

The Reader Rock Garden

www.ReaderRock.com



NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF READER ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

Reader Rock Ramblings



Notes From the Board

By Diane M. Dalkin

Hello FoRRGS members & supporters!

Gosh, ... the world sure has endured so much in the last two years and the struggles have not yet eased ... the pandemic, civil unrest, lawlessness, climate change/environmental chaos, the erosion of basic manners to one another, and now an unprovoked, senseless war in Europe. It is impossible to remain silent, indifferent and passive amidst these calamities. Why have historical lessons been lost along the way? There's no panacea to solve all these ills; but a recalibration and reboot are in order; common ground can be found. We need to stand on the side of peace, civility and compassion for one another, here at home and overseas. Yet, at the same time, it might be easy to feel drained, hopeless and despair with all these awful things going on. Indeed with such intense stress tests of character, it may be difficult to navigate one's path. In addition to whatever ways you choose to support peace in this troubled world and deal with these heartbreaking realities, may we also suggest turning to Nature for a reprieve, to catch a breath. Nature's lessons remind us to dwell on the beauty of life, its wonder and awe. The irrepressible life that always follows the dark days of winter is on the horizon. The coming renewal of Spring will definitely bring rebirth and the enclosed 1934 article from the Herald archives also celebrates this vision. Furthermore, a growing body of recent research has shown that numerous health problems & general malaise can be effectively treated by spending time in nature. This could include everything from digging your hands into a backyard garden to exploring the backcountry (though studies have shown increased biodiversity, as well as sweeping views of green space and water, are best). It's referred to as PaRx, *a prescription for Nature, worth filling!* The internet provides many science-based articles to corroborate these findings.

We hope that our little oasis at *Reader Rock Garden* can once again offer you a serene refuge to find solace, joy and a healthy connection to Nature. Our optimistic plans for the coming season are to safely and slowly resume in-person activities at the Garden; significant dates are noted on the following pages. The Café is scheduled to re-open on *April 29th*; the Head Gardener, his team & volunteers also have grand plans to get the Garden ready for your visit(s); see *Updates from Daniel* for the insider scoop.

Of course there's still the looming element of unpredictability given that many things may be beyond our control. Please check out our new & improved website for further updates; plus, you can also follow us on Social Media to stay in-touch.

We're doing our best to be forward-looking and flexible as the new season welcomes us outdoors. Hope to see you in-person, at the Garden in the coming months.



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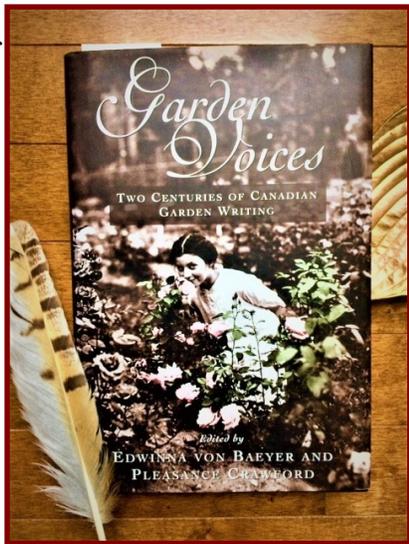
So Interesting !

By Diane M. Dalkin

One gift that winter provides is ample time to catch up on reading. I was fortunate enough to recently discover this lovely treasure in a used bookstore. Dated from 1995,

“Garden Voices – Two Centuries of Canadian Garden Writing”, by Edwina Von Baeyer & Pleasance Crawford. It is an inspirational collection from enthusiastic gardening pioneers. This timeless book documents legions of intrepid gardeners from coast to coast as they carried on in the perennially

hardy spirit of Canadian gardening, facing trials by sun, rain, frost and snow. The extra bonus to this interesting anthology is that **Reader Rock Garden** is highlighted herein too (pages 156-159). Well, without a doubt, I had to share this with you! Taking in something extraordinary, a bit of awe that’s beyond our everyday experience helps us to break out of habitual patterns of thinking about the world. Despite the ever-present gloom from our current challenging times, we can still find positivity from Nature and her rewards. Hope you enjoy this beautiful account of the Garden’s heyday; and perhaps it may inspire you to visit this coming growing season:



Rockery Holds Peace and Charm – 1934, *Calgary Daily Herald*, By **Frederic Leslie Sara**

Were one to describe it without disclosing its location, few would realize and fewer believe, that situated in the midst of Calgary is a garden which from earliest spring to killing frosts of late autumn is a paeon of beauty; a lovely little sanctuary where amid the cool cloisters of a sheltering grove, myriads of gorgeous blooms nestle between the sheltering rocks; where ferns caress the mossy sides of a

tiny stream that wanders merrily through this glade, falling with the tinkle of liquid music into the deeper pools, and bubbling out over a marsh where the king-cups run their riot of green and gold.

Everywhere, one is struck by the beauty of color, the subtle scent of this wondrous bouquet, the rapture of bird song and a peace that possesses. To walk in it is a solace, the memory of which lingers long.

Outstanding among Canadian gardens, and acknowledged as one of the most unusual collections of Alpine flora with specimens from many corners of the globe, this rock garden, part of Calgary’s park system, is situated adjacent to the home of Parks Superintendent W.R. Reader, branching off from the main driveway leading through Union Cemetery. The inception of this beautiful spot, the planning and direction of it all has been a hobby of Mr. Reader, and citizens may be justly proud of the fame it has brought the city.

Twenty years of work on the part of the Parks Superintendent and his staff have gone into the making of it –

“For such gardens are not made by saying, ‘Oh, How Beautiful!’ and sitting in the shade.”

And at the start Nature did little beyond providing a bare hillside scarred with channels where the rain had washed the soil away and possessing no more possibilities for landscaping than the slopes leading up to Crescent Heights. First came the planting of trees, mere saplings that gave little promise of afforesting the bald benches, and a modest scheme of rockery was commenced on a new cut in the hill that gave access to the park superintendent’s residence.

So steep was this cutbank that nothing but rockwork would retain the sliding soil, and to cover its barrenness, seeds of quick-growing plants that would withstand the blazing heat of the sun beating on the rocks were scattered.

Even by the second year visitors marveled at the riot of color which the masses of yellow Anthemis, the poppies, Lychins and delphiniums produced, and as time advanced and the shelter belt of trees along the brow of the hill added protection, the rockery was extended, and choicer and more varied alpins were added, until today this portion of the garden contains in its hundreds of specimens, one of the finest collection of plants that ordinarily make their habitat nestling among the rocks or dotting the alpine meadows of mountain peaks.

During these years plans were being made for the development of the larger rock garden on the slope below

the driveway. Here the gradient was not so steep, a natural declivity offered possibilities of a bosky dell through which the tiny stream now flows, and an old sand pit lent itself to the scheme of providing pools and a boggy swamp for the marsh plants.

Trees planted on this slope made steady progress, and as the grove of poplars and spruce grew, the ground beneath them was carpeted with blue forget-me-nots, with sweet rocket and aquilegias, which soon ran riot in this sylvan glade.

Making a rockery is not the indiscriminate dumping of a heap of stones on a pile of earth; every rock and boulder has to be set with consummate care, not alone to give the appearance of having “grown” out of the ground, but at angles which will attract moisture to the crannies and pockets of soil in which the plants flourish. Thousands of tons of stone, each piece picked for its surface, or the beauty of its lichen-covered face, had to be used; many of the boulders were a truckload in themselves, and besides the local-supply, interested citizens donated choice rocks from as far afield as Banff, Drumheller or Cochrane.

Beyond the area set aside for the marsh, which had to be treated with a liberal application of peat and sphagnum moss, no special treatment was given to the soil, ordinary prairie loam being used, enriched annually



by a light mulch of straw manure which protects the plants during the winter from premature budding when the warm Chinook winds blow from the West.

Choice shrubs and some of the rarer trees were planted in points of vantage, and the space between the rocks filled with alpine plants. Seeds of tiny saxifragas and other creeping plants were sown in the crevices of the flagstones which form the paths, to spread and form a living outline for each stone. And where the winding paths crossed the little brook at many points, adequate access was provided by a flat stone slab, an

ample stepping stone, or a bridge of rustic wood.

Thus was the garden made; made, but not completed, for each season sees new specimens being added to the collection of about 4,000 species which Mr. Reader has accumulated. Alpine plants from all over the world have been sent him by visitors who have gloried in this garden and the “mountaineers” of the floral world are here gathered in one happy family in the City of the Foothills.

Frederic Leslie Sara 1896-1940 was a respected naturalist, CBC radio broadcaster, author of weekly newspaper column “What Nature Shows Us”.



Save these dates:

FoRRGS event plans for 2022:

- ◆ **March** - Online Seed Sale coming - *details soon*
- ◆ **April 29** - Reader’s Garden Café re-opening
- ◆ **May 6, 7 & 8** - Calgary Foundation **Jane’s Walk** *
- ◆ **May 7** - FoRRGS AGM – *In-person/Virtual [TBD]*
- ◆ **June 12** - FoRRGS Plant Sale & Stroll
- ◆ **July 22 - Aug 1** - Historic Calgary Week *
- ◆ **Sept 17** - Volunteer Appreciation

Please check our website or follow us on social media for updates & more details.

* *Tentative; [TBD]= To Be Determined*



Have you heard about ...?

Atlas Obscura – The definitive guide to the world’s hidden wonders. It’s a community-driven database and collection of 24,000+ amazing places to discover. Their mission is *to inspire wonder and curiosity about the incredible world we all share*. Now, **Reader Rock Garden** resides in this place of honor as a travel destination. *Thanks to our Board Treasurer, Victoria*, for introducing us to this interesting site and for sharing Reader Rock Garden with other explorers. Check it out at:



<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/reader-rock-garden>



Updates From Daniel :

* The seeds are germinating and growing nicely for the 2022 season; this year over 500 species of seeds are being grown and approximately 280 of those are reintroductions to the Garden.

Approximately 42 species of potted plants will be added to the gardens' inventory list. I was fortunate to stumble up-

on some unique seed suppliers and new plants vendors to acquire these gems. Some noteworthy seeds are *Paeonia peregrina*, *Lewisia cotyledon* and *L. pygmaea*. Numerous penstemons , 18 species in total, 3 species of *Rosas* (paulstris, blanda, setigera), 4 species of *Gentiana*, 6 species of *Iris*, *Delphinium semibartum* (a lemon yellow delphinium), many new *Dianthus* and dozens upon dozens of rockery plants will be added to the High Rockery. Please stay tuned for update pictures and the plants heading into the garden.



* Many of the overwintered species that germinated late last year are waking up, *Daphne alpina*, *Alstromeria aurea*, *Hibiscus moscheutos*, *Manfreda virginica*, *Liatrix scariosa* and *Exchorda racemose*. The bulbs from 2019 and 2020 are putting out a lot of growth and will be able to be plant-



ed in the holding beds for one more year before entered into the garden for the 2023 season, *Lilium pennsylvani-*

cum, *Narcissus bulbocodium* and a couple species of *Galanthus*.

* Many of the 2022 seeded species this year will make it to the **2022 Plant Sale**, as well many seedling volunteers from the garden.

* Two of the spruce have been removed in the High Rockery as one tree had its roots undermining the pathway ways and rocks of the rockery and the second tree was a co dominant (two trunks) and was deemed to be a safety concerned in high winds and splitting. This was a blessing in disguise as the removals not only brought in some much needed light to the beds on the other side of the inner road which has multiple peonies along Bed L. But it allows the Reader staff to utilize the remainder of the High Rockery that makes up approx. 30-40% of the overall area. Before the removals, the trees just provided too much dry shade with their boughs and shallow root system. Another interesting fact is that the removals reclaimed two historical view points from on top of the rockery#1. Looking towards downtown Calgary and #2. Looking to the Café. I was very pleased with this as we have some historical photos to back up these view points.



* The experimental farm trip is still in the works but might be deferred another year, details are still being worked on by new management within the City and will keep posted as soon as I know more.

* In the process of creating a native plant bed with native plants that are found on Reader's list. This area will be used to teach tour groups, school groups, etc. in learning the benefits of growing native plants for biodiversity, being water wise and overall the best resilient plants to grow on the prairies. Hoping to get some of this area prepped and partially planted within the 2022/2023 seasons.

Hope to see you throughout the season in the Garden, either as visitors or as volunteers.



Heritage Inventory Map Gets a Refresh

An enhanced map for the Inventory of Evaluated Historic Resources here in Calgary [including Reader Rock Garden] is now available on Heritage Calgary's website & at The City of Calgary.

<https://www.HeritageCalgary.ca/explore-inventory>

<https://www.Calgary.ca/heritageinventory>

Together they have combined their databases into one easy-to-use map tool, with loads of useful & fascinating information.

Definitely worthy of checking this out!



New!

For your convenience ...

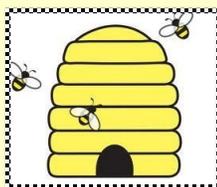
Memberships can now be purchased & renewed Online & other options are available too.

It's super easy, really!

Our updated website has all the details.

Please email us at info@ReaderRock.com

If you have any concerns



The **Canadian Garden Council** is proud to proclaim 2022 as Canada's Year of the Garden in honor of the Centennial of the ornamental horticultural sector.

Official launch is scheduled for *March 20, 2022, the first day of spring.*

In the meantime, check out their website to see how you can get involved, partake in the celebrations, join in their inspiring initiatives and have fun.

<https://livethegardenlife.gardenscanada.ca/>



Congratulations !!

To the **Calgary Horticultural Society**

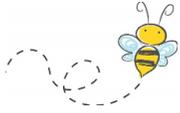
On finding a fabulous new location for their office. It's Official—In March, the CHS will be moving to the former Richmond Green Golf Course clubhouse at **2539—33 Ave SW.**

There's lots of parking & situated in a City park.

Good Luck with the move!

Open House is planned once they're settled in to their new home.





37 Silver Springs Dr. NW
www.bgss.ca

GROWING NATIVE PLANTS
34th Alberta Native Plant Council Virtual Workshop
 Saturday March 12, 2022
 8:30am - 4:30pm

Workshop Fee \$25 Register at https://anpc.ab.ca/?page_id=7001

Here you will learn from expert growers and restoration professionals presenting on successful native plant gardening and restoration projects. Presentations will touch on seed collection and propagation, considerations for planting sites such as soil, moisture and sunlight, as well as choosing appropriate native plant species. Through case studies, presenters will highlight the benefits of using native plant species, including water conservation and the creation of wildlife and pollinator habitat. Opportunities for open discussion, photo sharing and fun activities will also be provided.

www.anpc.ab.ca



hurry up Spring!

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Open from Mid April to mid October
 Wednesday to Sunday
 9:30 am to 3:00 pm

Reader's
 GARDEN CAFE



The Calgary Rock and Alpine Garden Society (CRAGS)

Mark Your Calendars

CRAGS Annual Plant Sale:

Saturday, **June 4, 2022**

From Noon until 4:00 PM

Will be outdoors for everyone's safety.

See their website for more up-to-date happenings

www.cragss.ca/events

Lakeview Community Association Hall
6110 - 34 Street SW



Re-Opening April 29, 2022 for the Season.

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

