



The Reader Rock Garden

www.ReaderRock.com



2017—A Year to Celebrate!

By Diane Dalkin

This year, across our great country, Canadians are celebrating in style with so many opportunities for the “sesquicentennial”. If you perfect the pronunciation of this anniversary, then you’ll be a real crowd pleaser (*ha, ha—start practising*). In the meantime, hope you had the time to stop and smell the Tulips! The aptly named *Canada 150 Tulips* with white and red petals, echoing the colors of our nation’s flag, were proudly displayed in many gardens. *Reader Rock Garden* was fortunate to have a large showy en masse planting of these tulips at the base of the old driveway. Thankfully, good creative planning on the gardeners’ parts gave us this stirring beauty ... Excellent work!



Blooming on June 6th @ Reader’s

Besides our usual pre-season activities, we also participated in some new encounters ... in March, we attended Seedy Saturday at the Hillhurst Sunnyside Community Centre. April brought us to a unique opportunity, the Calgary Retired Teachers’ Association Conference for a requested presentation; there we met many energetic former educators, with a wide scope of interests and a wealth of knowledge; *thanks for the invitation*. Of course, we took part in the Calgary Horticultural Society’s Garden Show at Spruce Meadows. The change of venue for our booth afforded us greater exposure to the weekend’s attendees and offered an increase in our membership sales. All good developments. “*Thank-you*” to the many volunteers for making these events such a success.



ReaderRock (@FoRRGS) · 7h
Sharing our #ReaderRockYYC @CalgFoundation umbrellas. A little cold & rain won't deter RR gardeners! See better.com/ReaderRock

Good attendance for the Jane’s Walk @ Reader’s, even with the cold & rain!



In early May, we shared in (for the first time) the Calgary Foundation’s initiative, the city-wide *Jane’s Walks*. The less than ideal weather conditions didn’t deter ~50-60 keen, resilient Alberta gardeners from joining us on the walk.

On May 27th, our Annual General Meeting was held. We wholeheartedly welcome the new Board Members, *Barb Smith, Grace Satre & Heather Ashdown*, who raised their hands to volunteer with our team. *Thanks* for coming on-board! And, undoubtedly, special appreciation goes out to the long-term, loyal folks that continue with the team, year-after-year. Your dedication is commendable!

However, I would like to point out that there are still two vacancies on our Board (listed below), which might appeal to you? Perhaps give this some thought; we’re always looking for fresh perspectives and new energies. Share your talents with us!

There’s also a new roster of *Tour Guides-in-Training*, which is fantastic growth to the team. Stay tuned, they’ll be adding their flair at the Garden real soon. You’ll probably meet them at ...

Our Upcoming Event ...

The **Annual Garden Stroll** on Saturday, **July 29th, 1:00-3:00 pm.**

This year, we’re very pleased to be part of the *2017 Historic Calgary Week*, which aims to promote greater understanding of Alberta’s history; see the Chinook Country Historical Society’s website – chinookcountry.org – to find all the activities that celebrate the city’s rich history, culture and community. This ten day event will surely offer something for everyone! Make this special year a *Time to Explore & Celebrate Canada 150 & Happy Stampede!*



FoRRGS Team

- President - Diane Dalkin
- Vice-President - *Vacant*
- Secretary - *Vacant*
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- Membership - Helen Li
- Newsletter - Marilyn Mayall
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Introducing ...

By Marilyn Mayall

Many of us are aware of Reader's passion for the new and exotic and his experimentation in introducing, trialling and promoting new plant materials for use in his adopted home town.

The sensation of the Himalayan Blue Poppy (*Meconopsis betonicifolia*) after a visit to the Chelsea Flower Show; collecting and growing the Western Wood Lily (*Lilium philadelphicum*) as well as other alpine treasures; participating in the foundation of the fledgling Calgary Horticultural Society; the boulevard beautification programs where Calgarians were encouraged to grow some of the many plants that were introduced into the City greenhouses by Reader are only some of the examples of Reader's directed energies in changing the landscape of Calgary.

Driven no doubt by a vision of something more familiar than the relentless shortgrass prairie, Reader began the work of introducing trees to our semi-arid, continental climate...some native and some from equally robust (and unforgiving) climates like Siberia.

When I first started thinking about the trees that Reader had introduced and asked for a suggestion or two, I was told it was pretty wide open as there were only about 3 species of trees in Calgary when Reader arrived (~1908).

In the 1920s Reader introduced elms in to the neighbourhoods of Scarboro and Mount Royal. A huge old elm can be found in Nana's garden (north side). The designated Heritage blue spruce on the main lawn was a huge novelty in Calgary when it was first planted.

The Ohio buckeye (*Aesculus glabra*) that grows at the bottom of the drive must also have been a sensation when first planted. A native to North America, but much farther south than Alberta, the Ohio buckeye is generally found in rocky, wooded valleys and prefers a moist, fertile soil. In dry conditions the foliage may scorch. The sandy soil of Cemetery Hill and the lack of humidity in Calgary would not

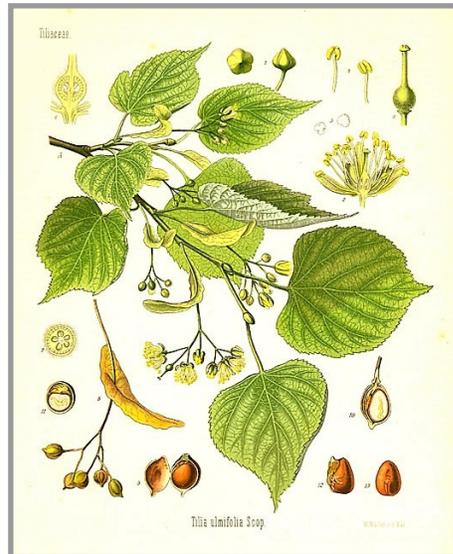


argue for the success of this tree, but it is a beautiful specimen which often shows great colour in fall.

A cousin of the Ohio buckeye, but from the Balkans, also grows at Reader. Towards the west end of Nana's garden there is a specimen of *Aesculus hippocastanum*, the horse chestnut. The showy upright terminal panicles are white with red or yellow markings and this year appeared in mid-June (as did the panicles on the Ohio buckeye).



Both trees have palmate leaves which lend a somewhat tropical contrast to surrounding foliage. And like its native cousin, the horse chestnut can suffer from leaf scorch in dry conditions. The relatively exposed conditions of this specimen may explain its short stature.....in its native range it can grow from 17-25 m. tall. Location, location, location.....A tap-root, however, argues strongly against the relocation of established specimens.



Reader's 1936 plant lists include both *Tilia americana* and *Tilia x vulgaris* (a synonym for *T. x europaea*).

An additional note mentions *T. cordata* as a likely candidate for a specimen simply listed as basswood. You cannot help but be struck by the fact that Reader selected a native (*T.americana*), and two specimens from Europe and southwestern

Asia (*T. cordata* and *T.x europaea*) to trial in the same bed in the same year ... beginning to look a lot like a con-



trolled experiment.

By this time Reader had more than twenty years of experience in trialling plants in Calgary and there is little doubt in my mind that he was conducting controlled tests on the success of different species in this environment.

A little about basswood/linden....I have seen juvenile specimens as boulevard plantings in Calgary and there are a few mature specimens also, but one can only ask why this attractive tree has not been more widely utilized here. There is some agreement that *T.cordata* is the best of the above species.

It is hardy to Zone 3; adapts to a wide range of soil conditions; is tolerant of drought conditions as well as urban conditions; has glossy green cordate shaped foliage and fragrant pale yellow flowers that bees and butterflies find very attractive (gotta save the bees) and it has a pleasing ovate to pyramidal form.



With Calgary's rapidly growing population, the need to provide a variety of food was certainly a matter of importance in early Calgary. Of the 20 or so varieties of apples listed as being grown at the Gardens most are crabapples. Reader's huge network of correspondents was no doubt of value in finding likely cultivars to trial. One such specimen is simply called *Malus* 'Brooks Seedling' attesting to Reader's familiarity with the work being done at the Brooks Research Station.

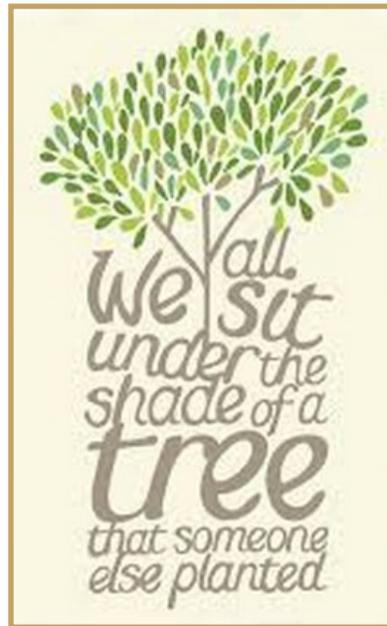
Malus 'Wealthy' is an exception. Less bitter than the crabapples, 'Wealthy' has a tart, strawberry flavour which makes it suitable not only for baking but for eating as well. Its other advantages are its cold hardiness, its long bloom period (which makes it valuable as a pollinator) its early maturity and its resistance to some apple diseases such as apple scab and fire blight. This apple originated in Minnesota



in 1860 and is still a popular choice for commercial and home orchardists.

It would be unrealistic to believe that all of Reader's introductions were successful. Although Reader introduced the white walnut to Calgary, I have only seen one *Juglans cinerea* (listed in Reader's 1936 plant list) in Calgary and it was not a happy Butternut....even though its hardiness (Zone 2) and the fact that it is native to North America would suggest some chance of a successful introduction.

After all, the point of a trial is to see whether in fact a plant works in this particular place. Otherwise we may still be growing nothing but prairie short grasses. And we may argue till the cows come home about the benefits of natives versus the allure of trying something new and pushing the boundaries just a little. The more important thing is to take responsibility for being as knowledgeable as we can about the living things in our care and to take as many of those factors which we know will impact our environment into consideration when we decide to try something new.



The greatest oak was once a little nut who held his ground





Sincere Thanks to our long-time Supporter

Shawnessy Home Depot



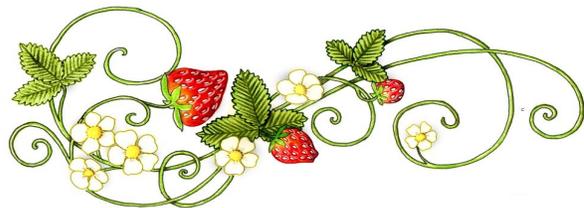
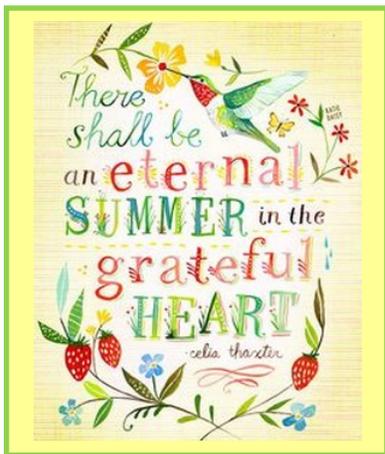
For enhancing our booth with your spectacular flowers and the generous door prizes for our special events



Mark your calendars. Remember ...

- ◆ **July 29, 2017 (Saturday)**—Join us at the **FoRRGS Annual Garden Stroll** when we welcome the public to the Garden, **1:00-3:00 pm**, on-site at Reader Rock Garden. This year we're pleased to be part of the *2017 Calgary Historic Week*:
- ◆ Come by and check out this family-friendly, fun filled afternoon:
 - ◆ Free event & parking (across from Erlton C-train station)
 - ◆ Knowledgeable volunteers onsite to answer your questions
 - ◆ Used **Book Sale**
 - ◆ **Glass garden art for sale**
 - ◆ **Draw prizes**
 - ◆ **Membership sales.**

See you there!

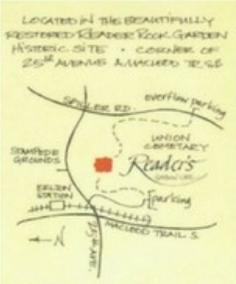


Reader's Garden Café has re-opened ... under new management & featuring an exciting new menu.

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RETREAT TO CALGARY'S
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Open from Mid April to mid October

 Wednesday to Sunday
 9:30 am to 3:00 pm
 Monday, Tuesday Closed

Weddings & Functions

Reader's
GARDEN CAFE

Reservations (403) 263-0210
readergardencafe@telus.net

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. 14, 2017**

Speaker: Marilyn Mayall
Topic: *Wildflowers of Western Australia*

See: www.crag.ca/events

