



Friends of Dominion Brook Park Society



The **Annual General Meeting**

of the Friends of Dominion Brook Park Society will be held on April 28th, 2016, 7pm, at the Pavilion, Centre for Plant Health, 8801 East Saanich Road.

This is your chance to rub shoulders with the 'movers and shakers' of the Society.

Our guest speaker will be Mr. Gordon MacKay who was our conifer specialist during the early years of the Dominion Brook Park Society.

He is a lecturer at Royal Roads University with the Camosun Horticultural program as well as owner of Alba Nursery in Duncan. His topic is entitled: "The World of Conifers: A Few Personal Favourites."

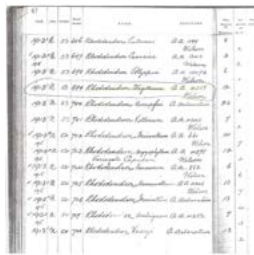


More Than A Century In The Park

We have one remaining *Rhodo strigillosum* (of 16) plants on the lower edge of the south side of the pond. It is part of a long and interesting Park history.

It was in a letter to plantsman, **George Fraser**, from **C.S. Sargent**, Director of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, given to me by a **Bill Dale**, a Fraser historian, that the AA had sent 60 ornamental plants to the Dominion Experimental Farm in 1913. However, no other information was available at that time.

A few years later while trolling through long stored boxes at the Centre for Plant Health, there it was – the original invoice from the Arnold Arboretum. It listed dozens of plants along with the AA numbers and the name of the plant hunter associated with the specimen. And then another wonderful find, a large journal of all the plants acquired from 1913 to 1915.



There were several dozen species of rhodos plus Pittosporum, Viburnum, Cotoneaster, Ilex, Jasminum, etc., included in the 1913 shipment with the names Wilson and Purdom attached.

Ernest Henry Wilson (1876-1930) the better known of the two plantsmen. He trained at Birmingham Botanical Gardens and obtained a position at Kew Gardens. When Veitch Nurseries asked Kew to recommend a young man to travel to China to find a source of the Handkerchief tree, *Davidia involucre*, Wilson was recommended. Having travelled halfway around the world tasked



with finding this once sighted extraordinary tree, Wilson discovered it had been cut down to build a shed. According to his diary, he was devastated. Meanwhile he discovered the Kiwi Vine fruit (*Actinida deliciosa*), along with 400 additional new plants. He continued his search and eventually stumbled on an entire grove of *Davidia*. The first trip, of five, lasted for three years.

Such was his reputation that in 1896 he was recruited

by the Arnold Arboretum in Boston and his talents led him all over the world in search of new species for the Arboretum: Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, India, Africa and of course, China. At one point Wilson was estimated to have introduced 2000 new species. Dominion Brook Park is fortunate to have some of these specimens, *Berberis Julianae* and *Triacanthophora*, *Ilex Wilsonii* and several rhodos still in the Park. At least 600 Wilson introductions are still in cultivation.

At the young age of 50 he succeeded Sargent as Director of the Arnold Arboretum in 1927 with a long and distinguished career ahead of him. Unfortunately, he and his wife died in a car accident in Montreal and are buried there. He is credited in the founding of the Montreal Botanical Garden.

William Purdom (1880-1921) also was employed by Kew Gardens, London, for a time before being selected by the Arnold Arboretum and to join an expedition to 'bring into our gardens Chinese plants from regions with climates even more severe than those of New England'. He was less successful than Wilson though it was in an area near Tibet with less than optimal conditions including brigands, political unrest and narrow escapes.



However, photography was an extremely successful result of Purdom's expedition. He proved a gifted portraitist, capturing for posterity a rich ethnographic record of the people from Tibetan border regions and of the plant material encountered throughout the region.

Purdom is noted for his later exploration in China with **Reginal Farrer** (1880-1920) with whom he collected and introduced many new alpine plants. At the conclusion of their expedition in 1916, Purdom remained in China to become a division chief with the Chinese Forest Service to help with reforestation of the country. He died in Beijing after minor surgery.

Dominion Brook Park is fortunate to have some remaining plant material from these intrepid plant hunters.



WANTED!!!

**VOLUNTEERS
FOR
DOMINION BROOK PARK
WEDNESDAY MORNING WORK PARTIES
9AM - 11AM**

Join our team of enthusiastic supporters to continue the restoration of the Jewel of the Peninsula. Experience not necessary and work levels for everyone.



2016 Work Season - Our 15th Year!

Our volunteers will begin the 2016 work season on March 16th at 9am. The volunteers have made wonderful progress in the continuing upkeep of the Park. The major efforts in the Ravine last season was a feather in our cap. We will continue the restoration and maintenance with special projects again this year along with our regular work schedule. New volunteers are always needed and very welcome. No expertise required and we do have fun!

Contact Joan Gibb for more information: 250 656 4185, or gibbjb@shaw.ca



Farewell And A Tip Of The Hat

To Ed Johnson

After eight years of dedication as a volunteer on the board of the Friends of Dominion Brook Park Society, we bid farewell to Ed Johnson. In his time with the Board Ed has served as Member At Large, Treasurer and President, providing informed counsel at Board meetings with advice and information.

Ed volunteered to help with our participation in the North Saanich Flavour Trail, always available to answer questions from the public and serving as our official photographer and videographer, as he did at many public tours and events. On occasion he has helped with the on the ground work of the volunteers who have toiled tirelessly to restore and maintain the Park.

He has been largely responsible for eight years of newsletters as contributing writer, graphic artist and editor. To this we can add being the printer of our brochure saving the Society thousands of dollars. If that is not enough Ed has also been responsible for the creation and maintenance of our website, easing us, sometimes reluctantly, into the digital age.

DBP is not the only community organization that has benefited from Ed's hard work. He has served on other Boards, committees, devoting his time to many worthwhile projects on the peninsula and further abroad.

So a tip of the hat to our man of many hats; thanks Ed for all that you have contributed.



Thank you **Jeff** !

Once again this year, Jeff Lambert has done doggy bag duty over the winter months. It is the contributions of regular Park goers that make a big difference to the Park. And to others who contributed to this chore-well done!

Have you seen our new website?

Go to www.dominionbrookpark.ca

for a slide show presentation of this year's

Ravine Project accomplishments!

Featured Plant

R. Strigillosum

One of the classic species in the genus *Rhododendron* is *R. strigillosum*. The large deep red flowers in early spring are set against the whorl of dark green leaves. Known in its native China (Sichuan & Yunnan) as prickly rhododendron. It was first described in 1886 by M.A. Franc. It was introduced into cultivation by Ernest Wilson in 1904 during his plant hunting days as an employee of the Veitch Nursery in England. In early spring (March in the Park), the sticky flower buds open to reveal brilliant crimson, scarlet or deep red flowers. It can grow as wide as tall, relatively frost resistant but being a plant of the forest and thicket, it prefers some protection from full exposure to the sun. However, it is not a difficult species to accommodate in our climate. It is often used as a parent in *Rhododendron* hybrid breeding programs, e.g. *R. Matador*.



Staff this issue:

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For more information on Dominion Brook Park, please visit <http://www.dominionbrookpark.ca/>
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