



# The Reader Rock Garden

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## 2017—A Good Year!

By Diane M. Dalkin

Hard to say if you'll be reading our newsletter while staying nice 'n' cozy indoors on a brisk snowy day or enjoying a reprieve from the possible bitterness with warm Chinook conditions. Such is the unpredictability of our local winters. Whatever comes our way ... winter's quiet and peace offer an ideal time to take stock in days gone by.

This year's Canada 150 celebrations were omnipresent across the country, but my favorite symbolic gesture for this auspicious occasion had to be the cheery red and white tulips designed to echo the bright colors of Canada's national flag. These perky blossoms adorned many flower beds throughout the City, including a prominent one at Reader Rock Garden's front entrance, near the driveway. Hope you had the chance to see some of these delightful blooms?

As we alluded to in last winter's newsletter, 2017 did indeed bring quite a few changes to Reader Rock Garden. While it's so important to always remember the rich history of this cultural landscape, it's equally significant to know its future direction. That's why our feature article will give you a glimpse into two innovative and determined gentlemen that are currently impacting the Garden's experiences in positive ways. Of course, we're referring to the new *dynamic duo* onsite, *Daniel*, the new Head Gardener, and *Helmut*, the new Manager at Reader's Garden Café.

This year, Daniel and his team worked the land with mighty muscles and creative flair, refreshing the scenery anew. Helmut and his crew offered warm, friendly service, a novel menu and introduced wine tasting events to the Café. We're grateful that they agreed to share some of their insights when we recently chatted with them. See pages 2 & 3 for more details, and in the future, remember to say "Hello" to them, now that you know who they are!

Another noteworthy accomplishment in particular to FoRRGS is the growing number of volunteers that joined our ranks this year in various capacities. These enthusiastic folks have added so much to the team; couldn't ask for a better gift, all boding very well for successful seasons in the future. *Welcome and sincerest thanks to each one of you!*

Next year, 2018, in the Chinese lunar new year is that of the *Earth Brown Dog*, which is said to bring happiness and conservatism. The Farmer's Almanac predicts precipitation and snowfall to be below normal levels in our region. Not sure how much credence I give to the weather question, since we've already had such an early start to winter. Whatever your thoughts may be ... there's no doubt that the Holiday Season is officially in full swing.

Do you hear those sleigh bells *jingling, ringling, ting-a-ling* too? Are you chomping at the bit to start *decking those halls with boughs of holly*? All is calm ... at least in the garden.

Until we see you next year ... On behalf of the FoRRGS Board of Directors ... **Sincerest Happy Holidays & Merry Christmas & Joyeux Noel** to all our supporters and **especially our volunteers** ... wishing you & your families a safe & peaceful winter season.



### FoRRGS Team

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## Getting to Know - The New Head Gardener

By Diane M. Dalkin



We promised to introduce you to the new Head Gardener at Reader Rock Garden, *Daniel Walker*. So, we posed a few questions to him, just to share some insights with us:

### Q. Your hometown?

I grew up Millet, AB. It's a very small town of around 1900 people located in central Alberta, Canada. It's the kind of town where everyone knows each other, making it a great place for my parents to raise myself and

three younger brothers. In the summer of 2008, my family moved to an acreage just outside of Wetaskiwin. It was a "huge" move for my family, even though it was only five minutes from Millet. This is where my love for the horticulture world blossomed.

### Q. When did you arrive in Calgary?

I moved to Calgary in the summer of 2009, right after college. I felt that the city was calling my name. I love the mountains - who wouldn't want to live in a city when you can see the mountains from your back yard?! I instantly loved the hustle and bustle of the big city, and all the various activities to do, to see and to enjoy.

### Q. Favorite book(s) / movie(s)?

I'm kind of all over the map when it comes to favorite books and movies. I like a little bit of everything, depending on my mood. But, I tend to lean towards non-fiction and fantasy to allow my mind to create the world and scenery in the book any way I see fit.

### Q. Have a favorite saying or perspective?

I try to live by the motto, "*change is good*." From trying new foods, experiences and meeting new people to even simply taking a different path when walking through the Garden. It helps me gain a new viewpoint or perspective that I may not have noticed if I follow the same route over and over.

### Q. Hobbies or non-work related interests?

Obviously, gardening is a passion of mine. I'm always visiting greenhouses and plant exchanges to find hidden treasures. I also love to cook and bake, especially for my friends and family. And, when my schedule allows, I enjoy trying new recipes once or twice a week. Some have been huge successes, while others have been total flops. I think my love for cooking stems back to my childhood and the great memories I have when my whole family came together for family dinners or special occasions.

I'm just starting to get involved in learning yoga and hiking, and am looking forward to doing more of both of these activities now that my busy schedule is a little lighter.

### Q. Where & what did you study post-secondary school?

I went to Olds College from 2003-2005, where I studied Ornamental Horticulture and majored in landscape management. Olds helped me realize that I will always be connected to the horticulture industry in some fashion.

### Q. Previous work experiences? Horticultural or otherwise?

I've worked at a variety of jobs. Before my college days, I worked at a local greenhouse over the summers carrying soil bags and plants out to customer's vehicles. Later, I moved up the

ladder and began working in the tree lot watering and making sales displays. It was amazing to see all the plants bloom together, and inspired my creativity as I built the displays. For two seasons, I even worked in Custom Order Planters and Hanging Basket department.

I also spent some time working in the oil fields in Fort McMurray, mainly over the winter months. There, I worked in the warehouse in the Shipping and Receiving department, as well as a second year pipefitter. I was very grateful for the work in the oil fields, but it made me appreciate my work at the greenhouse and solidified that working in horticulture is my first love and passion.

### Q. Professional affiliations or publications?

I have been involved with the Communities in Bloom competition in both Millet and Wetaskiwin. Millet has won nationally in the competition. I am a current member of the Calgary Horticulture Society, and am looking to get more involved with the Society, as well with Friends of Reader Rock Garden Society (FoRRGS), Calgary Rock and Alpine Garden Society (CRAGS), and the Foothills Orchid Society.

### Q. Best thing(s) about Reader Rock Garden (RRG)?

The best thing about Reader Rock is the unique location in downtown Calgary. It's so easy to get to by transit or driving, yet the majority of the public don't know of its existence. The plant material in the park is spectacular. There are numerous gems that I'm not completely familiar with, and I pride myself on knowing a lot of plants. I'm challenged daily to do more research, and learn more about the park.

### Q. Your cool discoveries at RRG? (historical/flora/fauna/insects/etc.?)

The park is not just home to plants, but to wildlife as well. The diversity of the park is another thing that makes the park so incredible. This year, we were blessed to have a family of ducks, osprey, hawks and a mink that we named *Fred* call the garden their home. I really hope that with the renovations of the beds and addition of new to the garden plant material, the biodiversity of the garden continues to grow.

### Q. What would you like the public to know about this special place?

Reader Rock Garden is a very unique and special place. It's one of the oldest gardens in the city, and has a lot of historic value attached to it. We do a lot in the park to preserve its historic side by planting materials William Reader, the Superintendent for Calgary Parks from 1913-1942, trialed for and introduced to Calgary's environment. In 2006, the park was honoured with a Calgary Heritage Authority Lion Award in Landscape Preservation, earning official designation as a Provincial Historic Resource.

### Q. All-time favorite plant/tree at RRG or in the plant world?

I absolutely love the *Sorbus aucuparia* (European Mountain Ash) in the high rockery. It clings to the hillside while giving a beautiful fall display over the inner road. I also love the *Aesculus hippocastanum* (Horse-Chestnut) with its unique candle-like flower, massive palmate leaves and gorgeous spiky conkers in the fall.

### Q. Must-sees highlights onsite?

The spring season, when the hillsides are blue from all the Scilla and Hepatica, is definitely one of the best seasons to walk through the gardens. But, each season has interesting and unique features that everyone will enjoy seeing.

### Q. Your future plans for RRG &/or any insider scoop?

In the upcoming year, our focus will be renovating the plant beds in the Garden. It's quite the undertaking because it involves evaluating the existing plant material and planning how to incorporate new material into the bed. For example, if there are large amounts of one species, we will evaluate the appropriateness of removing

some of the species to add in another. The removed species will then be placed either in one of our holding beds, relocated to other park, or made available as a plant sale at the FoRRG's Garden Stroll. Another focus of the renovation, is to help manage perennial weeds, especially the *Campanula rapunculoides* (creeping bellflower).

We are also looking at developing an onsite herbarium to help educate visitors about the different species that are now considered prohibited noxious plants. Some of these still grow in the Garden but are continuously monitored and kept in check.

**Q. Most challenging task(s) at RRG?**

Most people would think that the most challenging task at the garden would be weeding. Don't get me wrong, that's a big one. But, I would have to say that the most challenging task is finding all the species that William Reader trialed at the Garden during his time as the Parks Superintendent. The challenge comes in trying to find the cultivators of these species, like the iris, peony, phlox and lilac collection, and then figuring out how to grow them and help them survive Calgary's harsh climate due to the chinooks. The majority of these cultivars are no longer commercially available and have to be procured through specialty growers. Working with other botanic gardens, commercial vendors and private growers in hopes of finding all the species on Reader's list is another big undertaking we'll be focusing on as part of our future work plan.

**Getting to Know - The New Manager at Reader's Garden Café**

Here's *Helmut Forsthuber* musings:

**Q. Your hometown?**

Salzburg, Austria

**Q. When did you arrive in Calgary?**

September 2007

**Q. Most memorable book(s) / movie(s)?**

Historical texts and biographies by Stefan Zweig

**Q. Favorite place in your travels or at the Garden?**

I am a 'learner' when travelling, interested in other countries cultures, arts and architecture; but I am also an enthusiastic outdoor person and enjoy the diversity in our nature just as much as the beauty of a sophisticated groomed garden.

**Q. Hobbies or non-work related interests?**

Outdoor sports (skiing, hiking, mountain biking), travel (Canada, North America, Europe), arts and architecture

**Q. Where & what did you study post-secondary school?**

Salzburg, Klesheim - College for Tourism Hotel- and Restaurant Management

**Q. Previous work experiences? Catering, restaurant or otherwise?**

In Austria I operated bars, restaurants and catering businesses for more than 20 years. Since our arrival in Calgary I worked as F&B Manager for a Casino, Operation manager in a well-known Catering company as well as General manager of an European style bakery.

**Q. Best thing(s) about the Café or the Garden?**

The best of Reader's Garden Café is its unique atmosphere. This is the result of being a historic building with interesting background stories as well as its very special, almost hidden location in the center of the city, in the middle of this diverse and very well maintained garden.



**Q. Your cool discoveries at the Café or Garden? (historical/flora/fauna/insects/etc.???)**

The documented, impressive transition from a 'naked' 'anywhere' hill to this beautiful, colorful and interesting site in the City.

**Q. What would you like the public to know about this special place?**

Reader Rock Garden and the Café are perfect places to retreat, no matter if it is only for an hour or two to enjoy the garden, have a good conversation and a tasty lunch, or if it is a weekend walk and brunch with family and friends. Not to forget, it is also a location for a unique, unforgettable private or corporate event !!

**Q. Must-sees highlights onsite?**

Each season has its highlights and one is more impressive than the other. Since I walk almost every day, I enjoy the visible diversity and seasonal change of fragrances as well.

**Q. Your future plans for the Café - long-term goals?**

Establish this unique location as a well-known place for good communication, extraordinary food, great coffee and delicious desserts.

Make it a popular venue for smaller weddings and other private and corporate events.

Cooperate with the City, to further promote and utilize the well equipped onsite training room (Potato Room), offer unique, good food and facilitate a communicative atmosphere, making it a perfect place for undistracted lunch-&-learns, training sessions and meetings (social, business, educational, etc.).

Work together with the adjoining City cemetery and advance the possible opportunities at the newly renovated chapel (weddings and other celebrations).

**Q. Best eats at the Reader's Garden Café?**

Our menus evolve over time, but we will always implement edible flowers and fresh products out of our vegetable and herb garden, focus on attractive salads, establish standard main dishes, spiced up with extra-ordinary daily specials and have a delightful choice of European desserts and sundaes available.

**Q. Most challenging task(s) at the Café?**

Dealing with the difficulties of being a seasonal business in general (seasonal set-up and tear-down, staffing, etc.) and also to deal with the dependence on daily weather conditions.

We noticed from the onset, that the vast majority of visitors remark that they never knew about Reader Rock Garden, even though they've resided in Calgary for many years. Better visual communication and signage locations for both the Garden and Café would help to make people aware of this unique park and our Cafe. I am already in talks with the City and suggested two spots for new signage that I think would make a big difference.

**Q. Who would you love to have as a guest at the Café?**

Everyone! Its a meetup place for anyone who appreciates the gardens and the atmosphere. It is a place for all age groups, from all walks of life...diverse as the gardens

**Q. Other things you'd like to share with us?**

I really liked the atmosphere of your FoRRGS Annual Stroll event, with the blending of varied interests: horticultural, arts and social interactions. It was a fun-filled day!



*Special Thank-You to you both, Daniel & Helmut, for taking the time to answer our questions. I am certain our readers will enjoy this brief interlude, as much as I did. We are so lucky to have you at Reader Rock Garden, furthering the long legacy of this most special place. Also, another "thanks" goes out to Erin M. at City of Calgary Communications for her prompt feedback with this article.*





Let  
it  
snow



**Congratulations to *Erin D.***  
*(one of our special volunteers)*  
&  
*Welcome to her recently born daughter*  
*... (drum roll) ...*

**Poppy!!!**



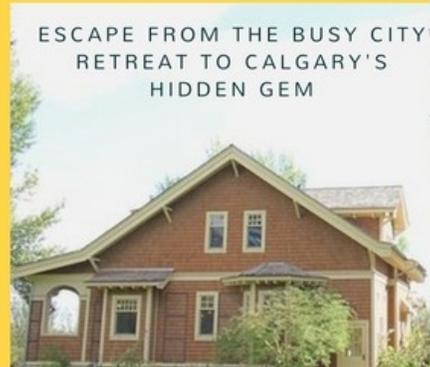
**Thank-you FoRRGS members & business affiliates** for supporting us this year! Your contributions helped us with our continuing efforts to get the message out. With Heartfelt Gratitude!!

from *The FoRRGS Team*

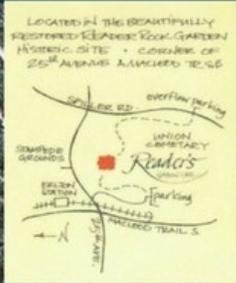


*A snowflake is  
winter's butterfly*

ESCAPE FROM THE BUSY CITY  
RETREAT TO CALGARY'S  
HIDDEN GEM



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RESTORED ROCK GARDEN  
HISTORIC SITE - CONSISTING OF  
25+ ALPINE PLANTING TERRACE



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

**Thursday, Jan 11, 2018**  
**Annual Potluck Supper and Talk**

**Lakeview Community Association Hall**  
**6110 - 34 Street SW**

See their website for more details  
[www.crag.ca/events](http://www.crag.ca/events)

