



# The Reader Rock Garden

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



## *Pumpkin Spiced Season!*

By Diane Dalkin

Another growing season comes to a close. This year, the intense, prolonged heat and drought conditions stressed many of our gardens and parks. However the Head Gardener, *Daniel Walker* and his team worked diligently to ensure that the water needs were responsibly met at Reader Rock Garden. They also infused a refreshed energy back into the Garden with some serious weed eradication, clearing and replanting new plant material and a host of other improvements along the way. Accolades go out to them for ALL their efforts ...the Garden looked amazing ... lots of compliments were heard this year. Way to go, team; *thank-you!*

Even though the heat of the summer is definitely gone now, and pumpkin-spiced weather might be upon us, there's still time for some more visits to the Garden. The rich hues of the leaves, berries, apples and seed pods evoke warmth and paint a dazzling display. The garden reveals a different side of its finery and is still worthy of a saunter.

Reader's Garden Café will endeavor to stay open as long as patrons come by, but it might be best to check-in with them first, just so you won't be disappointed. Contact details are available on page 4.

This year, we also added @FoRRGS to further out-reach on Social Media and it's getting the word out. Follow us on Twitter, Facebook & Instagram: *A huge thanks* to our multi-talented Treasurer, *Liz* for her initiatives with this project.   

Furthermore, we had the good fortune of attracting a large group of new and talented tour guides and volunteers. They've already dedicated a lot of their time to learn the rich site history, as well as the ins & outs of the Garden. You will surely meet them next year when we return to high gear. And I know you'll agree with me ... they're awesome!

For now, the slower pace in the Garden offers us time to reflect, *be thankful* and reap the abundant harvest from everyone's work. In the quiet, cool, still air take in these simple riches and stay warm ... it's pumpkin spice and everything nice kinda season.



### FoRRGS Team

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**To Everything There Is A Season ... Part 2**

*By Marilyn Mayall*

At this time of the year my thoughts once again turn to some of the old trees at Reader and the need for all of us who garden to think about planning for the future of our gardens. At Reader Rock Garden succession planning is well underway.

Behind the restaurant on the South slopes (*Beds 5, 8 and 11*) are a number of crabapple trees of varying ages and in varying degrees of health.

During the past few seasons the cavity in the trunk of the crabapple in Bed 5 has been the home of chickadees and nuthatches. And although there are newer branches on this tree, the main trunk shows serious deterioration.



The fruit of this tree is a bright crimson colour and is oval in shape. It looks very much like a 'Dolgo' crabapple. In Spring its blooms are white.

Some of 'Dolgo's distinguished descendants are *M.* 'Centennial' (good for jelly making); *M.* 'Martha-Dolgo' said to be a good eating apple introduced at Morden in 1943.

The 'Dolgo' must have been a favourite of Reader as it is listed and used a number of times in the garden.

Brought from Siberia in the 1800s, 'Dolgo' has the advantages of cold resistance (to -40 degrees) as well as resistance to some of the diseases that plague fruit trees, such as scab and fire blight.



*Daniel Walker*, the gardener at Reader, indicated that this tree will eventually be removed due to its age and the ex-

tent of damage to its trunk. There are, however, plans to clone the tree by taking softwood cuttings. Seed will be collected from it as well. The cuttings will be nurtured at Reader until they can be sent to the City Nursery to be grown on and then (in 3-5 years) possibly replanted at Reader or elsewhere in Calgary. As the seeds are open pollinated the progeny from seed will not be clones of the original tree, but relatives.

We have all rooted our favourite pelargoniums (geraniums) by dropping them into a jar of water and waiting for the roots to appear. Softwood cuttings are a somewhat more sophisticated version of this technique and have the advantage of having the highest potential for successful rooting (which consequently provides the best chance for successful cloning of deciduous shrubs and trees). Softwood cuttings are sometimes described as being neither green nor woody, but I suspect there is a lot of judgement and experience required to take the cuttings at just the right time.

Most softwood cuttings are collected in spring or early summer. The cuttings should be 5-10 cm. long with a cut just below a node (the concentration of hormones at the node increases the chance of rooting). Rooting hormones are of benefit also when using this technique.

One of the greater dangers in this type of propagation is the loss of moisture both in the cutting and in the potting medium. This technique requires the use of a closed propagator case to ensure sufficient humidity. The low tech. version of the closed propagator is the closed plastic bag around the pots. After rooting has taken place (6-10 weeks) the plants can be gradually exposed to less humidity before being potted on.

Another candidate for cloning and seed collection is an unidentified crabapple in Bed 11. The main trunk is damaged and like the tree in Bed 5 it has tried to compensate by sending out new limbs.



The identification of crabapples in general is notoriously difficult (they hybridize freely) and the identification of the crabapples at Reader are no exception. I feel it is important to pursue identification matters for a bit longer and hopefully, after talking to folks more knowledgeable than I am I'll be ready to hazard some tentative identifications for the crabapples at Reader.

I have a love-hate relationship with the crabapple in my yard. I appreciate the shade that it provides during the heat of summer as well as the blizzard of white and pink blossoms in spring. While perfectly willing to acknowledge the crabapple's historical importance as a source of sustenance in really cold places and its value in being a parent in the hybridization of many of our modern eating apples in Canada, I find myself mutinously promising doom to the tree as I deposit trug after trug of boozy smelling crabs into the composter each fall. I long ago gave up making jelly which simply occupied space in the cold room.

So it is with some bemusement that I wonder why Reader planted more than twenty different varieties of crabapple (often more than one of each species) at Reader Rock Garden as well as in many City Parks around Calgary.

There was the obvious need to feed a rapidly expanding population in a harsh environment. In the early 1900s Calgary grew little of its own produce...instead relying on expensive and less than fresh produce from British Columbia. So the quest to grow cold hardy produce would have been a pressing necessity for Reader, then Superintendent of Parks.

Reader was, in all probability, heavily influenced by two turn-of-the-century philosophies: the *City Beautiful Movement* (inspired and espoused by Thomas Mawson) and the *Garden City Movement*. Both of these philosophies expressed a strong belief in the power of beautiful surroundings and strong civic planning to positively influence the lives of citizens .....especially those citizens who were struggling economically.

The City Beautiful Movement sought to avoid the overcrowded, unsanitary slums where diseases such as cholera still flourished in some of the older cities of the world by attending to civic planning. The emphasis on beauty which brought the movement into some disrepute as an impractical dwelling place for dreamers was perhaps unfortunate as the ideas formulated by Mawson now form the foundation of much modern city planning. The attraction of a beautiful environment would have been a powerful vision for citizens living on a wind-swept, treeless prairie landscape. The attraction of more congenial surroundings would have provided incentive for citizens who perhaps had not yet developed a commitment to the sprawling settlement that would become Calgary.

But the dream of less expensive and fresh produce was undoubtedly more compelling to Calgarians. Consequently the Garden City Movement had an extensive and long-lasting impact on the landscape of Calgary. Commenced around 1914, the purpose of the Vacant Lots Gardening Club was two-fold: beautification and food supply.

Reader commented in an unpublished manuscript: *Month by Month in a Canadian Garden*

*...But one way in which we can serve ourselves, our home, and our community at the same time is by employing our best effort to make the earth lovelier, to tidy up neglected places, to plant trees, and to set out plants whose blossoms will refresh the weary-minded, cheer both young and aged, and make our homes and the city in which we dwell brighter places.*

Although the concept of beautification seems to be the focus of Reader's comments about the civic duty to plant trees and flowers, it is a utilitarian concept of beauty. Planting on vacant lots (both private and City owned) was an effective method of ridding vacant lots of weeds and garbage.

It was a wildly successful initiative and at its height (1943) 3229 vacant lots were under cultivation. One site persists. It is located in the Bridgeland community. Although it was dissolved in 1952 due to the rising demand for building land, the legacy of the Vacant Lots Garden Club persists in the development of our current community gardens.

And to end on a positive note: Daniel Walker reports that the grand old crabapple on 25<sup>th</sup> Avenue (which was afflicted by oyster scale) is responding well to treatment.



Our *special thanks* go out to *Daniel Walker* and *Michelle Reid* (both from the City of Calgary Parks) for sharing their expertise with us. Your help with this article was most appreciated!



**Sincere Thanks to our long-time Supporter**

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For providing us with generous door prizes : several spectacular outdoor plants & a gift certificate!



Making the Stroll a celebration



Thanks to ALL the special volunteers that made this year's Garden Stroll a resounding success! Here's the team:



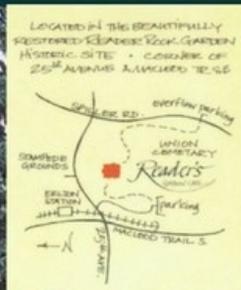
Glynn, John, Edward, Ev, Lindsey B., Barb, Susan B., Grace, Lindsay O., Marilyn, Davina, Heather, Scott, Leora, Liz, Leah, Pat, Susan M., Anna, Denys, Anastasia. Absent - Daniel, Tara, Helmut, Brettyn Rose & Carol



Thankful

Reader's Garden Café will remain open as long as the fair weather stays with us. Best to call ahead of your visit.

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Reservations (403) 263-0210  
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**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

Save these Important Upcoming Dates  
on your calendars:

Thursday, **Oct. 12, 2017** &

Thursday, **Nov . 9, 2017 - AGM**

See: [www.crag.ca/events](http://www.crag.ca/events)

For all the exciting details

