



Reader Rock Ramblings



The Reader Rock Garden

www.ReaderRock.com



Adjusting to Strange Times

By Diane M. Dalkin

The original intent of this summer issue was to focus on the glory of the season and highlight some fabulous plants growing at the Garden. Instead, all our lives have been notably altered due to the COVID-19 virus. It seems too insensitive to carry-on as nothing has changed. The human and economic tolls have been devastating world-wide. We can't ignore the hardships so many have endured and it's difficult to move beyond the gloom cast by this pandemic. But, for everyone's well-being, we must try to redirect our perspectives on some of the silver-linings from this trying experience and the lessons learned.

For most of us, we complied with the directives from our health care officials, understanding fully the dire consequences if we did not. Our group, like many others, voluntarily cancelled our usual seasonal events where large crowds gathered. As disappointed as we were with these necessary decisions, we know that for the greater good, it was important to promote health & safety. Yet, "necessity" is also the inventors' inspiration, so now, we finally implemented e-transfers for our financial transactions. That means *you can renew your memberships via e-transfers*, among other options. This new process was most helpful with our recent online plant sale. Thanks to *Daniel* for bearing the bulk of the load on the sale logistics, and to *Liz* for getting us more up-to-speed with digital transactions. The rest of the team also stepped up as we tried to navigate through uncharted territory. We had our first online AGM (to maintain physical distancing) voting in our new Board of Directors. As one of my first duties as Past-President, I am delighted to introduce you to *Lindsey Boida*, the new FoRRGS President. Additionally, *Lillian Kasa* and *Julie Ma* have joined the team, with the rest of the Board continuing their long-term commitments as noted below.

Yes, we are in unprecedented times for this generation, and perhaps that's why the "new normal" is not being readily accepted. But let's remember that history has shown us how resilient the human spirit can be. Our forebears rose to their historical challenges for many years, which was far more intense than we are currently experiencing. While Mr. Reader was Superintendent of Park, Cemeteries & Recreation (1913-43), he and his family (as well as the world) encountered World Wars, the Great Depression, floods, droughts, plagues, and other harsh environmental disasters, without the present-day comforts and conveniences of technology.

Covid-19 has forced us all to pause and take inventory of what's really important. This constructive isolation should help us re-learn many good things such as patience, caring and to promote creativity & inspiration to find joy in life's simplicity. Being outdoors and in touch with nature offers peaceful refuge amidst the uncertainty. We hope that Reader Rock Garden continues to be a destination of healthy respite, with serenity as your guide. And, we look forward to seeing you again (safely) in the future.



FoRRGS Team

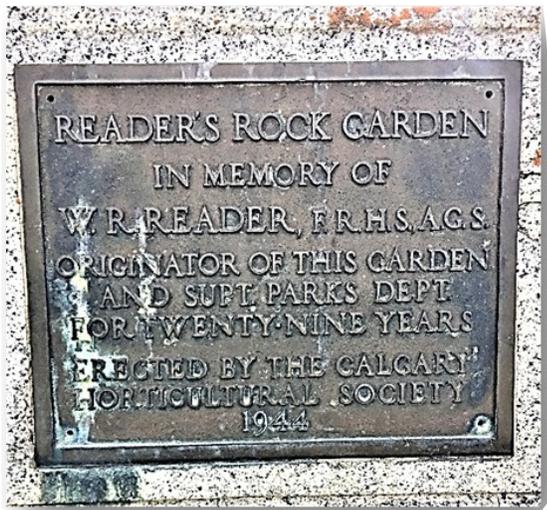
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Vice-President - *Vacant*
Secretary - Lillian Kasa
Treasurer - Liz Lunney
Membership - Karen Hogan
Social Media & Website - Julie Ma & Diane Dalkin
Directors - Bruce Dunlop, Leah Gayle, Sue Gryzenhout,
Lindsay Orr, John Percic, Richard Young
Past President - Diane Dalkin

Inside this Issue	
Adjusting To Strange Times	1
Shameful Vandalism During Covid-19	2 & 3
Volunteers' Picks & Ornamental Beauties	4 & 5
Announcements & Gratitude	6 & 7

Shameful Vandalism During Covid-19

By Diane Dalkin

In case you haven't already heard from TV and Social Media coverage, Reader Rock Garden was vandalized sometime mid-April 2020. The historical plaque (below) on the rock cairn was ripped off and stolen. The gardeners hoped it would be found during spring clean-up; but regrettably that did not come to pass.



The plaque was originally gifted by the Calgary Horticultural Society in 1944 to recognize Mr. Reader's longtime city efforts and the naming of the park in his honor. At that time, there was a public celebration and a blessing given at the installation. The Calgary Herald covered this special event (as noted in the news clipping below).

*Calgary Herald newspaper clipping, June 12, 1944
Plaque Unveiling Ceremony*



Dean Frank Smye dedicates a memorial to a city beautifier.

Rockery
Plaque Is
Dedicated

Blessing of the plaque – Alderman Fred Chalk, deputy Mayor, Dr. JH Gibson, President of the Calgary Horticultural Society & Rev. Frank H. Smye are seen here at the public ceremony, June 12, 1944

Plaque Is Dedicated

With a bright sun highlighting the Reader rockery, now in the height of its beauty, a plaque at the main entrance of the rockery in Union cemetery, in memory of the late W. R. Reader, was unveiled and dedicated in a brief ceremony Sunday afternoon.

The memorial tablet, given by the Calgary Horticultural Society, of which Mr. Reader was a life member, was unveiled by Alderman F. J. Chalk, deputy mayor.

INTERNATIONAL FAME

Mr. Reader was parks and playgrounds superintendent for 29 years prior to his death in January, 1943, and gained international fame as a horticulturist and authority on flora of Western Canada and the Rockies during that time.

"One man has shown what can be done, with the help of nature, to beautify barren areas," said Alderman Chalk, in speaking of Mr. Reader, who, over a period of years built the rock garden which contains some of the rarest and finest rock and alpine plants from various parts of the world.

UNIQUE GARDEN.

The rock garden, which extends over some 2 1/2 acres of land, has been visited by royalty and famous horticulturists from many countries and is the only one of its kind in the Dominion.

"Mr. Reader's ambition was to make Calgary a lilac city, and he came close to realizing this," Alderman Chalk said.

The rock garden is open for inspection by the public at any time.

Very Rev. Frank H. Smye, dean of Calgary, dedicated the plaque, and Dr. J. H. Gibson, president of the Calgary Horticultural Society, introduced the speakers.

For over 76 years, the commemorative plaque greeted visitors to the garden. Now, the rock cairn remains shamefully defaced as shown in the photo on the next page.

Many Calgarians have expressed outrage about this senseless destruction. Mr. Reader's granddaughter, Betty-Rose and extended family were saddened by this vandalism, as their relative's memorial was not respected. Anyone who has lost a dear family member knows how important these types of symbols are to keeping legacies alive.

It's also despicable that this vandalism took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the park was quieter due to necessary physical distancing. For most people, the current health crisis has been a huge sacrifice in many ways, leaving us with many losses, dire lessons, but also reminding us of the important connections we missed during this time. Taking advantage of the absence of visitors at the Garden to steal this piece of Calgary's history is utterly disgraceful.



This WWII era plaque is not valuable in the monetary sense; it is not copper, but made of brass. The historical significance is the primary loss and is irreplaceable. That's why *we appeal to the public for assistance in returning this important piece of Calgary's history back to its rightful place*, in the Garden. If you know of its whereabouts or have seen the plaque, *please do the right thing, help us return it!*

We'd also like to thank the local news media with their assistance to connect with the public on this matter. Please check out their good work online (videos & articles) on the following links:

- ◆ <https://globalnews.ca/news/6941211/national-historic-site-calgary-theft-covid-19/>
- ◆ <https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/vandals-swipe-75-year-old-plaque-from-reader-rock-garden-1.4937925>
- ◆ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/reader-rock-garden-plaque-1.5569955>

BOG



Sign of the Times
1918 Influenza Epidemic– Poster

◆ *No medicine to prevent / Stay away from public gatherings/ Keep covered, wear a mask / Isolate*

The similarities to current times are uncanny, even the instructions of making a mask.

Yes, Reader Rock Garden is open!
And the Café too!!

Please maintain recommended spacing among visitors.

It's our duty to help stop the spread.

Stay Well! 🧘‍♂️

Celebrating special things with our special team at Reader Rock Garden:



Volunteer's Picks: ★★ ★

Sharon Gratton's Pick: Castor Bean

As a FoRRGS Tour Guide, I'd like to bring your attention to *Ricinis Communis*, the Castor Bean or Castor Oil Plant. With its oversized tropical leaves and bizarre seed pods, it makes a bold statement at Reader Rock Garden. This six-foot-tall plant can easily be recognized and is usually located in the central entry area at the base of the driveway in this Edwardian styled park.



Castor Bean is native to East Africa around Ethiopia and is a member of the Spurge Family. The word "ricinis" is Latin for 'tick'. The seed has a warty appendage called the caruncle and resembles a particular species of European tick.

The palmate leaves have serrated edges, distinctive veining, wonderful "crinkles" and are positively stunning in size, up to an astonishing 18 feet. These unisexual plants produce male flowers below the female flowers and the fruit is a rather scary prickly looking red spike ball.



Another common name for this plant is "Palm of Christ", indicating its ability to heal wounds and cure ailments. The naturalist, Pliny the Elder, recommended "boiling the leaves, applying these to the face for three consecutive days to improve complexion." Additionally, Cleopatra is reputed to have used it to brighten the whites of her eyes and to promote hair growth.

The plant's oil is also used as a modifier that improves flow characteristics of cocoa butter in the manufacture of chocolate bars, also as an effective motor lubricant; it was used in internal combustion engines of WWI airplanes, some racing cars and model airplanes. For lawn care, it is used to repel moles and voles.

The toxin in Castor seeds is ricin, more poisonous than cyanide and 12,000 times more poisonous than rattlesnake venom. Clearly, this plant fiercely protects its seed from predators!

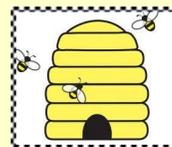


Did you know ...

Memberships can now be purchased and renewed via e-transfers

Please email us at info@ReaderRock.com

And we'll fill you in *how easy this works.*





Ornamental Beauties

By Diane Dalkin

Spring and early summer are ideal times to appreciate trees' contours sans leaves coverage. This can also help with inspection of the tree's overall health and possible winter damage too. There are many stately trees at Reader Rock Garden that seem to shine at this season.

This elegant multi-trunked tree resides close to the parking lot off 25th Avenue, by the entrance to Reader Rock Garden. It is sometimes overlooked by visitors busily getting ready for their walk up the hill to the fenced area of the garden, but it is still truly worthy of a stop to note its uniqueness.



The Latin genus name means plum or cherry and is associated with the 19th century Russian naturalist, Rickard Karlovich Maack. This deciduous tree, **Prunus maackii**, commonly known as Amur Cherry (or Amur chokecherry) and Manchurian cherry, belongs to the Rosaceae family and is native to Siberia, Korea & Manchuria, Zones 2 to 6. It is a medium-sized tree with amazing copper-colored bark, making it very showy even without leaves, as shown in this photo.

The photo doesn't do justice to the actual bronze sheen. The light-colored horizontal dashes (lenticils) and rings appear prominently against the flamboyant, distinct metallic-like bark. It has other seasonal interest with fragrant flowers in Spring, and later glossy black cherries that birds enjoy in late summer. The fruit can also be made into jellies, jams, and juices.



Cherry trees can be susceptible to many diseases (black knot, die back, canker, powdery mildew, leaf spot, root rot, etc.) and insect pests (scale, spiders, beetles, caterpillars, borers, etc.). This particular specimen at Reader's has lived up to its tough reputation and hardiness, weathering some harsh challenges as evident in the large crack/wound on its bark (perhaps frost cracking?).

While these trees are usually longer-lived than many other Prunus, in the ~30-50 years range, the possible road developments in the vicinity might impact this tree and also the one below (pending changes to this intersection, 25th Ave & Macleod Trail & Erlton Stampede C-train alterations). We continue to monitor City roads plans for that area, as it is a known problem area for vehicle traffic.



Just steps away from this Amur Cherry is another impressive profile from the *Malus* Crabapple tree near 25th Avenue. This spectacular specimen reminds me of a ballerina in perfect form, with such a graceful silhouette. Lots of Calgarians know this show-stopper's location, as I've seen this tree serve in multiple occasions as a fascinating background for family photos, wedding pictures, engagements, etc.

Every Spring for almost thirty years as I zoomed by daily on my C-train commute to & from my office downtown, I purposely paused to admire the stunning white blossoms that filled its canopy. It was such a lovely way to start and end one's day. But this beauty isn't simply awesome to behold. Its tasty fruit beckons to be picked later on in the season. Clearly, this apple tree was intentionally planted to provide yummy nourishment as was the common practice for that era. Given the age of this tree, it is not obvious what type of heirloom apple variety this might be. After WWII, every decade brought new developments in apple diversity. Perhaps one day the precise botanical identification of this grand old apple tree will be more conclusive. Nonetheless, this tree has withstood the test of time and witnessed many historical events; it has also been a valuable source of beauty and enrichment to this landscape, with its dramatic architectural structure. For now, it continues to stand as a character-defining element to the main entrance of Reader Rock Garden. Hopefully it will preside there for many more years to come.



A Gentle Reminder!

By Diane Dalkin



We often get questions about why *dogs are NOT allowed at Reader Rock Garden*. Firstly, it certainly isn't that we think those cute furry companions aren't adorable. Who doesn't luv genuine friendly wagging tails and wet noses to greet you? Can't dispute that!

But on more practical levels, there are several factors to consider:

- ◆ Many of the plants at the Garden are poisonous, which should concern *responsible pet owners*. The well-being of your dog and avoiding pricey vet bills should be a strong motivation to keep your pup in check.
- ◆ There are sections in the Garden that grow edibles for the Café, which must remain safe for human consumption. We have to respect healthy growing practices for this purpose too.
- ◆ Then there's the business of "their business". Realistically, when nature calls, dogs do their thing. Even with community standards bylaws in-place about cleaning poop after your pooch, that doesn't always happen. Park visitors shouldn't have to worry about stepping or sitting in foul droppings. After all, the park

isn't a bank, these deposits aren't welcomed.

- ◆ Even though most volunteers, local gardeners and the public enjoy dogs, some visitors may be terrified (wolves at heart) or allergic to dogs. It's only respectful and sensitive to consider the surroundings available to everyone.
- ◆ Of course, documented Service Dogs working in their official capacities are exempt and may accompany their owners on-leash.
- ◆ Reader Rock Garden also has quite a few rare and expensive plants on-site that aren't always commercially available. So, replacing these can be difficult and costly. It's far better to take care of the plant inventory rather than have them dug up for sport, which our four-legged feisty companions sometimes do. Plus, keeping humans on the walking paths is often difficult enough. Trampled plants don't thrive very well.
- ◆ The above signs are posted at all of the entrances to the Garden. You may also notice that fines are also noted next to the Bylaw # number on these signs. It could be a costly oversight if this Bylaw is violated. *Just sayin...*

We urge you to find alternative suitable off-leash areas or a dog park for your special canine buddy. Hopefully this summary explains why dogs are NOT allowed at Reader Rock Garden. Please continue to bring your human families and friends to join you for a leisurely stroll around this three-acre peaceful garden.

Thanks for your cooperation!



For further *Garden Etiquette* to respect the uniqueness of the plant collection, wildlife and public facility, please see the simple rules on the City of Calgary Parks website:

<https://www.calgary.ca/CSPP/Parks/Pages/Locations/SE-parks/Reader-Rock-Garden.aspx>





Euphorbia polychroma—Cushion Spurge & raindrops

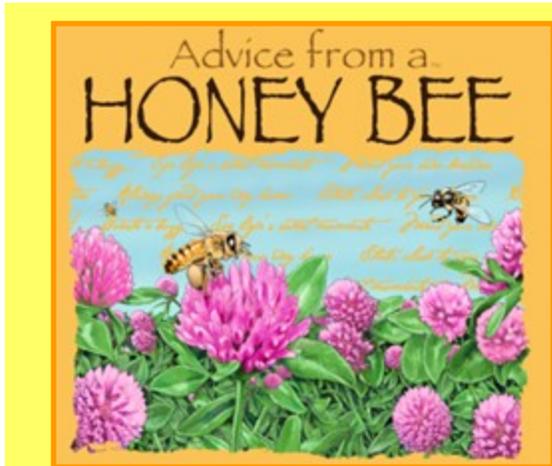
Staycations are the safest way to enjoy this summer!
Re-discover the treasures in our city.
Start by Visiting
Reader Rock Garden



Thank-you For making our online Plant Sale a Success!!



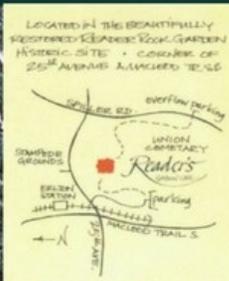
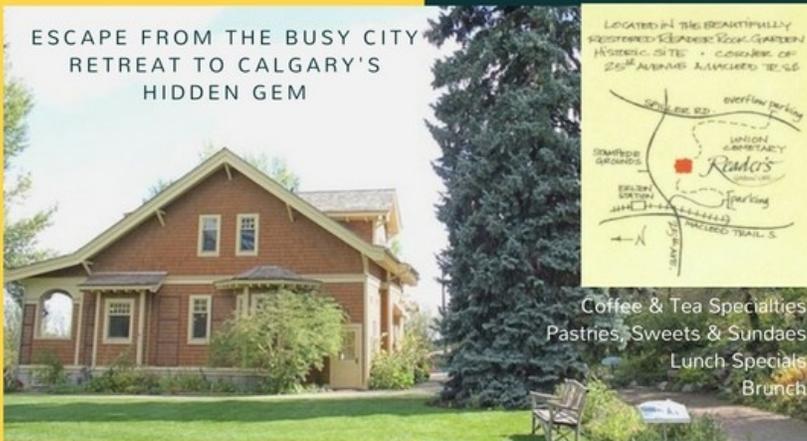
Your patience was greatly appreciated!



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Stick close to you honey * Bee yourself !!!

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*Reader's
Garden Cafe*

Call 403-234-0065 or see the website: www.readersgardencafe.ca

The Calgary Rock and Alpine Garden Society (CRAGS)

Until further notice

Most events have been cancelled due to COVID-19

Best to check their Social Media, website, or Facebook pages for updates

See their website for more details
www.cragss.ca/events

