

FRIENDS OF DOMINION BROOK PARK

Newsletter No. 23

July, 2008

2008 Fieldwork Program – ongoing and planned

This season's fieldwork work program is moving steadily along. Following the early spring general cleanup of leaves and winter debris, our primary work has been focused on the removal of weeds, ivy, and other extraneous plant materials from the island copses and borders along the north boundary of the park. We are fortunate this summer in having the services of Cliff Halliday of North Saanich Parks working with the volunteers on Wednesday mornings using power tools to remove dead and dying woody material and other unwanted invasive growth.

Following completion of the north boundary cleanup volunteers will concentrate on the sunken garden, which is in need of a major renovation. In late summer work will begin on preparation of the embankment below the main entrance sign and kiosk for planting of shrubs and other plant materials along the slope that will reduce the foot traffic wear and erosion by re-directing it towards the new main entry pathway, which was completed early this year.

This year experienced an especially favourable good spring for the park's many classic rhododendrons. The combination of cool and moist weather, along with some judicious pruning several years ago by a special volunteer pruning team, paid off this year with an extraordinarily spectacular display. And beginning this summer we are especially fortunate to have the volunteer assistance of Francois Frutiger, former head gardener of a 54 acre Rothschilds estate in Geneva, who has undertaken to prune the rhododendrons, shrubs, and small conifers along the north border and island beds. (continued on page 2)

2008 Annual Picnic Sunday, 17th August

The Society's 7th annual membership picnic will be held on
Sunday, 17 August at 3:00 pm in the picnic area

Mark your calendars !! Perfect weather guaranteed, as usual



Volunteers John Ashton and Stu Macdonald haul debris to dumpster

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The ongoing program for identification, cataloguing, mapping, and photographing of park plant materials directed by Joan Gibb received a real boost this year. A presentation by Joan last winter to the Victoria Master Gardener Association resulted in the Association's contribution of three teams of master gardeners this summer who volunteered their expertise to assist with the plant identification program. With this help the I.D. program should be finished by October. In addition, our computer data base for plant records is underway with the expectation of its completion early in the new year.

Special Donation Fund for New Plant Materials

As the park rehabilitation program continues, plans are concurrently being made for the next step – replacement of some of the trees and shrubs lost through damage, neglect, or natural attrition over the years. In this respect a special fund – separate from General Revenue – has been established specifically to purchase new plant materials for restoration plantings. In fact, a few suitable plants have already been obtained and are currently being stored at the Centre for Plant Health property pending preparation of appropriate planting locations.

With the objective of rehabilitating Dominion Brook Park in a manner consistent with its original concept as a horticultural display garden for plant specimens from around the world -- as mandated in 1913 by Dr. William Macoun, Dominion Horticulturist – archival records and soil conditions are being used to guide the replanting program.

The first areas to be renovated with new plantings will be the embankment below the main entry, followed by the north boundary and the island beds. The second area for restoration and replanting is the sunken garden. The third phase will be the rehabilitation of the main pond and ravine areas – a major project now in its initial planning stage.

For this program a “wish list” of restoration and replacement plantings is being drawn up, partly from archival records and from suggestions and recommendations received by interested gardeners and park users. Anyone interested in being involved in this heritage restoration plan is invited to contact Joan Gibb, at 656-4185, or gibbjb@shaw.ca



One “wish list” tree is a *stewartia pseudocamellia* or “Tree for all Seasons”. It is a medium to large size deciduous tree native to Japan with attractive dark red peeling bark for winter interest. White cup shaped flowers with bright yellow anthers in mid summer turn a brilliant red in the fall.

Water in the Park – the Upside and the Downside

Dominion Brook Park is not short of water – but it is in all the wrong places.

The **upside** is the installation earlier this year of a pressure water line and standpipe on the north boundary about 100 meters west (uphill) of the Marshall Road park entrance gate. This will finally enable regular irrigation of the drought stressed rhododendrons and other plantings – including two memorial trees -- along the northern border area, which is an especially arid area of the park.



John Dawson with new water supply standpipe

The **downside** of water in the park is the erratic drainage of surface and ground water, which bubbles up periodically in various areas of the park creating supersaturated wet and muddy areas. The problem is partly the failure or collapse of sections of the ancient tile drainage system installed many decades ago, partly by the vagaries and changes in natural drainage flows, and also underground leakage from the main pond.

Typical locations are in the meadow above the picnic hut, the south bank of the ravine, a mud hole next to the east boundary fence, and – this year – an eruption of drainage on the adjacent uphill side of bed #9 on the north boundary.

The resulting marshy lawn in this area cannot be mowed, creating the large and unsightly hay field. Without correction the ongoing soil saturation in Bed #9 may eventually lead to potential root rot and possible loss of its old and unique trees and shrubs.

Our best hope currently is a natural change in the drainage flow in this area (or perhaps a long dry summer). Unfortunately the cost of any long term comprehensive drainage renovation program for the park is far beyond the park management's current resources.



John stands in undrained marsh area next to Bed #9

Featured Plant

Cedrus atlantica ‘Glauca Pendula’



This coniferous tree is located just behind and above the Douglas Cook memorial bench south of the main pond. It is a weeping form of the *C. atlantica*, one of the ‘true cedars’. It is a native of the Atlas mountains of Algeria and Morocco, found in the wild in 1845. Dominion Brook Park’s specimen was supplied by Layritz Nursery in Saanich in 1942. It was trained over the years to its present form, and the memorial bench it shelters provides one of the best view seats in the park.

Layritz Nursery, founded by nurseryman Richard Layritz in 1890, played a large role over the years in providing plant materials to the Dominion Experimental Farm, forerunner to the present Centre for Plant Health. Layritz Park, next to Camosun College in Saanich, was named after him.

New Board of Directors

At the Society’s Annual General meeting on April 23rd the following members were elected to the Board of Directors:

President:	Bryan Kemper	Directors at large	Sheila Irving
Vice president	Vacant		Ed Johnson
Secretary /past president	Edna Ralston		Debbie Sherwood
Treasurer	Spring Harrison	Ex-Officio members	David Lye, Centre for Plant Health
Field Operations	Joan Gibb		Brian Robinson, District of North Saanich



For more information on Dominion Brook Park, please visit www.northsaanich.ca/municipal_Hall/Department/Parks_and_Trails

To contact the Friends of Dominion Brook Park Society please write to Box 20007, 9839 Fifth St, Sidney, B.C. V8L 5C9. Or phone 250-656-6574