



The Reader Rock Garden

www.ReaderRock.com



Record Breaking

By Diane Dalkin

A busy year thus far, with the weather being the topic of many conversations. But breaking some records isn't exactly what we really want. This being the smokiest year ever in Calgary doesn't rank favorably on my idea of accomplishments (*cough, cough*). Yet our neighbours in B.C. are truly having a much more difficult time battling 550+ forest fires. The intense summer heat hasn't helped much either. On August 10th, the all time local high temperature was broken, with the mercury soaring to 37 C. Environment Canada noted that many communities in southern Alberta broke the 40 C mark, slightly too toasty for most of us! What we in Alberta and B.C. need now most is lots of rain. Strange that I'm saying this, since earlier in the season, several of our events were rained out, curtailing attendance or having to be postponed altogether. Nonetheless, our supporters were good sports about accepting the things we can't change—the weather!

Even though another growing season is wrapping up, the garden still offers abundance ... rich in autumn colors, a full harvest of apples, seed heads/pods bursting with new promise, crisp earthy fragrances, a place for quiet conversations, wildlife preparing for the next orbit around the sun, and nature calming its energies. Best to take in whatever we can outdoors before the approach of winter.

But, ... before we move on ahead ... our **volunteers** deserve a standing ovation for all their generosity and hard work. They have made significant strides in the success of the Garden. Our experienced Guides shared their narratives and welcoming personalities numerous times with private garden tours; Grace's team—aka *Project 25* enthusiastically put order and beauty back where it belonged; Marilyn's team of recent *Master Gardener* graduates invigorated many flower beds throughout; and of course ... the dedicated Board of Directors once again contributed their time and talents to make everything work smoothly. Additionally, the Head Gardener, *Daniel* and his team guided the onsite efforts. Intrepid benevolence in action, so honored to be part of this and such an amazing group! Sincerest *thanks* to ALL of you!!

Other noteworthy developments ... Two long-time, steadfast City Parks employees that have been instrumental in the Garden's development and sustainability are planning their upcoming retirements soon. We are very sad to see *Anne Charlton* (Director of Parks) and *Daryl Klint* (District Supervisor) go, but wish them loads of fun with their new adventures! A fresh chapter awaits them.

We recently learned that Parks Canada will be offering a public celebration surrounding the unveiling of the *National Historic Designation* plaque. No firm date is set for this event yet; next Spring 2019 seems the most likely. Stay tuned for more updates. ☘☘

FoRRGS Team

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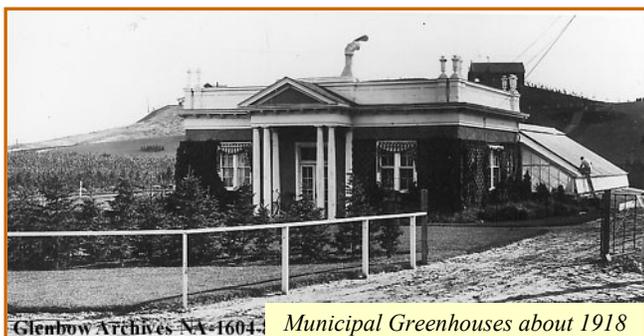
Gardening Then and Now

By Marilyn Mayall

Looking at some of the historical resources available to us in the Glenbow Museum archives is a fascinating way to build an understanding of Reader's time as well as the challenges faced by him and early Calgary gardeners.

One hundred and one years ago, Reader had given his 5th report to City Council and the world was preparing to go into the last year of "the war to end all wars". Although there is no direct mention of the Great War in Reader's 1917 report, its presence is felt in many of the details. "Practically nothing was done in the way of further development of the Parks system during the year, and much of the maintenance work was curtailed in conformity with the policy of retrenchment affecting all civic work."

"Flowers were sent weekly to all the Hospitals and the Veteran's Club."...though more practical support to veterans was available with the sale of produce from Parks Department initiatives. Lack of sufficient funds was felt in a number of areas such as the Cemetery Nursery where "propagating was carried on so far as time and the sum appropriated permitted."



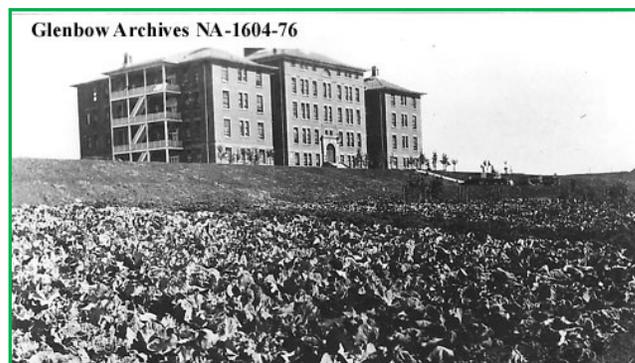
Reader sets his report into the context of the weather prevailing at the time. Here we see a familiar picture emerge. Calgary's climate was as challenging then as it is today.

"The season was an unusually dry one, the total precipitation for the year being only 10.65 inches [about 25 cm.] as compared to 17.10 inches in 1916." The summer of 1918 was to prove equally droughty. The droughty conditions of 2017 are still pretty fresh in my memory and 2018 has brought a mixture of heat which has stressed plants to the maximum and downpours accompanied by hail in some cases.

And does this sound familiar? In addition, "the heavy snowstorm at the end of October did considerable damage [to trees] ... many limbs being broken down by the weight of the snow." Snowtember, Snowtober...

Articles in newspapers promoted the cultivation of food gardens as a practical way to help win the war.

And although the motivation for growing our own food may be different today than it was a hundred years ago, much of the advice is as sound today as it was then. For example, the following advice is given on the avoidance of



Calgary General Hospital with cabbages in foreground, around 1920, as part of the Vacant Lots Garden Club.

carrot maggots: "It is also advisable to sow the carrot seed late, for it has been found that the late plants suffer less than the early ones, and it is better to practice rotation of crops so that the carrots are not sown on the same piece of land two years in succession."

And on the elimination of insects: "Very often, what seems to be the longest way round is the shortest way home in gardening. Picking off the insects by hand is not so tedious a job sometimes as it appears to be, and it is extremely certain-if you make sure to have a receptacle with you full of kerosene or some other sure killer to receive them."

It is in the last part of that advice that we see the differences in pest management strategies recommended then and what is acceptable today. References to substances no longer available are frequent. For example, kerosene emulsion applied 4 or 5 times at intervals of a week or 10 days is the advice given for elimination of carrot maggots ... in the same article as the advice about late sowing.

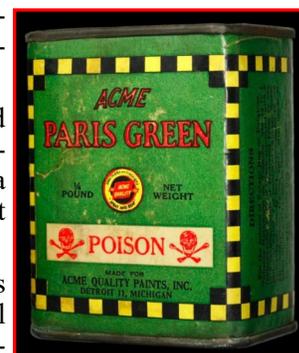
Green cabbage worm was treated with an arsenical solution of one pound of Paris green, four pounds of whale oil soap and forty gallons of water. This combination was to be sprayed on the plants before the formation of heads. Paris green is a highly toxic powder that has been used as a rodenticide and insecticide.

Other frequently recommended insecticides include nicotine solutions such as nicotine sulphate, a broad spectrum insecticide, but also poisonous to humans.

Horticultural recommendations regarding the best fertilizers will also be unfamiliar to modern gardeners; as will the imperial units of measurement used at the time. No such thing as a label indicating the N-P-K balance of the mix or a fertilizer identified as tomato food.

For beets: no animal manure: superphosphate, 3 pounds; sulphate of potash 1 1/2 pounds; nitrate of soda, 2 pounds.

For turnips: Manure, 3 large wheelbarrow loads; superphosphate, 4 pounds; sulphate of potash, 2 pounds sulphate of ammonia, 1 1/2 pounds.



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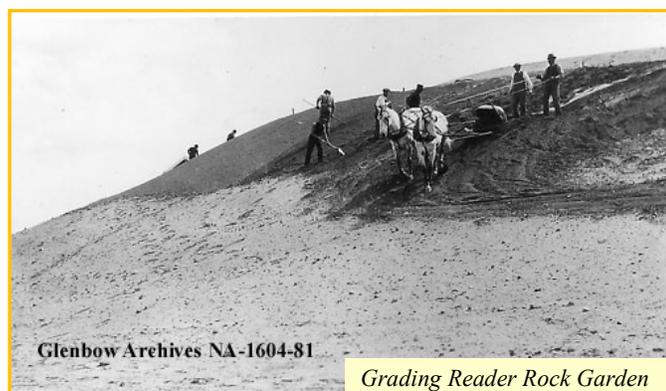
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The Herald (June 1919) suggests the above as the best fertilizers per square rod. (A rod is approximately 5 meters long). It is possible to determine the N-P-K ratios when we know that superphosphate is P; sulphate of potash is K and nitrate of soda is N.

“The manure should really be applied and turned under in the autumn. If applied in the spring have it well rotted. Scatter the potash some time before planting. Dust the superphosphate in the drills. Give the first application of nitrate of soda when the plants are well up, the second three weeks later.”

There seems to be some merit in applying fertilizers at different times so that plants can be given what they need when they need it. Though possibly lacking the convenience of pre-prepared formulations it seems that the smart gardener could better address specific soil and plant needs in the garden.

Manure was still readily available in 1917. Horses were



Glenbow Archives NA-1604-81

Grading Reader Rock Garden ~1910.

still used extensively in agriculture. Various dumping stations prepared manure for fertilizer and the sale of manure provided income for the Parks Department. But the age of horses was coming to an end. 1917 saw the first use of a motor mower to cut the grass in Memorial Park. It was deemed to be a successful introduction *“with much saving of labor, greater expedition and very satisfactory results.”*

Our modern equivalent will hopefully be the products of the Green Bin composting program.

Any discussion of early gardening in Calgary would be incomplete without reference to Reader’s passion for trees and boulevard plantings.

“Trees should have prime consideration in the work of park and boulevard development and they should be the last to be abandoned to neglect in this class of work when financial difficulties come.”

In 1917 a stock of over 20,000 trees were on hand; amongst them *Pyrus*, Manitoba Maple, Mountain Ash, Norway Spruce, Dakota Balm, Balsam Spruce, Russian Poplar and Poplar *wobstii*..... a species from Drumheller which was later to feature in the memorial plantings honouring the war dead.

Although determined to push ahead with boulevard plantings, Reader does recognize the challenges faced by these trees.

“A tree placed on a city street is surrounded by unnatural conditions which means a more or less severe struggle for existence.... Other improvements such as paving, sidewalks, sewer, water and gas pipes mean that air and water supply are cut off and roots periodically interfered with and damaged. Above ground the tree has to contend with injuries from horses, automobiles, malicious persons, overhead wires, noxious gases and oily and otherwise injurious dust.”

With the exception of damage from horses the challenges to boulevard plantings are the same or worse than a hundred years ago as the mortality rate of trees planted in these conditions attests to. Time to rethink this strategy?

Are there lessons to be learned from the past? It’s always amazing to me to come across information that was current a hundred years ago that is being introduced as brand new knowledge. Seems somewhat inefficient, though I do understand that “know-how” does not proceed in an unbroken line. And it is fairly clear that we have made some gains in our understanding of the needs of plants as part of an interconnected system rather than as isolated specimens. As well, we are a little more cautious in our use of really toxic substances which not only eliminate the bad and the ugly, but also the good bugs in our garden and which, further up the food chain, weaken our own health.

Thanks to the Staff at Glenbow Museum Archives for their help in accessing information for this article.





Sincere Thanks
to our long-time
Supporter

**Shawnessy Home
Depot**



For providing us with
generous door prizes :
several spectacular out-
door plants !



Making the Stroll
a celebration



Thanks to ALL the special volunteers & recent Master Gardener Grads that spruced up the Garden this season!



Sharon, Barb & Laura—deep amongst the flowers!

**Here are a few workers in action from
Project 25**

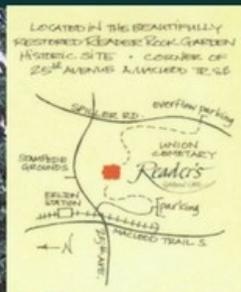
Thankful



Grace, Bruce & Brenda getting down & up close

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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**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

*Always something interesting to take in
here! Worthwhile to check this out ...*

Thursday, Sept. 13, 2018

Last Chance Plant Sale

See: www.crag.ca/events

The Website has more exciting
plans & all the details.

