

The Reader Rock Garden

www.ReaderRock.com



NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF READER ROCK GARDEN SOCIETY

Reader Rock Ramblings



President's Message

By Diane M. Dalkin

Hello FoRRGS members & supporters!

Welcome to 2023!! An exciting new year appears on the horizon, as we keenly anticipate the first harbingers of Spring. Yes indeed, it's hard to imagine while the snow keeps falling here in Calgary, but the warmth of the sun will eventually change our prospects - here's hoping it will be soon!

This year, we at FoRRGS will celebrate our 20th anniversary, a humble milestone in comparison to the Garden's 110th year. There's no question that the Garden is fabulous, yet, it's the people that add the special touches that make it really shine. Whether it was in the background or directly gardening, there have been so many dedicated volunteers along this two decades' journey; and this community support deserves a shout-out of *appreciation!!* Thank-you to all of our volunteers, past, present and future, for sharing your valuable time and energy. We're thrilled that you joined us to be part of this legacy and special National Historic Site. And we look forward to many more years to come with your help; volunteers always welcomed.

Following in this spirit of gratitude, we'd like to take this opportunity to recognize and bid farewell to our Social Media whizz, *Julie Ma*, for her creative work in expanding our online presence. Sincerest thanks Julie; you have left a great foundation for our new Social Media Director, *Mackenzie Clemens*, to build upon. Welcome Mackenzie, we're excited to work with you!

Speaking of celebrations ... our affiliate, the *Calgary Horticultural Society (CHS)* is in its 115th year! Wow, that's impressive longevity and the city is definitely a better place for it. Even back in 1914, endorsement came their way as you'll see in the archival letters-to-the-editor on page 6. Did you know that Mr. Reader was a founding member and served on the CHS Board for many years? The gardening community was/is so intertwined.

In this issue, Head Gardener, *Daniel* provides the feature article, as he recounts his memorable experience at Ottawa's Central Experimental Farm from last year. Procuring these rare Lilacs is a great enhancement to re-building the large plant inventory at Reader Rock Garden.

Significant dates are noted on the following pages. First up on the list ... The *Café* is scheduled to re-open on *April 28th*. Daniel, his team and volunteers also have concerted plans to get the Garden ready for your visit(s). Of course, this is all contingent on Mother Nature's cooperation to provide much-needed warmth. But as all gardeners know, "patience is a virtue" ... "to everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose" ... At least the optimistic and imminent signs of the spring equinox and time change in our clocks remind us to continue to wait attentively. Looking forward to seeing you soon at the Garden.



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FoRRGS Team

President - Diane Dalkin
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 Membership - Fabian Patino
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 Webmaster - Lillian Kasa
 Directors - Lena Cordell, Bruce Dunlop, Colleen McCracken, Magdalena Muir, John Percic
 Social Media - Mackenzie Clemens
 Past President - Lindsey Boida

Central Experimental Farm and Surrounding Area Trip

By Daniel Walker

After two years in the planning phase (no thanks to COVID) I was able to embark on a trip to the *Central Experimental Farm (CEF)* in Ottawa from June 6th to June 9th 2022. This was a joint collaboration and supported by the City of Calgary Parks & Open Spaces department as well as the Friends of Reader Rock Garden Society (*FoRRGS*).

A little history: the CEF was created in 1886 for the federal Department of Agriculture. Its purpose was to trial and test new types of plants and resolve farm production questions, which helped open up the prairies to agriculture production. It was also the site for extensive horticulture and ornamental plant breeding. Some of these larger collections are the lilacs, roses, irises and peonies. Many of these cultivars are found only at the CEF, which is run by a combined effort of government staff but largely passionate dedicated volunteers. There is even mention of the CEF in some of Reader's reports. I would love to dive deeper to see if I can recover any literature between the two sites.

The previous head gardener had connected with the CEF's lead volunteer with the lilac collection and was in the process of trying to convince them to take cuttings and mail them to Calgary. Unfortunately with it being a volunteer base they couldn't dedicate valuable time and resources for this project. I did find out while reconnecting with the farm that the lead lilac volunteer had passed away, so I now began the hunt to find an individual to help me inquire about cuttings. I was put in touch with *Robert Glendinning* who is actually the Lead for the Arboretum at the CEF, and he was quite interested in my request. Robert asked for my list of lilac requests, many of which are named cultivars of the French lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*). To my extreme pleasure the CEF lilac collection had 12 of the 14 lilacs that I needed to reintroduce to Reader Rock Garden. This was huge and amazing because I have searched as many nurseries in Canada that I could with no one carrying these named beauties. I asked if Robert and his volunteers would be willing to collect cuttings and ship them but there was a hesitation like with the previous head gardener. Again it was the time and resources to track down, collect the cuttings and package them up to be shipped that just wasn't in their work plans. It was suggested by CEF for me to come down and take the cuttings myself and bring them back to Calgary. Call it a gesture of commitment to the cause? It looked like the hopeful dream was out of reach yet again as I thought there would be no way for me to travel to Ottawa.

I brought up the idea of a joint venture between Parks and the FoRRGS group and it was taken to the drawing

board to talk it over. It didn't take long that this was in the best interest of the garden and the plans were in the works to fly me down to Ottawa and collect these lilac cuttings. After two cancellations due to COVID I was able to head to Ottawa with an empty suitcase and my lists of the cultivars I needed.

(Right & below:
Rideau Woodland Ramble)



While I was in Ottawa I took it upon myself to travel to as many independent and larger nurseries as possible and see what they had to offer in plants that are on Reader's list. So, off with my complete database I visited *Les Serres Robert Plante*, *Peter Knippel*, *Nesbitt Greenhouses*, *Green Thumb*,

Budd Gardens, and *Make It Green*. Most of these had pretty basic run of the mill plants that I could get back in Calgary. *Rideau Woodland Ramble* was this amazing nursery/woodland trail where I found an Oriental poppy (*Papaver orientale*, Prince of Orange) we don't have and some *Juniperus communis* "Compressa" as replacements for the ones that did not make it through the winter.



Beaux Arbres in Gatineau, Quebec was another wonderful native plant nursery where I was able to acquire plants I have not been able to find even on

the west coast, or they are so very rare that they are always sold out: *Mitchella repens*, *Linnaea borealis*, *Hypericum ascyron*, *Primula mistassinica*, *Sanguinaria canadensis*, *Dale purpurea*, *Gentian andrewsii* and *Aronia prunifolia*. I think I may have convinced this grower to ship to me in the future in exchange for connecting them with some of Calgary's local native plant growers. It was surreal to be able to move from nursery to nursery and find and bring back to the garden and check them off the inventory list.



The last day in Ottawa was reserved for the CEF, I arrived around 9:00 AM and was greeted by Robert at his building in the Arboretum. Here with my water bottles, paper towel and Ziploc bags I climbed into the souped-up gator vehicle they use around the garden and off we went to track down some lilacs. Robert informed me it takes a little bit to track them down as they are still working on streamlining their database and mapping of where each lilac is. They currently have a binder that generally lists which row and section but not quite down to its precise location. Consequently, given their huge inventory, a little hunting was also involved.



In his main office is the grand master hand plotted list of all the woody material and their accession numbers on this giant map of the whole grounds. It is quite impressive.

After about five hours and a few views of the grandmaster copy we were able to track down 10 of the 16 species and or named cultivars of the lilacs. Unfortunately, they had some plant deaths over the two-year COVID period as the volunteers were not allowed to work on the grounds and the care was not there for some of the weaker lilac shrubs. A few we couldn't confidently ID as the markers and tags on the shrubs were missing or we couldn't find (as once again the maps weren't updated).



(Left: Building where they keep their herbariums.

Below: entrance into the Rugosa rose garden)



Robert then took me on a tour of the grounds, showed me the historic greenhouses, the building that houses their herbarium collection, barns, where they grow all their cuttings and propagated materials (in ground for two seasons before planting out in the gardens). I saw many a volunteer group eagerly deadheading, weeding and dividing plants. We saw collections like the Preston lilac collection and many ornamental crabapples bred by *Isabelle Preston* on site as well the sections of the rose gardens dedicated to the explorer series, rugosa roses and the modern series. I spent the next few hours wandering about the site by myself and did a bit of reconnaissance of what other jewels could be found in the garden.



(Above: Lilac rows at CEF)



(Left: Back in Calgary - cuttings travelled to their new home)



(Above: Cuttings stuck in sand/perlite/turface mixture)

Multiple woody species of trees and shrubs were found in the arboretum and five of Reader's most rare cultivars of roses were found thriving in the gardens. I finished off my visit with collecting my samples stored at the CEF arboretum fridge, and while I wandered Robert told me that if there is anything else he can do to let him know. He said he would be willing to collect and ship any further cuttings of lilacs and or other plant material now that there was a level of commitment of me visiting the garden and he would love to retain this connection between the two organizations. This is thrilling and I hope to send the CEF some of the seeds we collect in Reader Rock as well send an inventory list of the material that we have and see what might be of interest to the CEF.

When back in Calgary the next morning after collecting the lilacs, I processed the cuttings. Of most varieties I was able to collect 8-12 cuttings depending on the vigor/health of the shrub. They were dipped in rooting hormone and stuck in a mixture of sand, perlite and turface [a fired calcine clay, which is traditionally used as a soil amendment & is an expanded clay pebble]. This mixture was found to be the best sterile media in my research. Cuttings were stuck in root trainer pots that fold like a book and allow for opening to inspect root development. These "booklets" were placed under a humidity dome and placed on our Reader Rock homemade heat cable sand propagation bed. I resisted the urge to look at any of the roots until end of July which put us around seven weeks. I was pleasantly surprised to see some roots poking through the bottoms of the cell packs and in week nine I ended up potting up some of the strongest rooted cuttings. It looks like a minimum of two-to-three cuttings from each cultivar and or species rooted. This is really good as a lot of the books said 10-20% rooting rate. I will continue to grow these cuttings inside for the winter for their best chance of survival. I have begun a weak fertilizer solution and kelp-based fertilizers to help build a more fibrous root system.



You can see going clockwise the stages of the rooting process, and how you can open these roter “books” to examine the roots.



If more cuttings become successful, root and thrive, I would like to propose sharing these rooted cuttings with other organizations with permission from Parks.

Space is an obvious issue at Reader and with the influx of growing and acquiring new species I’m running out of it. I would propose shipping or delivering these cultivars to organizations like the Calgary Zoo Botanical Gardens, Botanical Gardens of Silver Springs, and the University of Alberta Botanic Garden. I believe these

sites would give the proper care and documentation that these rare cultivars would need, and I would love to see these cultivars propagated further and sent to other botanic gardens across Canada so that we can increase the numbers and prevent these named cultivars from going extinct.

I am grateful for this opportunity to have travelled to Ottawa and connect with these caretakers and growers. I hope this can be a stepping stone for continually connecting with other organizations and building a network of sharing historic plant material.

FoRRGS has made a financial donation to the CEF through funds generated from their plant sales. We hope this gesture for these amazing, rare cultivars will help strengthen our connection by helping fund the volunteer-based program at the CEF to continue to be able to maintain these historic plants from this point on.

Thank you so very much,

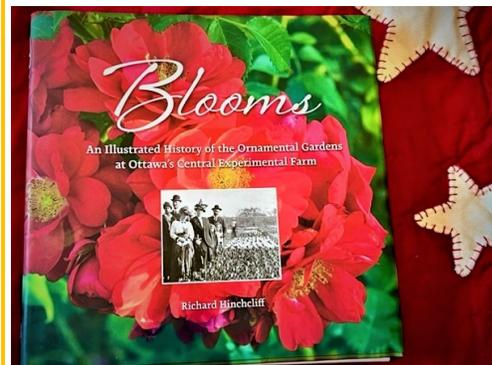
*Daniel Walker - Head Gardener,
Reader Rock Garden*



If you'd like to know more about *Ottawa's Central Experimental Farm* [A National Historic Site], their website is:

<https://friendsofthefarm.ca/plan-your-visit/>

Additionally, their hardcover 300+ page book [pictured below & preview available online at their website]: *“Blooms - An Illustrated History of the Ornamental Gardens ...”* By *Richard Hinchcliff*, would be a fabulous addition to any gardener's library. *Plus it's on sale now!*



“A tour de force in both words and pictures”.

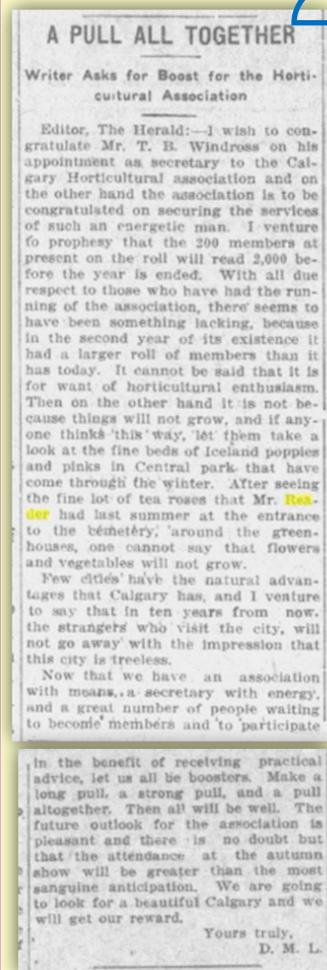
Highly recommend it!

From the Archives :

Reflections from **April 20, 1914**, to honor the CHS current milestone anniversary ...

Transcribed by Diane M. Dalkin

A Pull All Together ... Writer Asks for Boost for the Horticultural Association



Editor, The Herald: - I wish to congratulate Mr. T.B. Windross on his appointment as Secretary to the Calgary Horticultural Association and on the other hand the association is to be congratulated on securing the services of such an energetic man. I venture to prophesy that the 200 members at present on the roll will read 2,000 before the year is ended. With all due respect to those who have had the running of the association, there seems to have been something lacking, because in the second year of its existence it had a larger roll of members than it has today. It cannot be said that it is for want of horticultural enthusiasm. Then on the other hand it is not because things will not grow, and if anyone thinks 'this way, let them take a look at the fine beds of Iceland poppies and pinks in Central park that have come through the winter. After seeing the fine lot of tea roses that Mr. Reader had last summer at the entrance to the cemetery, around the greenhouses, one cannot say that flowers and vegetables will not grow.

Few cities have the natural advantages that Calgary has, and I venture to say that in ten years from now, the strangers who visit the city, will not go away with the impression that this city is treeless.

Now that we have an association with means, a secretary with energy, and a great number of people waiting to become members and to participate

the winter. After seeing the fine lot of tea roses that Mr. Reader had last summer at the entrance to the Union cemetery, around the greenhouses, one cannot say that flowers and vegetables will not grow.

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Now that we have an association with means, a secretary with energy and a great number of people waiting to become members and to participate in the benefit of receiving practical advice, let us all be boosters. Make a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether. Then all

will be well. The future outlook for the association is pleasant and there is no doubt but that the attendance at the autumn show will be greater than the most sanguine anticipation. We are going to look for a beautiful Calgary and we will get our reward.

Yours truly, D.M.L.



Let's Celebrate!

Calgary Horticultural Society's
115 Years of
Supporting local and area gardeners

Congratulations !!!



Save these dates:

FoRRGS event plans for 2023

- ◆ **April 28** - Reader's Garden Café re-opening
- ◆ **May 6** - FoRRGS AGM – *In-person @Reader's*
- ◆ **June 10** - FoRRGS Plant Sale & Stroll
- ◆ **July 28 - Aug 7** - Historic Calgary Week
- ◆ **Sept 10** - Volunteer Appreciation

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

Please Consider Renewing Your FoRRGS Membership

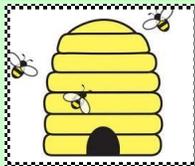
A three-year option offers savings and less annual work.

Plus it can be done Online for your convenience.

It's super easy, really!

See Our Website

<https://www.readerrock.com/>



Thank-you!

If you have any concerns

Please email us at info@ReaderRock.com

ALCLA



Native Plants

NEW - We're delighted to announce that **ALCLA** is now partnering with FoRRGS to promote native plants and Reader Rock Garden.

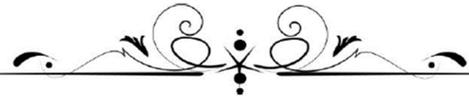
Starting this 2023 season, ALCLA will be offering a **5%** discount on live plants to FoRRGS members. You'll just have to mention your name and they'll verify eligibility. See their website for a detailed plant brochure; alternatively, you may call or email to order plants. Visits to their outdoor nursery, located in Bearspaw are currently by appointment only.

Did you know that ALCLA carry plants and seeds for over 150 species of grasses, shrubs and wildflowers native to Alberta? These are regionally sourced to preserve genetic diversity and ensure climate tolerance for the Calgary area.

Email: info@alclanativeplants.com

Phone: 403-889-4795

Website: <https://www.alclanativeplants.com/>



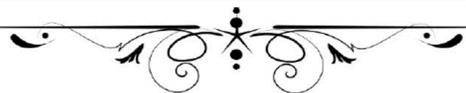
In Memoriam:

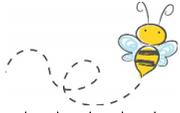
For one of our dear volunteers, **Sue van Millingen**, who passed away on Dec 21, 2022, at the young age of 67.



A garden of memories follows this lovely lady ... she was a well-rounded, confident person, fun, smart, and passionate, who was always busy with her many interests. As a Master Gardener, her most recent project with us was researching and identifying the historic peonies at *Reader Rock Garden*. We are truly saddened by her loss, but remain sincerely grateful for all her diligent efforts over the years; plus, her caring smile and genuine character will be missed by many.

Gone but not forgotten





Welcome

B A B Y

Elsie Faye.

Born Dec 3, 2022



Congratulations !!

To the proud new parents



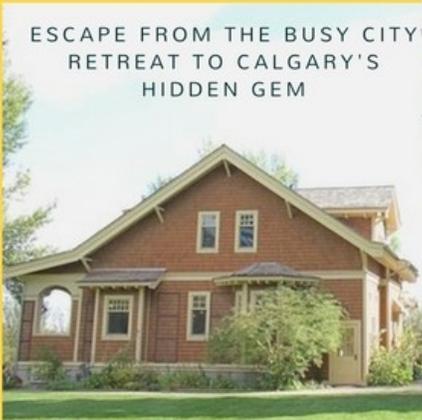
37 Silver Springs Dr. NW
www.bgss.ca

Have Some Extra Time ? ...
Looking For Learning Opportunities? ...
Volunteers Always Welcomed!
Contact us at Info@ReaderRock.com
and we'll fill you in on the details.

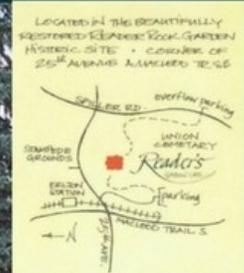
Thanks a bunch ! 🌸



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



LOCATED IN THE BEAUTIFULLY
RESTORED ELIZABETH ROCK GARDEN
HISTORIC SITE - CORNER OF
25th ALPINE AVENUE & 12th ST



Coffee & Tea Specialties
Pastries, Sweets & Sundaes
Lunch Specials
Brunch

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 3, 2023**

From Noon until 4:00 PM

Lakeview Community Association grounds

See their website for more up-to-date monthly happenings

www.cragss.ca/events

Lakeview Community
Association Hall
6110 - 34 Street SW



Re-Opening April 28, 2023 for the Season.

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