cowichan Valley**

### Cobble Hill Seedy Saturday, March 11, 2023

Cobble Hill's Seedy Saturday took place on March 11th, and the Mill Bay Garden Club had a table in the Stu Armour Hall. Around twenty possible new members left their emails and will receive sample newsletters and attend general meetings for the rest of the 2022-23 season.

The table was set up by Gill and Pat, and staffed from 10-12 by Ann and Dave, and from 12-2 by Bernie and Julie. The venue was packed, and the turnout was terrific!

## March Speaker (Tuesday, March 28th):

### Victor Vesely

The speaker for March 28 will be Victor Vesely who with his partner Margit Nellemann operate Westholme Tea Farm. Victor will present on the joys and challenges of growing *Camelia sinensis* in the Cowichan Valley. Victor and Margit's enterprise is unique to Canada - perhaps it will inspire some of us to plant our own tea bushes and hope to steep a cup from our own garden.

Margit and Victor planted their first tea bushes in 2010, adding to their business of importing fine organic teas, blending original recipe teas and tisanes, and creating hand-made ceramics to accompany each unique flavour.

After a decade of passionate work, they have become the first (and only) Commercial Organic Tea Grower in Canada.

To honour the history and geography of the land on which they work, the Westholme Tea Company was named after the valley where the tea garden is planted on Vancouver Island, and where Victor and Margit have grown tea culture in Canada for more than a decade.

**Also, the club has purchased a new projector which will be in operation at the March 28 meeting.**



## Committee Reports

### Notes from the Library

First of all, here's an excellent resource available for free through the Vancouver Island Regional Library:

<https://my.nicheacademy.com/virl/pathway/30786/course/26567>

Second, I am very excited to introduce a new book to our library! The Pacific Northwest 'Native Garden Primer' introduces the reader to 225 plants for an Earth Friendly Garden. These native plants help attract pollinators, support wildlife and help reduce garden maintenance. The book, by Kristen Currie & Andrew Merritt, is a very well organized, well written book with lots of suggestions for our gardens here in the Cowichan Valley. This book is an absolute hit!

Please remember to return all MBGC books to our March meeting.

*Your friendly librarian,  
Janice Rose*

### Plant Sales

Happy Spring Everyone!

"Blossom by blossom, the Spring arrives".

*Charles Algernon Swinburne*

It is so wonderful to feel the warmth of the returning sun. There are lots of bulbs and perennials starting to pop up in my garden. I'm always excited to see what has survived the long winter. Soon the garden will be bursting with plants and it will be a good time to dig out & divide plants or make room for new discoveries at the nursery.

With that thought, please keep us in mind if you have plants or garden related items to contribute to the Plant Sale Table at the March 28th meeting. It's much appreciated.

Remember to please put your plants in pots and label with name and colour if known.

And to my other note, I have taken over the running of the Plant Sale Table at the Mill Bay Flower & Garden Show in June. I will add this reminder each month to keep you in touch. Please keep us in mind when you are potting up plants from your garden, or





## Committee Reports (continued)

starting flowers and veggies. We would love it if you could grow a few extras or divide plants to contribute.

Barb & Bernie Juurlink have kindly offered their front driveway for storing the plants.

I will be passing around a sign up sheet at the next meeting for those that would like to contribute plants or equipment and/or volunteer to help in the weeks leading up to the show. If you miss the meeting, please contact me by email ([rs58km@telus.net](mailto:rs58km@telus.net)) if you wish to help. And thank you to those who have already agreed to help.

*Thanks,*

*Kathleen Mercer*

### Bursary Committee

If you have an interest in the selection of candidates eligible for the Mill Bay Garden Club Bursary, please send an email to [iannbaty@gmail.com](mailto:iannbaty@gmail.com) or speak to Ann Baty at the February meeting. The committee would like to have at least one or two more members. The time commitment is mostly in the latter part of April and involves advance reading through the applications and a meeting on Zoom.

This year we have two \$500 bursaries to present.

*Ann Baty*



### A little ray of sunshine...

Club member and Librarian Janice Rose has stepped into the shoes filled for so many years by Mary Gale. Janice will send cards to members experiencing illness or loss on behalf of the Club, 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.



## Committee Reports (continued)

### Membership

Name tags. Just a reminder that I have name tags at the Membership desk you can fill out when you come in to the meeting and return to me after the meeting. That way I'll always have it for you next time you come. It helps people learn and remember each other's names which makes for friendlier and more personalized socializing.



We also have permanent name tags you can order. The permanent name tags, green in the pic, are available with a pin at the back for \$8.00 and with a magnetic back for \$11.00. Membership desk is on your left when you come into the hall.

*Pat Spezowka*



The old farmstead during our February General Meeting

🌻🌻🌻🌻🌻🌻 **GARDEN RELATED VENDORS WANTED** 🌻🌻🌻🌻🌻🌻

WE ARE LOOKING FOR MEMBERS WHO WOULD LIKE TO BE A VENDOR AT THE  
COMMUNITY FLOWER AND GARDEN SHOW ON JUNE 3rd 2023.

## Coming Events

### Mill Bay Plantaholics 2023 Plant Sale

The 2023 Mill Bay Plantaholics Annual Plant Sale will again be online. Our customer base has become so large that it is just not practical to have an on-site sale any longer.

The plant and wooden garden novelties lists will be sent out to customers at 9am on **April 15, 2023**.

Although there will be well over 1200 plants for purchase, one needs to be on the alert on that day to put in an order as things move very quickly. If you are already a customer you will receive the lists. If you would like to become a customer please contact and you will be placed on the circulation list.

Some funds are saved for the purchase of potting soil and seeds for the following year but all other proceeds are donated to the Cowichan Women Against Violence Society in Duncan to assist with the operation of Somenos House or to help fund other related programs.

### Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Society, April 21 and 22

This organization has an annual sale which is always really great. The times for this year's sale will be April 21, 1pm-8pm and April 22 9am-3pm. It will be held at the Lambrick Park Church, 1780 Feltam Road, Victoria. It is a sale that one should not miss as it always has unusual plants and very knowledgeable members are present to advise you on your purchases. The event will include a judged show, club plant sale and vendors sale and a silent auction. Check their web site at [www.virags.com](http://www.virags.com) for more information.

### Cairnsmore Plant Sale, May 6, 2023

Remember that the proceeds from this plant sale help to maintain the gardens at Cairnsmore Place and Hospice House in Duncan. Save the Date! Plant sale on Saturday, May 6, 2023. The Volunteer Gardeners for Cairnsmore Place and Hospice House in Duncan will be returning to an in-person annual sale this year! We will have a large variety of plants for sale, Master Gardeners on site to answer any questions, and tours of the gardens for anyone who is interested. The annual plant sale is our major fundraiser and helps us buy plants, soil, compost, fertilizer, gardening tools, and irrigation equipment to maintain the gardens at Cairnsmore Place and Cowichan Hospice House. More information on the sale will be available in the spring. Thanks for your continued support!

### Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society Annual Plant Sale

**Saturday May 13. 10am - noon.** Hundreds of rhododendrons grown by our society and companion plants. A list will be provided at a later date. Please contact us at the email below for more details. Email: [cowichanvalleyrhododendron@gmail.com](mailto:cowichanvalleyrhododendron@gmail.com).

### 2023 Cowichan Family Life Association Garden Tour on June 4th, 2023

Come join our Garden Tour Committee for fun and good times! Greeters, auction item coordinator, media relations, sponsorship, parking attendants, directional sign posters, poster distributors, Garden Tea coordinator, bakers and much more are all warmly welcomed. The CFLA provides free and affordable mental health services to Cowichan Valley residents and the Garden Tour is a major fundraiser. Come join the team and help your family, friends and neighbours get the services they need. Not to mention one heckuva wrap-up party.

## Gardening Tips for February/March 2023

by Barb Kohlman

There is a lot to be busy with in the garden.

Taking good care of your garden tools will ensure they're in good condition when you need them. Why bleach them? No, it's not related to Covid-19. Cleaning hand tools that go from plant-to-plant will help prevent the spread of diseases with 10 to one mix---bleach to water.



Prune deciduous trees, shade trees, small fruits and fruit trees, ornamentals, evergreens {except pine which are suggested to be pruned closer to May}. Deciduous trees should be pruned during the dormant season when the leaves are off and before the sap starts to flow again. Flowering shrubs should typically be pruned immediately after flowering; pruning them now may result in cutting off this year's blooms. Roses, however, should be pruned when yellow forsythia shrubs begin to bloom. (they are just budding now.)

**Set out Mason Bee cocoons and houses.** Mason Bees are gentle, hard-working pollinators. Set out cocoons when temperatures are consistently about 10-13C or higher, and make sure they will have a food source near them when they emerge. Early blooming bulbs or winter heather are good options to have close by. Place Mason Bee houses in a sheltered spot under a house eave on the south or southeast side of your home (or similar location),

**Plant out hardy hellebores, evergreen euphorbias, winter heathers and fragrant shrubs.** Yes, you can plant perennials and shrubs now to enjoy for years to come. Early blooming plants provide much appreciated food for bees and other pollinators too. Remember the fragrance! *Viburnum* 'Pink Dawn', Chinese witch hazel, *Sarcococca*, *Chimonanthus* {wintersweet} and winter flowering honeysuckle are just a few of our seasonal flowering favourites.

**Deadhead and clean up seasonal annuals.** Fall-planted pansies, violas, bellis (English Daisies) and primulas appreciate a clean up to encourage re-blooming. When kept healthy, they will often bloom through to mid-Spring. Side dress with well-composted manure to give them a bit of a boost.

When starting seeds indoors, make sure you have an excellent source of light, good air circulation and a source of consistent warmth to get them off to a good start. Be mindful of timing too. Be sure to read the seed packages to determine the best timing for starting each type of seed so that they can be transplanted outdoors at the right time.

Hope this gets us motivated for the coming season.

Barb K.





## GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

7:00 pm, January 24, 2023

*Note: The January minutes appear in this issue as the Club's February general meeting was cancelled due to snow.*

Vice President Richard Nelson called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

First he read a message from President Gillian Keir who was absent due to illness. He also announced that we have a new Kitchen Coordinator, Judy Raimondo.

Judy Raimondo moved approval of the agenda; seconded by Dustin Carlson.

Kate Roberts moved approval of the minutes of the General Meeting of November 22; seconded by Janice Rose.

President's Report: Richard reported that we have received a letter from the CMS Food Bank Society thanking us for our donation of \$143.00 which was raised by Pat Spezowka's sale of Christmas decorations.

### **Executive Committee Reports:**

Al Mikalishen announced that the Community Garden Show will be held this year on June 2-3, a week later than usual. He is looking for volunteers to help out, especially new members. He would like someone who knows Excel to volunteer. There is a broad spectrum of tasks that need volunteers so please get involved. This is a good cause since we donate much of the money we make to community organizations.

Plant Table: Kathleen Mercer asked us to bring contributions to the plant table to be sold at meetings. She also has a sign-up sheet for plant sales at the Community Garden Show.

Vice President: Richard Nelson reported that we once again had technical problems for tonight's presentation. This time it was because our projector is an old model that does not interface with the presenter's computer. Fortunately our speaker brought his own projector. Pip Woodcock proposed that the Executive Committee investigate and purchase a new projector that will be compatible with modern equipment. Seconded by Pat Spezowka. Carried.

Library: Janice Rose reported that to her surprise there were no new books for sale at the conference at the Mary Winspear Centre last Saturday, so she will go on a shopping spree with her \$400 book budget. Bill Herring has donated two of his favourite gardening books to the library. They are **The Vegetable Garden Displayed** and **The Fruit Garden Displayed**, both by the Royal Horticultural Society. Some folks who borrowed books pre-Covid have not yet returned them so Janice will be making some phone calls. Get Well cards were sent to Pat Stevens, Heather Jenkins and Al Mikalishen in the past month. Please contact Janice if you know of anyone who should get a card.

Speakers; Richard Nelson is hoping to have a presentation by an Expert Panel for the February General Meeting. If anyone is interested in participating please contact Richard.

Membership: Pat Spezowka reported 112 paid up members. There were no new members tonight.

Raffle Table: Stephanie Taylor said there was a good selection of things tonight so please buy raffle tickets.

Kitchen: Judy Raimondo is circulating a list tonight for you to sign up to help in the kitchen and to bring treats for future meetings.

Brag Table: Barb Kohlman showed us a vase of witch hazel in bloom, both yellow and red varieties. This has a pleasant scent and a tea can be made from the bark which has healing properties. There was also holly with lots of red berries, snow drops and winter aconite and a large leaf from Fatsia Japonica. She showed us a leaf from the fern polystichum satiferum divisitobum which had numerous buds along the leaf. New plants can easily be started from these.

Questions: Pat asked if it is too late to plant garlic now? It can be planted now and will still grow well. Should seaweed on the garden be worked in now? Leave it on the surface for now and work it in when you are ready to plant. It is good for beets. Be sure not to use seaweed from October when herring roe is on it.

We were warned that emails that look like they are from the executive are being used by scammers. Look closely and the email is not quite the same. Perhaps we should protect our Executive emails with a password.

The meeting broke at 7:37 PM for refreshment and reconvened at 7:55 PM.

Our speaker was Trevor Reid, a fire protection officer from the Mill Bay Office and a Firesmart coordinator for the Cowichan Valley. The Firesmart Program aims to increase ecology sensitivity and native species resiliency and to preserve and enhance biodiversity. He spoke about the Firesmart Plant and Landscaping program which will help protect your property during a fire. Free home assessments are available in the CVRD area. You can access this on line or contact Trevor Reid himself. This will not affect your home insurance rates but it will point out areas that need to be improved.