



THE BULLETIN

BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL
OF GARDEN CLUBS

DECEMBER 2025



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

LYNDA PASACRETA

PLEASE FORWARD TO ALL OF YOUR CLUB MEMBERS

It is interesting how mindful gardeners have become when working in gardens, whether for food or ornamental.

We now consider the birds and the bees!

No matter where we live in British Columbia, winter is a tough time for the non-migratory birds. Days are often windy and cold; nights are long and even colder.

Non-migratory birds switch their diet from insects to seeds and fruit during the winter months. It can be hard for them to find food at this time.

Humans step in and offer backyard feeders, making their lives a bit easier and ours more enjoyable.

It is important if we decide to help out our birds that we provide food that is nutritious and high in fat, like black-oil sunflower seeds. Black-oil sunflower seeds attract the greatest number of species and have a high meat-to-shell ratio.

There are some concerns with human intervention. Poorly maintained feeders may contribute to the spread of infectious diseases among birds (which we experienced a few years back with the significant loss of pine siskins caused by poorly maintained bird feeders).

Some helpful hints for successful bird feeding:

🐦 Keep your feeding area and feeders clean.

🐦 Prevent overcrowding at feeders by placing numerous feeders several feet apart.

🐦 Keep food and food-storage containers dry and free of mold and insects (and mice).

How about letting nature feed the birds? Fruit and seeds become the diet for the birds in the winter. Plant trees and shrubs that provide berries throughout the cold months such as serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis*), elderberry (*Sambuca nigra*), highbush cranberry (*Viburnum edule*), and black hawthorn (*Crataegus douglasii*), to name a few.

Our west coast Anna's hummingbirds thrive in the winter on the nectar from Oregon grape (*Mahonia 'Arthur Menzies' and 'Charity'*), winter jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*), viburnum, sweet box (*Sarcococca*), witch hazel (*Hamamelis*), and heather (*Calluna vulgaris*). Winter blooms of hellebore, flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum*) and camellias also provide a source of nectar.

Thank you to all that sent photos of berries that remind us to help feed our wildlife through all seasons, and naturally as much as possible. 🍒

SCHOLARSHIP FUND NEWS

DEBBIE MELLENGER, SCHOLARSHIP FUND COMMITTEE

CISSY ZHANG, RECIPIENT OF THE BC COUNCIL OF GARDEN CLUBS ROSE BANCROFT HORTICULTURE SCHOLARSHIP IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,400

My name is Cissy Zhang and I'm a recent recipient of the BCCGC Scholarship Award. Thank you so much for the award. It's truly an absolute honour! It has definitely helped to alleviate stress related to the cost of tuition and living in Vancouver.

As requested in the official letter of congratulations, I'm happy to provide a bit of info about myself:

I'm currently in the first year of my M.Sc. in Forestry with the Faculty of Forestry at UBC, as a member of Dr. Jennifer Grenz's Indigenous Ecology Lab. I graduated from the Applied Biology program in the Faculty of Land and Food Systems, also at UBC, majoring in Sustainable Agriculture and Environment. My current research is alongside Kwiakah First Nation, and we are exploring the soil microbiome under various land uses – including village sites, ancestrally-managed forest gardens, and cut blocks (areas with clearcut logging) – with a focus on culturally-important food plants, in order to better understand what makes this forest healthy. We are also hoping to explore the characteristics of seed banks in cut blocks to understand where there is potential for natural regeneration, and where we can help things along. We hope to wield this knowledge to heal logged areas through a relational, food systems lens. A question that guides me in this work is: what stories does the soil hold? I hope to continue to do work that directly serves and is meaningful to communities, wherever that might take me!

The photo attached is one me after I ate a delicious salmonberry; one of the food plants I'm focusing on.

Thank you again for the generous award, it means a lot to me.



KPU RICHMOND FARM SCHOOL – COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS

ANITA IRANI, SCHOLARSHIP FUND COMMITTEE (INTERIM MEMBER)

At the Fall Meeting in 2024, Betty Girard, our current Scholarship Fund Committee chair gave a presentation on the Kwantlen Polytechnic University Farm School located on Garden City Lands in Richmond. The Farm School offers a seven-month program providing classroom instruction and practical training in “organic, regenerative agriculture” (source: KPU website) for students interested in sustainable farming. As mentioned at the meeting, the goal of the scholarship committee for 2025 was to fund a new scholarship for this particular program.

Besides offering an intense training program to aspiring farmers, the school also hosts a booth at the Kwantlen Farm Market at the Brighthouse Library site, offers workshops, and collaborates with the City of Richmond and Tsawwassen First Nation on food system initiatives. A key aspect of its community role in the city of Richmond is the donation of produce grown on the farm to the Richmond Food Bank. During the summer months, the farm donates produce every week to the food bank. Varieties of produce vary from week to week and include lettuce, kale, cucumbers, zucchini, carrots, and beets.

In 2024, the Richmond Food Bank received over 3,200 kgs of produce from KPU. In 2025, the Richmond Food Bank

received 1,244 kgs of squash from the KPU Farm School. Farmers from the Incubator program also donated fresh produce including onions, peppers, cucumbers, and more. Contributions to a scholarship at the Richmond Farm School also indirectly support the local community — students and staff work hard in this program; and the fruits of their labour serve to help feed the local community. Food insecurity is a national and international challenge and efforts to address growing needs are vital.

As always, the Scholarship Fund Committee is grateful to our donors. The impact and value of your contributions are immeasurable.

Our thanks to Frankie Quinn and Vivian Chung from the Richmond Food Bank for the statistical information and for the photos below. Interested viewers may click on this link [KPU x Richmond Food Bank Society](#) for more information.



Produce from the KPU Farm School.



Farmers from the Incubator Program, KPU Farm School.



HOW TO DONATE TO THE BCCGC SCHOLARSHIP FUND

If you wish to make a donation by cheque please send it to:

BC Council of Garden Clubs
Scholarship Fund, c/o: BC Council of
Garden Clubs

10952 McAdam Road

North Delta, BC, V4C 3E8

Please ensure that the cheques are made out to the "Vancity Community Foundation" and the memo field shows "BC Council of Garden Clubs." If the person or organization that the donation is from does not clearly show on the cheque, please include a brief note with the cheque indicating who the donation is from and a return address (so that an income tax receipt can be issued).

If you wish to donate online with a credit card:

Go to
www.vancitycommunityfoundation.ca.

Click the "Funds" button on the top right side of the home page.

Locate the BC Council of Garden Clubs Scholarship Fund, either by scrolling through the list or searching "garden clubs" in the search bar.

Once on the BCCGC Scholarship Fund page, click "Give to this Fund" and complete the form.

OR

Go to www.bcgardenclubs.com.

Go to the "Scholarship Fund" on the top bar and click on the "Donate" page below.

Scroll down to the link to Vancity Community Foundation and click on it. This will take you to the BCCGC Scholarship Fund page.

Click on "Give to this Fund" and complete the form.

Thank You!

We are now **95%** towards our goal. End the year on a high note by bringing us to 100%! **DONATE TODAY!**



SHELTER IS IMPORTANT FOR BENEFICIAL INSECTS

VICTOR FROESE, FLORAL ARTISTS OF THE FRASER VALLEY

In urban environments it has become challenging for our beneficial insects to find shelter, particularly when gardens are “cleaned up” for the winter season. There is a movement now to leave the leaves and seed heads in our gardens to provide the much needed warm blanket and shelter for wildlife.

Victor was working on a photo project and decided to create a “bug hotel” to take care of the beneficial insects like solitary bees, ladybugs, and spiders on his property.

The basic structure was made from two 4 foot 1x6 fence boards. The contents of the bug hotel consists of various materials found around his place. He really enjoyed his project of building a



Photo by Victor Froese, Floral Artists of the Fraser Valley.

FALL AND WINTER BERRIES

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY BC COUNCIL OF GARDEN CLUBS MEMBERS

European spindle tree (*Euonymus europaeus*) is a European species of *Euonymus* that has attractive fall colour and interesting seed capsules. Birds are very attracted to the fruit of this beautiful shrub. Photo by Georgina Butler, Seed to Sky Garden Club, Vancouver.



The berry of this arbutus tree (*Arbutus unedo*) bears some resemblance to a strawberry. This is a very valuable plant for restoring degraded ecosystems and will grow well in poor soil. The nectar is biologically active against a common and debilitating parasite of bumble bees. Birds love the fruit. Photo by Laurella Hay, Gibsons Garden Club.

FALL AND WINTER BERRIES

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY BC COUNCIL OF GARDEN CLUBS MEMBERS

Joanne Rankin, Seed to Sky Garden Club, took this photo of berries on her Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*). Birds are attracted to the red leaves in the fall and to the berries. More than 35 species of birds love eating these berries, like thrushes, woodpeckers, warblers, vireos, and other songbirds. Joanne has a *Hydrangea petiolaris* growing next to and into the vine making for beautiful fall colour!



The bright red fruits of viburnum (not sure of the variety) in Paulik Park, Richmond, attract many different bird species. This shrub also provides excellent shelter during the cold months. Photo by Lynda Pasacreta, Richmond Garden Club.

FALL AND WINTER BERRIES

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY BC COUNCIL OF GARDEN CLUBS MEMBERS

Mary Openshaw, North Surrey Horticultural Society, sent a photo of a lovely bouquet of snowberry (*Symphoricarpos*) gathered from Blackie Spit, Crescent Beach. Snowberry is a resilient plant able to withstand varying temperatures, especially through the winter months. While poisonous to humans, it is an important food source for quail and grouse.



Celia Owen, View Royal Garden Club, Victoria, sent a photo of rose hips she used in a floral design. Thrushes, blackbirds, cedar waxwings, finches, sparrows, robins, and bluebirds eat rose hips when other food options are limited.

FALL AND WINTER BERRIES

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY BC COUNCIL OF GARDEN CLUBS MEMBERS

Highbush cranberry (*Viburnum trilobum*) found growing in very poor soil by the Columbia River in Castlegar, BC. Plants begin to produce fruit at approximately five years of age. Birds and animals are attracted to the fruit, depositing the seeds in another location. Photo by Lynda Pasacreta, Richmond Garden Club.



The winter flowers of Oregon grape (*Mahonia* 'Charity') feed Anna's hummingbirds throughout the winter months. Photo by Jill Wright, Richmond Garden Club.

FALL AND WINTER BERRIES

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY BC COUNCIL OF GARDEN CLUBS MEMBERS

Hamilton's spindle tree (*Euonymus Hamiltonianus*), Darts Hill Garden. All parts of this plant are toxic to humans but birds will eat the seeds of the fruit. Photo by Cynthia Waiz.



Sweet box (*Sarcococca*) produce small, sweet berries that are a food source for birds in the winter. Photo by Visnja Gasparic Vojvodic, Richmond Garden Club.

FALL AND WINTER BERRIES

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY BC COUNCIL OF GARDEN CLUBS MEMBERS



American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) is loved by birds and deer. A folk remedy claims that the crushed leaves keep away biting insects from horses and possibly humans. The berries are a favourite of wild birds including finches, woodpeckers, and others. It also attracts wildlife, providing shelter. Photo by Diane Salter, Capilano Garden Club, West Vancouver.

MONITORING WATER CONSUMPTION – THERE IS AN APP FOR THAT!

BETTY GIRARD, SOUTH BURNABY GARDEN CLUB

Some of the plumbing in our house is made from a material that is prone to leaking so it was recommended that we install an inline monitor that will automatically shut the water off in the event of a leak.

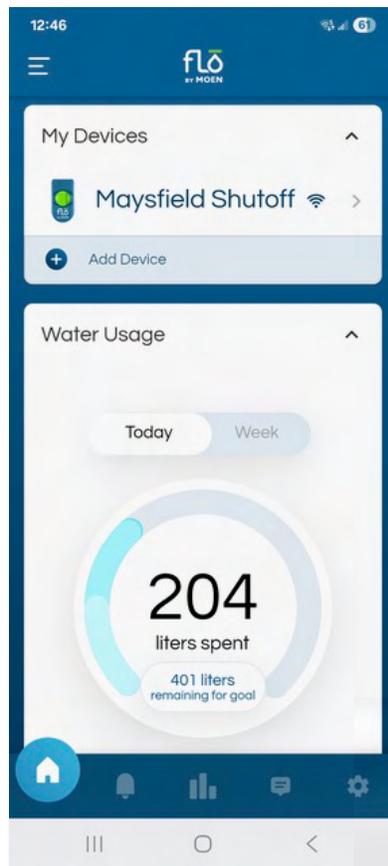
But not only does this monitor watch for leaks, it reports your water consumption in real time on an app on your cell phone, as well as sets targets for your household consumption. I started watching my water consumption with great interest when I was watering the 8 baskets and 84 pots of various shapes and sizes each morning in the summer.

I would average about 400 litres per morning on warm sunny days! In fact, the neighbourhood teenager who would water when we were away would average the same amount. A good friend graciously offered to water for me when we were away during the heatwave

in early August. She has lived on her property with a well for the last thirty years and water conservation every summer is nothing new to her. She managed to keep my baskets and pots looking fantastic with only 140 litres of water daily, about a third of what I was using!

As the summer progressed, I noticed I was using less and less water as the awareness of my water usage increased and the pots and baskets were none the worse for wear.

Of course, for every problem you solve, you create another. I had to be very careful with my soaker hoses as I tricked the app into thinking we did have a leak several times, and sure enough the water would be turned off. We would then have to reset the whole system!



THE BEAUTIFUL PRACTICE OF TAKING TIME TO OBSERVE NATURE

LYNDA PASACRETA, RICHMOND GARDEN CLUB

I was deep into a garden bed in Paulik Park removing an obnoxious (a bully really) weed, goutweed (*Aegopodium podagraria*), that has taken over most of our favourite plants in the bed.

As I worked away and grumbled in my head how naughty this plant is, I stopped for a bit and became quiet.

I looked right in front of me. There was an old snag (a dead birch tree) that we purposely left in the bed and right in front of my nose was a community! A community growing right at the base of the tree.

It is filled with a very tiny ferns about a foot high. The sunlight was alive on the green fronds of the ferns — which is probably what woke me up to the beauty right in front of me. Then a flash of deep burgundy caught my eyes. A small grouping of fairytale burgundy-brown mushrooms was growing just above the ferns. I sat very still and continued my focus.

To the left of the fairytale mushrooms were tiny fingernail-like mushrooms growing out of the pockets in the bark of the tree. Bits of soft green lichen were also in the mix.

At the base of the tree below the ferns were the turkey tail fungi (*Trametes versicolor*) growing all around the tree, especially on the exposed roots.



Photos taken in Paulik Park, Richmond. Photos by Lynda Pasacreta (left) and Jill Wright (right).



Even though we work in the middle of over 40 garden beds in Paulik Park, we are sometimes so focused at the task at hand we forget to take a moment or two to take a look at what is around us in nature.

We have to remember we are an integral part of the living web of nature. We are more focused on humans around us.

I know that when I am in a funk I hear the call of nature to come and bathe and observe. Of course, hubby and I wander over to the gardens and forest of Paulik Park.

Nature invites us to slow down and fully experience the sensory invitations from the flora and fauna in the park.

These invitations may include observing a flock of birds busy in the elderberry bushes, bees on the asters working hard to collect nectar, beetles busy in piles of a healthy berm of soil, and even the light from the sun or the air movement at that moment in time.

I feel like I can breathe.



Announcing the 2026 Communities in Bloom Theme...Therapeutic Gardening

This year, CiB is recognizing the restorative power of green spaces - gardens that nurture the mind, body, and spirit. Whether through community food gardens, volunteer-maintained landscapes, or the simple act of tending plants so that others can enjoy them, therapeutic gardening fosters connection, resilience, and well-being.

We sincerely hope you will join us in 2026; to explore why green spaces can enrich communities, promote well-being, and inspire civic pride across Canada. Your participation is vital to the ongoing success of Communities in Bloom and to celebrate your 'Therapeutic Gardening' achievements.

British Columbia Communities in Bloom offers several participation options for individuals, groups or municipalities. Please go to www.bccib.ca or email catherine.bccib@gmail.com for more information.

Catherine Kennedy, Executive Director, BC Communities in Bloom





NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

We would **love** to feature your club or community garden in the newsletter. 🙏

Tell us about some of the projects your club or community garden is involved in.

You are invited to submit an article at any time (please include photos and name of author). Photos should be high resolution and you should include the name of the photographer if possible. Articles should be in the range of 300–500

words. If you have an idea for a longer piece, connect with the newsletter editor in advance to discuss your idea.

Articles are due on the 15th of the month preceding publication. If they are submitted after that date, they will be held for the next issue.

The **next due date is December 15 for January 1**. Submissions/ inquiries:

newsletter@bcgardenclubs.com

Lynda Pasacreta, Editor

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