

THE BULLETIN

BRITISH COLUMBIA COUNCIL
OF GARDEN CLUBS

NOVEMBER 2026



Photo by Alice Jensen-Stanley,
Richmond Garden Club.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

LYNDA PASACRETA

PLEASE FORWARD TO ALL OF YOUR CLUB MEMBERS

I announced at the BC Council of Garden Clubs Fall Meeting that I am stepping down as president at the Spring AGM in April 2027.

I am finishing up my fourth year as president so I feel it is time to give other BC Council members the opportunity to take on the position.

I encourage those folks who really want to give back to community and love to lead to step up.

Most of our member clubs/community gardens operate on thin budgets so many of our accomplishments come from volunteers.

I have found over the four years in the role as president, I have learned new skills, been part of a wonderful team, and shared a mutual vision of what BC Council of Garden Clubs represents.

The BC Council team continues to develop new ideas, recognize our successes, and feel proud of our accomplishments.

My own vision over the past four years has been to tell the story of how gardeners have become extremely valuable in protecting the world around us.

Through articles we receive from members throughout the province, we have become stewards of the land and teachers promoting best practices in taking care of our environment.

Many of our members have shared stories about supporting wildlife through planting native plants; helping protect our water sources

through drought-resistant planting; finding ways to improve soil biodiversity; promoting healthier food choices and fresher food access; adding green spaces to help mitigate local pollution; lowering ambient temperatures and reducing urban flood risks — all while improving the curb appeal in our communities.

So the role of president became a way to support all that we do in British Columbia with a great team supporting me.

Are you passionate about supporting the BC Council's vision of BC-wide environmental stewardship, supporting BC post-secondary students to continue in the field of horticulture, providing online tools for garden clubs and community gardens to be successful, and leading us into our next chapter — celebrating 85 years as the umbrella organization for BC gardeners? Send me a message that you would like to apply to run as president of the BC Council of Garden Clubs for 2027 — president@bcgardenclubs.com.



SCHOLARSHIP FUND NEWS

BETTY GIRARD, SCHOLARSHIP FUND COMMITTEE

Nick Tooke was awarded the BCCGC Award in the Viticulture program at the Okanagan College, Penticton Campus.

He travelled from Kelowna and spoke at the fall meeting. He said “Of all my education over the years, this was the one that actually got me a job!” Nick started his education just as the Okanagan experienced one of the most severe cold snaps in recent memory. He is now a manager of several vineyards in the Kelowna area and has become a leader in the industry. Nick has contributed to research into how grapevines can survive our unpredictably cold winters. Rather than planting in the usual pattern that we see in most vineyards, he is evaluating growing grapes as bush vines. This is a way grapes were originally cultivated. He also spoke to the accommodations that winemakers are having to make to cope with wildfire smoke.

It is important that we learn as much as we can about how climate change is impacting horticulture and your support allows the BCCGC Scholarship Fund to provide funds to students in horticultural programs around the province. Details on how to donate can be found in this issue.



Nick Tooke demonstrated the bush vine method of pruning grapes at the recent fall meeting. Photo by Betty Girard, Scholarship Fund Committee.



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!



THE FUNGUS AMONGUS

LIZ KNIGHT, SOUTH SURREY GARDEN CLUB

Ask any random person on the street and they could probably tell you the basic facts about plants. They use sunlight and photosynthesis to make food. They absorb carbon dioxide and emit oxygen. We all learn about this in school. But if you asked them to tell you about fungus — I bet you would get a blank stare. It's funny how little we all know about such an important part of the natural world.

I'm going to tell you 10 things about fungus that will at least make you better informed than that random passer-by, and might even change how you think about them altogether.

1. Fungi are ancient. The fossil record on fungus is scant, but by looking at their genetics scientists estimate that fungus evolved at least 1 billion years ago, making it one of earth's earliest life forms; they were here 600 million years before plants. Fungi provided the essential minerals that land plants needed to spread and turn the planet green.
2. Fungi are not plants. Linnaeus classified all living things into two kingdoms: plants and animals. But in 1969, fungi (mushrooms, yeast, moulds, and slimes) got their own kingdom, because they are neither a plant nor an animal.
3. Fungi breathe like us; they take in oxygen and expel CO₂. Green plants, of course, do the opposite — CO₂ in and oxygen out.
4. Plants use a substance called lignin to create their cell walls — lignin is what makes wood, well, woody. Shellfish (crabs, lobsters, and the like) use chitin to make their exterior shells. Fungi are like shellfish; they use chitin to create their cell walls.
5. Fungi "eat" by secreting enzymes and absorbing externally digested nutrients (which is a fancy way to describe decomposition). Fungi can decompose almost anything. In 2017, scientists in China and Pakistan identified a strain of *Aspergillus tubingensis* that was hard at work breaking down polyurethane plastic in a landfill site in Islamabad. Oyster mushrooms are being trained to eat cigarette butts.
6. Nobody yet knows how many species of fungi there are; we have identified 200,000 species with new ones discovered every year. Guesses range from 1.5 to 5 million species. One thing is certain, there are many more species of fungi than plants.
7. Fungi are everywhere. In fact, there are way more fungal spores in the air than pollen grains — 100 to 1,000 times more. Every single breath you take contains between 1 and 10 fungal spores.
8. Gender isn't a really a concept in the world of fungi. Instead of male and female, they can have thousands of genders. In fact, one species of fungi, *Schizophyllum commune*, has 23,000 different sexual identities.
9. In a world without fungi, we would soon be drowning in leaves, plant debris, and animal carcasses. Fungi are the primary agents of decomposition, recycling nutrients from dead materials back into the soil/food web. They form the bridge between the dead and the living.
10. Fungi are responsible three of my favourite things: Bread, Cheese, & Wine.

THE FUNGUS AMONGUS, CONT'D

LIZ KNIGHT, SOUTH SURREY GARDEN CLUB

There are lots more interesting things I could tell you about fungi, but there isn't much room left on this page.

Disclaimer — I am not a botanist, I just wish I were.

Any errors in this article are entirely my own.

Sources: Royal Horticultural Society

Kew.org

Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Merlyn Sheldrake



Photos by Phil Knight, South Surrey Garden Club.



REMEMBRANCE DAY 2026: THE HISTORY OF POPPIES

LYNDA PASACRETA, RICHMOND GARDEN CLUB

November is a cerebral month — a time for reflection, remembrance, and thoughtful consideration of the sacrifices made by our military and the profound impact of their service on our lives.

With the recent tragic events at CFB Wainwright it brings the risks involved with serving in the military to the forefront.

Our thoughts and prayers are with all the families that have been affected by this tragedy.

The red poppy became a universal symbol of military remembrance after the First World War, rooted in the wildflowers that are across the churned-up and blood-soaked battlefields of Western Europe.

Battlefield origins (1915):

The second battle of Ypres involved heavy artillery and lime-rich rubble from constant bombardments in Flanders (Belgium and France) and created ideal soil

conditions for *Papaver rhoeas* (the red corn poppy) to grow over barren graves.

"In Flanders Fields" was penned by Canadian military doctor Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae.

Anna Guérin, a French woman known as the "Poppy Lady" organized French war widows and orphans to craft silk poppies to raise funds for rebuilding war-torn regions and supporting veterans. She brought the idea to Canada in 1921. Canada's Great War Veterans' Association (predecessor to the Royal Canadian Legion) officially adopted the poppy. The first national Poppy Day took place November 11, 1921.



Photo by Jennifer Morgan, Richmond Garden Club.

THE VERNON & DISTRICT GARDEN CLUB CELEBRATING 100 YEARS

LINDA ANDREWS, VERNON & DISTRICT GARDEN CLUB

For 100 years the Vernon & District Garden Club has made gardening a communal endeavour, turning an age-old practice into socializing and friendship.

The club celebrated its centennial anniversary with a flower show at the Schubert Centre in June. The public was invited and ribbons were awarded in the various categories.

The club has scrapbooks going back to 1926, the year of its first flower show. These scrapbooks have enabled the club to make many connections over the years.

As part of the club's presence in the community for 100 years, it is honouring people living in Vernon that are 100 years old or older. They've contacted the local seniors homes and have/will be delivering a plant or bouquet of flowers to the centenarians.

The club was also involved in the makeover of the front boulevard garden at Hospice House as part of the 100 year anniversary. Rocks and fresh soil were brought in, then bulbs, perennials, reseeding annuals, and succulents were planted to beautify the garden.

Gardening has been challenging in 2026 with the drought and stage 3 water restrictions. This is changing the thinking of many gardeners, with a move towards drip irrigation and choosing drought-tolerant plants. Succulents are drought-tolerant plants and are becoming more and more popular with gardeners. They come in a variety of colours and shapes.

Members feel one of the best aspects of being in a century-old garden club is the friendships that can be found — friendships that begin at the monthly meetings.

The club hosts many speakers who cover a range of gardening topics. New members are welcome at the meeting and membership costs just \$20/year. The club meets on the 4th Tuesday of the month, most months of the year, at the Vernon Community Arts Centre at 7 p.m.



Photo by Janet Stoll, Vernon & District Garden Club.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOIL: STAYING GROUNDED

I recently read an article about the importance of soil in our ecosystems in *The Economist's*, September 17, 2026 issue. The article was based on a book, *The World Beneath Our Feet* by Frank Ashwood.

The article refers to charismatic habitats — the concept of striking, iconic, or visually dramatic ecosystems — and then uncharismatic habitats with uncharismatic species such as mites, centipedes and millipedes, slime moulds and woodlice, nematodes, and oodles of earthworms which live in the least charismatic habitat of all: soil.

Soil and its critters make up the most important habitat of all according to Frank Ashwood, an ecologist. Without these underworld species, rainforests and savannahs would not exist. Agriculture relies on this uncharismatic habitat.

According to Dr. Ashwood, a teaspoon of healthy topsoil can hold up to six billion micro-organisms. Dr. Ashwood states that a square metre of temperate woodland or grassland soil contains approximately 300 earthworms, 100,000 mites, 50,000 springtail bugs, and five million nematodes.

Most of us know that soil is an incredible way to keep carbon out of the atmosphere. Dr. Ashwood states that

the carbon stored in a hectare of boreal-forest soil weighs more than jumbo jet!

We notice air and water but soil is often ignored. "Ignore the soil, then, at your peril." If we don't take care of our soil, it literally becomes just dirt. You get dirt in a cut, you may have to get a tetanus shot.

Wow again! These uncharismatic creatures are remarkable. Slime moulds form feeding networks so efficient that city planners have used them to model public transport systems.

Dr. Ashwood doesn't think human beings have been good "soil mates." Modern machine-based farming has caused soil erosion and compacting to the point that creatures cannot survive. This has resulted in a huge loss of biodiversity. No-till farming and regenerative agriculture (a conservation and rehabilitation approach that restores degraded soil, increases biodiversity, and locks carbon dioxide) aim to conserve existing soil biodiversity and increase it.

Let's add this book to our reading list in our own garden clubs and community gardens. Our motto will be "it is not dirt, it is soil."

Photo from Wikimedia Commons.



Slime mould.



Springtail bugs.

The David Douglas Botanical Garden Society has continued to grow in 2026, both in the gardens themselves and in the community that surrounds them.

A major focus this year has been the continued development of Phase 2 of Khasdzoon Yusk'ut Botanical Garden. As the garden takes shape, volunteers have been an essential part of bringing the vision to life. Plantings, garden maintenance, and regular work bees have provided opportunities for society members to get their hands in the soil, learn together, and contribute directly to the development of a botanical garden designed for northern British Columbia. The society's regular volunteer maintenance program and work bees have helped turn plans into living gardens.

For members, the learning continued beyond the garden gates. The 2026 Garden Tour Series offered members the opportunity to visit private gardens, exchange ideas, and see how other northern gardeners approach their landscapes. These informal summer evening tours have become a valued part of the society's membership experience, creating opportunities to explore, learn, and enjoy gardening together.

Education has also remained at the heart of the society's work. Through the Prince George Master Gardeners, community members have continued to have access to

practical horticultural knowledge, including workshops offered in partnership with the Prince George Public Library. The society's broader partnership with the Library also supports the Prince George Community Seed Library, connecting gardeners with seeds, growing information, and opportunities to learn about seed saving.

And while the growing season begins to wind down, the society's work does not stop. The upcoming Weed Free Lecture Series will help carry gardening education into the late fall and winter months, offering gardeners an opportunity to keep learning, planning, and preparing for the next growing season. The lecture series is an established part of the society's educational programming.

Together, these activities reflect what makes the David Douglas Botanical Garden Society more than a garden project. It is a community of people who are building, learning, and sharing their knowledge while creating something lasting for Prince George and northern British Columbia.

In 2026, the garden is growing, and so is the community growing it.



Photos by Dennis Webster, Lightsong Images, DDBG — except photo of a black bear sow and her three cubs (photo by Esther Proso, Garden Committee Chair.)





VICTORIA FLORAL ARTISTS GUILD/SAANICH FALL FAIR

CAROLINE HAYWOOD, VFAG

Victoria Floral Artists Guild displayed their amazing talent at the Saanich Fall Fair, while sharing their love for floral arranging.

Members showcased seven designs and shared their knowledge by doing demonstrations and teaching the attendees how to build a handheld bouquet they could take home.

Over 400 people participated with flowers donated by members of the guild and Eurosa gardens, who are the largest rose growers in Canada.



Photos by Caroline Haywood,
VFAG





The countdown to the 2027 Communities in Bloom program is underway, and we're proud to introduce a theme that celebrates the heart of our nation.

Ô Canada: Blooming Together | Fleurissons ensemble

In 2027, we're celebrating the landscapes, people, and places that make communities across Canada unique. Whether you're creating vibrant red and white floral displays, planting trees and regionally appropriate plants, enhancing community landscapes, celebrating local heritage, supporting environmental action, or beautifying public spaces, every project helps tell the story of your community while strengthening our connection to the places we call home.

Together, let's grow greener, celebrate the diversity of our communities, and create beautiful spaces that inspire, connect, and flourish.



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 November 15 for December 1**. Submissions/ inquiries:

newsletter@bcgardenclubs.com

Lynda Pasacreta, Editor

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