



# The Reader Rock Garden

[www.ReaderRock.com](http://www.ReaderRock.com)



## Golden Leaves & Gold Stars

By Diane Dalkin

Although some may find a certain sadness at the end of summer, with autumn luring us indoors, this season's dramatic transformation can be invigorating too and merits our attention. The brisk cool air, the smell of wood burning fireplaces, the brilliant colors of Mother Nature's canvas and the harvest define this special time.

Yet, before we shift to this new seasonal pace, just a quick recap on what's been happening at the Garden.

★ This year, the City allocated more resources to the Garden. The larger gardening team did a fabulous job sprucing up and renovating some tired areas. And, despite the seemingly incessant rain and hail this summer, the Garden hasn't look this good in ages! Mother Nature provided much-needed moisture; in fact, it's still quite lush and green, which is unusual for this time of year. Nonetheless, definite *kudos* go out to the entire City Parks team for all their efforts this year, *well-done!!*

★ Other positive improvements include the installation of additional bike racks, closer to the House. And I know that many of you will be pleased to know that the much-contentious "no doggie visitors" signs have been re-introduced as part of site garden etiquette.

Yet, attendance at the *Café* was clearly down. Just as many other local establishments struggled in these challenging economic times, the *Café* was not immune to this malaise. Normally, the *Café* stays open until Thanksgiving or until the first snowfall, but this year will probably be an exception, with an earlier closing scheduled. Please make sure to give them a call before you make plans, just so you won't be disappointed. Their contact details are on page 4.

★ Our **Annual Garden Stroll** took place on, Saturday, **June 18<sup>th</sup>**. We were very pleased to be part of the *National Garden Days* celebration, which offered a wider exposure of the garden via the Garden Days website – [gardendays.ca](http://gardendays.ca) – It featured coast-to-coast activities happening over the designated weekend.

★ The *Calgary Sketch Club* also joined us again at the Stroll and generously donated an original piece of art for future fund-raising consideration. This handsome, loveable 12x12 bug painting could be yours; stay tuned for more details about this.



Just as it is crucial to prepare for the next season, to put our gardens to bed, likewise, we're hoping that you may consider volunteering with our group? Lots of interesting opportunities exist; we'd appreciate hearing from you for a chat.

★ And lastly, but most importantly ...*"Thank-you"* to our many existing volunteers for making these events and this year such a success; and of course, to you, our members for your generous support of the association and the gardens.

Til next time, enjoy the season ahead; may you gather with family and friends under one roof for the upcoming holidays. Warmest Regards to you, our supporters. See you soon and *stay safe!*

### FoRRGS Team

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## To Everything There Is A Season.

By Marilyn Mayall

The twisted single stemmed lilac in Bed K is not an immediately impressive sight. In the past few years it has successively lost limbs and is now struggling for its existence. A few suckers attest to the vigour of the many cultivars of *Syringa vulgaris*, but if/when this specimen does complete its long life cycle, it is reassuring to know that a replacement specimen has been started.

The photo below, was taken in 2008 by Janet Washburn when there were still two trunks remaining.

Identified as 'Marie Legraye' (1840 or before) the florets of this



common lilac are single, radiant white blooms with a bright yellow centre. Foliage is light to mid-green.

'Marie Legraye' was used extensively by Emile Lemoine (one of the famous French family of lilac hybridizers, Victor Lemoine et Fils, who developed many double lilacs we have today) as the female parent in his hybridization work. Most of the finest white double lilacs –the so-called French lilacs-produced by Lemoine and other later hybridizers are the offspring of this parent. So botanically and historically significant.

The journey of *Syringa vulgaris* from its native hillsides in southeastern Europe is anything but common and well worth reading about. Initially transported to the garden courts of Istanbul, it then made its way back to Vienna around 1563 and then later to Paris as a betrothal gift between the powerful courts of Vienna and France. It be-

came a popular addition to European gardens, but it was not until the Lemoines began their hybridization work that the double lilacs were systematically developed. After the lilac's introduction to the Russian court, Leonid Kolesnikov continued the work of the Lemoines and developed his own variants – one of the most famous being 'Beauty of Moscow'

Reader must have been fond of this cultivar as he lists it as a planting in four different beds. Sadly, this is the only remaining specimen from his era.

Overshadowed by the huge elm in the Upper Garden (Nana's garden) is *Prunus sp.* – an unidentified plum. Although initially very keen to identify this smallish tree, after a significant number of hours combing through historical plum sites and comparing descriptions to Reader's list of planted plums, I find I am not a whole lot closer to a positive ID. That task will have to wait for a relatively calm winter's day.

In Spring a display of white blossoms lights up *Prunus sp.* and that section of garden, though fruit production is a rare event.



Photo by Marilyn Mayall

One reason could be the lack of suitable pollinating sources accessible to the plum. Some of the cultivars listed as being planted at Reader are self-sterile and require particular pollen in order to produce fruit. For example,

*P. 'Pembina'*, a hybrid of a Japanese plum, *P. salicina* and a Canadian plum, *P. nigra* requires fertilization by *P. americana*.

Efforts to re-introduce *P. 'Pembina'* to the gardens have not so far been successful.

You've got to take your hat off to this specimen, overshadowed though it is, for just showing up each year. As a candidate for eventual replacement, the obvious drawback is the lack of positive ID. Additionally a new site would need to be found as the elm has pre-empted much of the light available to the shrub.



A look at Reader's *Prunus* list indicates that Reader was familiar with the work being done to hybridize cold climate hardy fruits at the South Dakota Experimental Station. One of Hansen's most successful plum hybrids P 'Sapa' is listed as being planted by Reader.

Near the entry to the Gardens (off 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE) stands a low branched, architecturally beautiful old crabapple tree.



Photo by Marilyn Mayall

Janet Washburn has heard it referred to as Grandmother Crab, but does not know where the name originated, yet it is clearly (by Calgary standards) an old tree.

This year its foliage is a little tattered due to hail damage, but that allows the twisted branches to show to even greater advantage.

In 2015, the Urban Forestry Department pruned out the dead wood. But this grand old matriarch is facing other challenges.

Like many trees in Calgary it is susceptible to and is being attacked by oystershell scale.



Photo by Marilyn Mayall

Oystershell scale attacks a variety of commonly grown trees and shrubs including ash, cotoneaster, poplars, willow and lilac.

Without treatment, the scale can cause limb dieback and

during heavy outbreaks, plant death can occur. Scales feed by sucking the fluids of cells underlying the bark. Unfortunately the tricky part of treatment is that it has to be timed exactly to when the new crawlers (Instar 1 nymphs) emerge in Spring-typically May or June, but hatches are extremely dependent on current weather conditions so that close observation of the affected tree needs to be undertaken at this time.

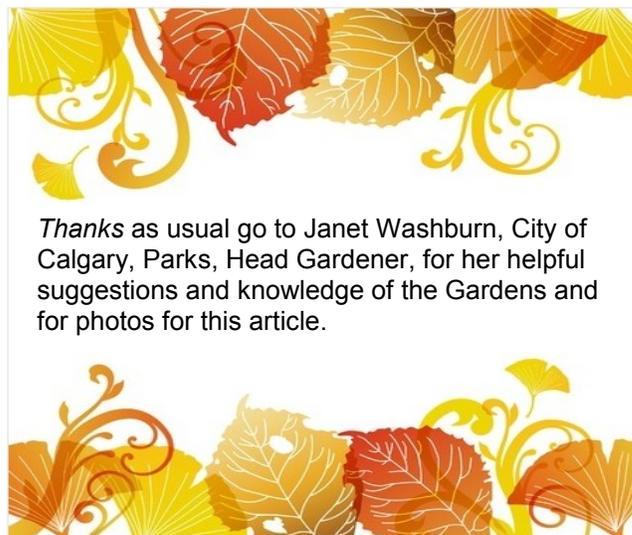
During this narrow window of approximately 2-3 weeks, the nymphs are not covered by the scale which gives the disease its name and can be sprayed with horticultural oil. The IPM (Integrated Pest management) Department of Calgary Parks has treated the tree with horticultural oil.

Following this brief mobile stage, the nymphs lose their legs and become immobile, but continue to grow and develop the protective scale which is impervious to most horticultural treatments. For those whose skin is not already feeling itchy about these unpleasant little creatures, I recommend further reading about the effectiveness of different controls. One approach, outlined in the book "Coincide" by Donald Orton involves awareness of what else is happening in your garden and understanding what events occur at the same time. Timing of insect control becomes a critical factor. Apparently the *Vanhouttei* spirea blooms at the same time as the crawlers emerge. And it is a lot easier to observe a tumbling mass of white blooms than to try to find the crawlers, which often requires the use of a magnifying lens.

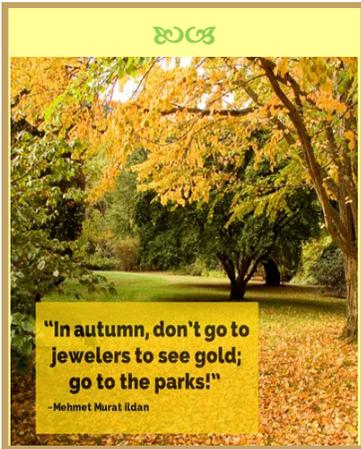
I'm hoping that this grand old tree can overcome the current challenges it faces and delight us through all seasons for many years to come.

In every garden's life change is the constant ... whether the plant reaches the end of its life cycle, or conditions around it change or it is faced with attack from disease or pests. The positive side of this coin is that *renewal is always a possibility in a garden.*

*To everything there is a season ...*



Thanks as usual go to Janet Washburn, City of Calgary, Parks, Head Gardener, for her helpful suggestions and knowledge of the Gardens and for photos for this article.



**Garden Tour Guides Needed for 2017 Season**

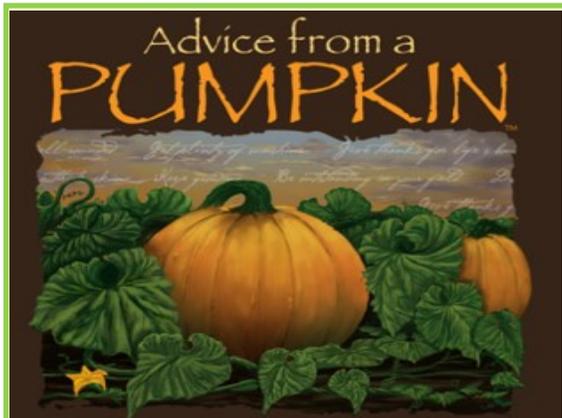
Our role as Tour Guides is to share our passion for the Reader Rock Garden with visitors. Garden Tour Guides take visitors back through time, sharing an insight into the unique legacy of William Reader, Calgary's first Superintendent of Parks & Cemeteries (1913-1943), while exposing some of the hidden treasures within the Garden today.

As a Tour Guide you will have the opportunity to expand your knowledge of the Garden and it's history. Tour Guide Training is offered in the form of maps, handouts and plant index. This is supplemented with a relaxed one hour guided training tour through the garden. Training tours are typically offered on Saturday mornings at various times through the season starting in May (weather permitting). You are welcome to attend as many training tours as your curiosity and schedule permits.

As public & group requests for tours are received, dates are made available to the pool of trained Tour Guides. Tour Guides are paired with a more experience Tour Guide leader to build confidence and support.

Contact Diane Dalkin at [info@readerrock.com](mailto:info@readerrock.com) if you are interested.

*If you're passionate about plants and beautiful gardens, Calgary's Reader Rock Garden is the place for you.*



Be well-rounded \* Get plenty of sunshine \*  
Give thanks for Life's bounty \* Have a thick skin \*  
Keep growing \* Be outstanding in your field \*  
Don't go to seed!!



— Photos by Anne Elliott

Calgary's Best Kept Secret  
Est. 1913 - 2013

Reader Rock Garden  
Historic Site

Lunch • Dinner  
Weekend Brunch • Special Events

*Reader's*  
GARDEN CAFE  
Kitchen Garden Cuisine

Macleod Trail & 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE  
403-263-0210  
[www.readergardencafe.ca](http://www.readergardencafe.ca)



**The Calgary Rock and Alpine Garden Society (CRAGS)**

2nd Thursday of each month  
(Jan-June and Sept-Nov)  
**Lakeview Community Association Hall**  
6110 34th Street SW.  
6:30 pm Social & Refreshments  
7:00 pm Q&A  
7:30 pm Presentation

◆ **Thursday, Sept. 15, 2016**

Last chance **Plant Sale** 6:30-7:15 pm,  
before the regular meeting.

Lots more going on, see their website.  
**See: [www.crag.ca/events](http://www.crag.ca/events)**

