

# Friends of Dominion Brook Park

Newsletter No. 31

March 2011

## Richard Layritz, Nurseryman

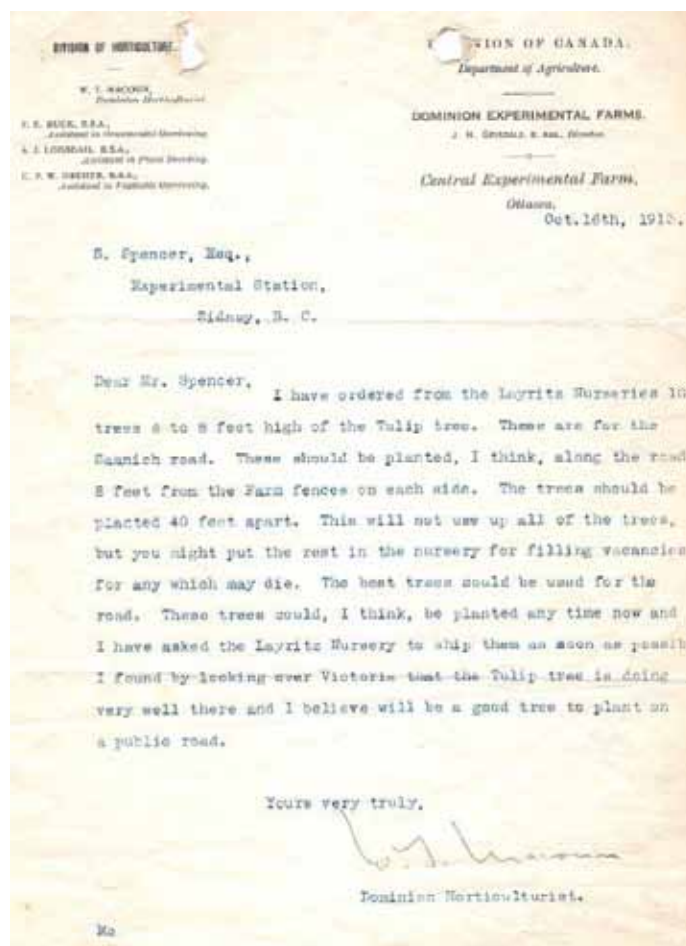
Richard Layritz was born near Dresden, Germany, in 1866. He studied horticultural in Stuttgart, ornamental gardening in Paris, hedging in London and gained further experience at the Spaeth Nursery in Berlin (April, 2010 Newsletter). He sailed for Montreal in 1887 and after a year in the East came to Victoria.

He started a small nursery near Ross Bay Cemetery but the cold winter froze the plants so in 1889 he bought 14 acres on Wilkinson Road. His nursery suffered various set backs and he followed the Klondike Gold Rush in 1898 and worked as a paid helper to earn money to pay off his debts and develop his business.

Layritz achieved international fame as a breeder and supplier of thousands of varieties of shrubs, fruit trees, roses and rhododendrons. Victoria Nurseries in Saanich and Layritz Nurseries Ltd. in Kelowna supplied more than half of the fruit trees for the Okanagan with orders as high as 40,000 trees, roses for British Colonials in the Far East and rhodos for the Pacific Northwest.

He was a major supplier for the new Dominion Experimental Farm both in fruit trees and ornamental trees and shrubs, a relationship which continued for decades. The most notable were the 100 Liriodendron (tulip) 6' to 8' trees, ordered October 16, 1913, which lined East Saanich Road near the Farm. William Macoun, Dominion Horticulturist, gave specific written instructions (from an original letter in the Farm Archives) that they were to be planted 40 feet apart. Only one specimen survives, a few feet north of the log fence fronting the Park, but it is a sad example because of the hydro wires. In 2008, in recognition of his contribution, we planted a donated Tulip tree in the Park adjacent to East Saanich Road.

Mr. Layritz donated 10 acres to Saanich for a Park in the 1940s which is still regarded as a gem in the Colquitz area. He claimed a big share of credit for making Victoria the "City of Gardens" with many boulevard trees and stock in private gardens originating at his nursery. He died in 1954 and by his request his ashes were scattered under his favourite Sequoia grown from a seedling in 1889. The Sequoia still stands on Wilkinson Road near his house.



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2011 Annual General Meeting will be held on April 27, 2011 in the Pavilion at the Centre for Plant Health at 7:30pm. Bring your friends and neighbours!

The program will include an update on future plans and projects. Our special speaker will be announced. Refreshments will be served.

REMEMBER TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP. YOUR SUPPORT IS ESSENTIAL.

# 2011 Work Season

Our 2011 Work Program is underway with the clearing of winter debris.

One of our main focuses this year will be the edging and mulching of the North Border and Island Beds. This chore, though labour intensive, improves the look of the Park and helps with moisture retentions plus keeps those ever present weeds somewhat suppressed. Much of our time is spent weeding to the detriment of other necessary work.

The District has addressed the water leakage from the Pond which had become a major health concern for the plant material in Beds 4, 5, 6 and 7. (see sandbagging photo) It appears to have solved the problem for the time being but the pond lining is an issue to be dealt with at a later date. It is also hoped we can put in an aeration system to help clear the Pond from what we refer to as the 'gunk'.

We will be continuing our rescue work on Rhodos in the Ravine. An expert pruner has been at work earlier this year and will continue the task. (see debris photo) We are fortunate that a portion of the work is pro bono. There are Ligustrum hedges in the southeast corner needing much attention to rid them of the noxious growth.

It is a long list for our volunteers which they always tackle with enthusiasm. However, a few extra hands would be most welcome by us all. Think 'fun and satisfaction' for a Wednesday morning activity.



Oops, we sprung a leak !



A mountain of pruning debris awaits our intrepid volunteers.

# ***CALLING ALL MEMORIES !***

An invitation to all (members, neighbours, friends, relatives) who have memories and anecdotes of the Dominion Experimental Farm and Park during its 100 year history.



Clearing Team, Dominion Experimental Farm, 1912  
*Sidney Archives Photo*

The Centenary is in 2012 and we are compiling material for a special edition of the Newsletter and the Farm Archives. The Farm and Park have played an important role in the history of the Saanich Peninsula whether from an employee's view or the social aspects of the larger community.

There a lot of stories out there and we want to read them. So write a few paragraphs telling us of your most memorable moments. They can be sent to [contactus@dominionbrookpark.ca](mailto:contactus@dominionbrookpark.ca) or Box 20007, Sidney, BC V8L 5C9.

## **Mile High Rhodos**



With the Himalayan Range in the background, these rhodos thrive at an elevation of 2000 meters (6,700 ft.) in Darjeeling, West Bengal, India.

*Joan Gibb photo © March 2011*

# VIEWS OF A VOLUNTEER

To the sweet satisfaction of the planter, one of life's little joys, is returning to Dominion Brook Park in December to witness the past summer's sturdy young plantings in their new home...tucked proudly amongst towering trees and spreading rhodos – many placed there just about a century ago. A pleasurable sense of connection and continuity exists for the returning volunteer at the Park. There are, too, the remembered sociable moments of the past summer – the camaraderie and the gatherings, 'en plein air', after a couple hours with pick and spade, tractor and fork, to share news, coffee and cookies.

*(How is it tea tastes so delicious when imbibed outdoors with earth stained hands and wearing an old pair of hand me down boots?)*

What brings us back, time and again, to grab a spade or a rake, a pruner or a good pair of loppers and head off for two hours of toil amongst the hidden places of 'our' arboretum? (for it feels like 'ours' for two hours a week).

Is it our fearless leader who unabatedly inspires us to dig huge holes, haul buckets of water or endlessly weed without any material reward or perhaps the quiet peace of the sunken garden with its tiny stream that sings past the curved bridge? Or the joy of seeing a sea of colour bursting forth from the earth every spring? Or it is the voluntary coming together of all of these aspects in conjunction with Nature's gracious hand, creating a felicitous shared whole in which we choose, each of us, to contribute in our own way.

"Hey, where did that pair of Felcos get to, anyway?" Bring on 2011, we all say!

*Sue Shillingford*



## *Acer p. 'Drummondii' (Norway Maple, Harlequin Maple)*

*A very striking medium-sized to large tree bearing leaves with a broad marginal band of creamy white. Its leaves burst forth later than other maples but well worth a look before they mature as the colours are fresh and bright as sunshine. An earlier specimen was among the first group of imported trees to the Farm. It was first introduced to the public in 1903. Our maple is one of the newly planted trees in the Southeast corner of the Park.*



For more information on Dominion Brook Park, please visit <http://www.dominionbrookpark.ca/>  
To contact the Friends of Dominion Brook Park Society please write to Box 20007, Sidney, B.C. V8L 5C9  
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