



The Reader Rock Garden

www.ReaderRock.com



Notes From The Board

By Diane M. Dalkin

Hello FoRRGS members & supporters!

What a whirlwind it was this year! ... Mother Nature and the pandemic made headlines indeed. The intense heatwaves, droughts, raging wildfires and floods caused havoc in so many places. "Unprecedented" characterizes the dramatic weather shifts, even today.

Once again, Covid-19 brought into sharp focus the preciousness of our lives, the unpredictable frailties and the importance of healthy living. While we are certainly limited by the necessary restrictions to control this pandemic for the greater good, our collective resilience seems to shine here at the Garden. Despite all the challenges, a lot was accomplished this year! *Daniel Walker*, the Head Gardener, shares these successes from his team and the volunteers on Page 5. We also checked-in for a seasonal review with *Helmut Forsthuber*, the Manager of the Café, and he was thrilled that the Café did about 30% better than the previous year. Attendees seemed eager to get outdoors and enjoy the Garden & Café; mostly everyone was very cooperative, safely following health guidelines, wearing masks, physically distancing, understanding lockdowns and being respectful and kind to one another. *Many thanks for your continued support!* There is also an optimism and hopeful confidence for the future, with better times ahead; this is evident in the fact that wedding bookings for next year have already begun. Hiring staff for the Café was difficult given the situation, but in the end it all worked out.

Wildlife seemed to be in abundance this year. It's so incredible to see the birds and mammals that visit the Garden from time to time, especially being in the city. Some of these cute critters ate a little too much in the veggie patch and ripped up the garbage for their feeding smorgasbord. But luckily the arrival of the hawks quickly curtailed this behaviour.

Our Board was also able to get things done, albeit mainly remotely. Nonetheless, projects continue to forge onward. The website is being updated with more convenient online functionalities; social media followers continue to grow; mapping is progressing and new membership options will be introduced in the new year, among other things. So, ... all things considered, can't complain. In reality, we remain grateful for all that was done and that the Garden still flourishes, even during these current hardships.

Thank-you everyone; good work! Stay safe & well; enjoy the coming winter & the Holidays ahead, however you may celebrate ... **Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Yuletide Winter Solstice, etc. ... See you next year !!!**



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FoRRGS Team

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Right and Wrong Ways in Protecting Garden in Winter

By WM. R. Reader

Timely pearls of wisdom from Mr. Reader to share with you:

Herald Archives, Sept 26, 1922 – Page 14 - Transcribed by Diane Dalkin



As winter approaches, the amateur gardener naturally becomes much concerned as to the method to be employed in protecting his plants from the rigors of that season. Sometimes over-anxiety leads him to apply the mulch or protective material much too thickly with the result that they are smothered. Sometimes he is too careless and applies so little that it is practically useless as protection.

Several Essentials

There are several essential to learn in connection with this subject of winter protection. When we make a study of the way in which nature protects dormant subjects during winter, we find that the leaves and stems of the herbaceous plants fall over the roots, and leaves, twigs and other materials are blown about them and lodge very lightly. These protective materials, when covered with snow usually afford adequate protection during the coldest months. We learn by this simple illustration that the natural winter mulch is composed of course but light material through which air may pass. Thus, when we apply a mulch to our herbaceous beds and borders, we must see that the proper material is used and that it is properly applied so as not to preclude the entrance of air.

Soggy Mass

Well rotted stable manure is very frequently applied as a

protective mulch. Whilst this does no particular harm to such subjects as are vigorous enough and hardy enough to withstand such treatment, generally speaking, this practice is wrong. When saturated with moisture the manure settles down into a dense soggy mass through which air cannot readily pass. Well rotted manure may be applied to a host of subjects as a fertilizer of the soil, but there is a vast difference between using manure as a fertilizer and as a protective mulch.

Straw Litter Good

Strawy litter shaken from the manure pile and, if possible, mixed with leaves makes an ideal mulch. This should be spread over the border to a depth of about four inches. Between the fibres of material of this kind there will be spaces which will always be filled with air. This film of air acts as a buffer to the cold outer air, preventing its too rapid entrance, and to the relatively warmer air beneath, preventing its too rapid exit. Thus, changes of temperature are gradual, and the plants are not so liable to suffer from the very sudden and extreme changes often experienced here.

The protective mulch should not be applied until the ground is lightly and permanently frozen for the winter. If applied before this takes place, the extra protection will tend to make the plants less hardy and may even cause them to produce unseasonable growth with disastrous results.

Let In The Air

In the case of those plants whose stems and leaves remain green throughout the winter, and which depend upon these for the flowers of the coming season, as for example, Canterbury Bells, Sweet Williams, and Pinks, it is the utmost importance that air should be able to pass through the covering for such plants it is not only the roots but the tops that have to be protected and preserved. It will be obvious that a heavy layer of mulch will have a tendency to break the stems and leaves. Once broken they quickly decay, and this often leads to the decay of the entire plant. The more impervious to air the greater the danger of decay. If some small branches are stuck in the ground throughout the area containing the plants, and the protective material placed lightly over these, they will prevent it from pressing down on the plants unduly, sufficient air will pass through this covering [for it is essential that air reach the foliage of these evergreen plants in winter as well as summer) and the covering will remain much drier when suspended in the branches, so that the risk of decay from damp will be largely obviated. Tender shrubs such as roses may be protected by scattering strawy litter over their stems and roots, or by tying straw around the stems.

Must Breathe

It will thus be seen that, one of the principles to keep in mind regarding the winter protection of all garden subjects is that there must be a gradual interchange of air. The several parts of plants must breathe. Even the soil

must “breathe” – the gases of fermentation must escape. Then as regards the retention of warmth in the soil, (though this is of minor importance) and aerated soil is always warmer than one from which the air is excluded, for the same reason that the hand in a woolen glove through which the air can pass is warmer in zero weather than one encased in a kid glove, which is practically impervious to air.



Animals At Reader’s

By Diane M. Dalkin

Reader Rock Garden has many distinctions: it is now a **National Historic Site**, a recognized **Provincial Historic Resource**, a haven for plant lovers, a quiet oasis for bird-watchers, a simple refreshing idyll for a peaceful stroll, a wonderful place for brunch at the Café, a unique romantic hideaway, and is a relevant **Cultural Landscape** connecting us to Calgary’s past. But before all this, ... long ago ... it served as a family home and was a private secret garden for thirty years. Historical photos depict regular Reader family gatherings (picnics, weddings, children growing, etc.), fun activities (tennis, croquet, children on the swings, gathering the harvest, etc.) and also the omnipresence of animals (pets, working, & wildlife).

The Reader children, *Harry and Doris* (& later the grandchildren too), were fortunate to have their home surrounded by all this vast outdoor space to discover Nature, play in, find special hiding spots and to grow up in and nurture their curiosity. They did not have the internet, nor other devices to distract them from this amazing garden’s treasures. Plus, the Readers had a small menagerie of animals to bring them companionship and the simplest of joys from their trusted, delightful presence. Which gleeful child would not be totally enchanted with goldfish swimming in their own ponds? Reader’s granddaughter, *Betty-Rose*, recalls these large fish being brought into the house for the winter.

“We were very impressed by them in the aquarium.”



Doris also had kittens as her playmates and various dogs were photographed with the family over the years.

Mr. Reader was often seen with his dog by his side in his vehicle as he made his daily rounds as City Superintendent of Parks, Cemeteries and Recreation. It was even reported in the Herald that at the time of his passing, “his favorite dog was at his side.”



Betty-Rose also shared with us that “*Collies were one of her grandmother’s favorites and grand-daddy always had his dependable four-legged friends by his side too,*” as seen prominently in many pictures. “*Laddie was Nana’s last dog when she had to leave the house.*”



The love of animals was also extended to inside the house, with numerous bird cages sharing the space among the indoor plants in their home. Clearly, their lifelong relationships with pets were important, long-standing and appreciated.



Animals at Reader's con't ...

But they also had other animals to assist them in their daily living, as was quite common for those times. In the early years, Mr. Reader had a horse and buggy for transportation, which was later replaced with an automobile. Behind the house, in a utility area, chickens and a cow were kept.



I'm Innocent Really!

In 1918, their cow was even the subject of inquiry in the local newspaper as a disgruntled employee scandalously claimed City feed was being incorrectly used for the Reader's hefty cow – really?! I suppose we would refer to this unbecoming public shaming behaviour to current day online trolling or cyber bullying. Nonetheless, this silly cow saga was eventually cleared up and the Herald's editor restored the Readers' (& their cow's) dignity and honor in the newspaper's editorial.



Today, we luckily continue to see all kinds of wildlife finding refuge at the Garden. Usually, there are raptors nesting annually;



this year, a mom and her three babies entertained visitors with their playful flying antics.

Songbirds joyfully announce their visits and numerous migratory birds find food, water, and shelter here on their regular jour-

Triplets @Readers, Aug 2021—by John Percic

neys. Other occasional wildlife has also included Bobcats, weasel-like minks (aka Fred), a lone deer wandered through one year, jack rabbits are always present; and even the beloved escaped Ramsay turkey "Turk" was briefly onsite in 2020.

This year, *Jasmin* (a City-gardener) captured this precious photo (akin to a Beatrix Potter book, an *aaahhh* moment indeed) of a cute bunny having a nibble in the Garden. Whether this adorable family continues to call this garden its home in the future depends on many factors, mainly their predators of course.



Pollinators of all sorts (bees, butterflies, moths, ladybugs, dragonflies, etc.) find so many agreeable plants here and I am certain



Entomology 2020 - by Bob Germain

this was also the case during Reader's lifetime too. Plus, in present times, other concerted initiatives are in-place to protect bees and encourage their habitation at the site, e.g., bee hotels, nesting tubes, limiting chemical use, creating native flower beds, etc.

The Garden was and continues to be a **living classroom**, with the connection to Nature and the creatures that reside there permanently or temporarily too. One only must patiently open your senses to enjoy their accompaniment: listen, see, and share in their fleeting spirits in the wind, in the trees or among the flowers and foliage.

Research has shown *that trees and their associated fungi thrive together, bonded via mycelia at the roots*. Perhaps humans and animals are likewise symbiotic, with emotional attachments and mutual support. Over the years, animals at Reader's seemed to suggest just that.



*B&W historical photos courtesy of the Reader Family
Recollections from Betty-Rose Harrington, Granddaughter
to Mr. & Mrs. Reader*



Updates From Daniel:

By Daniel Walker

Well this year has been another challenging one with continuing COVID restrictions and the intense heat wave; that being said, it has also been one of our most successful seasons so far. We had two brand new City gardeners join us, they're filled with passion for the garden and fit in perfectly with myself and returning gardeners. The success was also due in part to the amazing volunteers that braved the heat, the cold, and the last minute cancellations, helped to achieve all that was accomplished this season. I know I wasn't able to do as much of the "fun" stuff this season, so I appreciate all the combined efforts; about **950 hours** thus far and the season isn't over for some of the behind the scenes research work going on.

Many seedlings were grown this year despite scaling back some of the overall numbers, I am happy to say that I was able to reintroduce approx. **240 new species** back into the garden. The plant sale funds were put to good use by ordering from new suppliers such as Chiltern Seeds, Plant World Seeds again and Jelitto Seeds. Many of these new species were in part to new suppliers, one in BC with ties to Europe, allowed 18 species along with many spring blooming and fall blooming bulbs. A nursery in the US provided 7 cultivars of Roses, as well local groups like the *Botanical Gardens of Silver Springs* (BGSS) shared cuttings (1 out of 4 types rooted) and traded a rooted sucker. Next year we will be looking at gifting a *Rosa pendulina* and a couple other to BGSS. Other species of interest were that of woody type plants that came from Quebec and New Brunswick; these combined with a great new selection from *Wrightman's Alpines* on the east coast, contributed to this years numbers. Must not forget the local suppliers; *ALCLA*, *Garden Slippers*, *Rundlewood*, *CRAGS* plant sale, *Wild About Flowers* and *Vale's* always seem to surprise me with new gems that the garden needs.

The other half of bed 24, Bed E and M&I were renovated, as well as a partial of Bed L, the rock wall of L and X were thinned out of larger species which allow for the smaller low growing rock plants to become established. Continued "mini" renos/diversification is happening in Beds A&B and the high rockery....Stay tuned to see some spruce removals in the High Rockery. These trees are interfering with the delicate nature of the rocks in the high rockery and will be removed. This will allowed for the beds to be planted up with a couple hundred more plants in the 2022-2024 seasons. Next season, 2022, will see Beds 7, U and 26 to be diversified and replanted.

Four new *What's in Bloom* signs have been added to the garden and will continue to be used to showcase what's current & happening, as well as to highlight some other botanical and historical information about the garden, folklore and the other creatures that call Reader Rock their home.

Immature spruce trees were removed that were interfering with the crabapple tree just off of the Main Lawn and will provide a great protected space for some of the tender woody shrub material that was grown from seed in the holding beds.

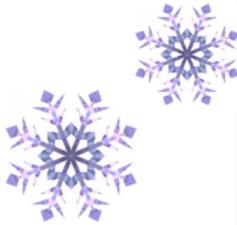
Articles were written for the Canadian Rose Society and Ontario Rock Garden Society, which was also shared in the Scottish Rock Garden Society newsletter.

Looking forward to next year, seeds are already rolling in and some will start being planted here shortly before they go in the fridge for a cool slumber for the next few weeks to months. Additionally, I hope to head out to Ontario in the spring of 2022, to reconnect with the Central Experimental Farm to take cuttings of 13 named cultivars of *Syringa vulgaris* (aka Lilacs).





Best of The Season Meilleurs Voeux!



Did you know ...

According to **Trip Advisor**, Reader Rock Garden and Reader's Garden Café are number 58 of 296 things to do in Calgary and get a 4.5/5 rating from 55 reviews.

On **Google** the Garden and Cafe get 4.7/5 from 438 reviews.

Check out these pages, leave a review of your own and add some photos!



Thank-you Volunteers!

- For **Bruce's** hands-on team at the Garden
 - For all the hidden efforts from numerous folks
 - For the continuous dedication from the Board
- AND
- For **Daniel, the City gardeners & Parks staff** that go above and beyond their regular duties!



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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

Best to check their website for an up-to-date listing of events during the current pandemic

See: www.crag.ca/events

Reader's Garden Café is closed for the Winter Season

Re-opening next **April 29, 2022.**

See www.readersgardencafe.ca or call 403-234-0065