

Davidsonia Returns!

When I wrote *Au Revoir* in February 1982, I never suspected that I would be writing this article for the reactivated UBC Botanical Garden journal **Davidsonia** - but I am most pleased to do so! **Davidsonia** is needed today just as much as it was for the 12 years beginning in 1970. The dissemination of information concerning the garden and its many activities is vital to the community of its supporters.

When I started the journal in 1970, I named it to honour the founder of the garden, Professor John Davidson. Little did I know then that *Davidsonia* was the name of an endemic monotypic genus of plants, *Davidsonia puriens*. It belongs to its own family, Davidsoniaceae (related to the Rosaceae and Saxifragaceae) and occurs in northeastern Australia. It is known as the Davidson plum and is used for fruit preserves and jams. I actually grew the plant from seed when we lived in Glencoe, Illinois. The seed was sent to us by the secretary of the Society for Growing Australian Plants – Queensland Region. Janet and I took a plant with us to California in October 1994. Unfortunately, we lost it in a freeze shortly after our arrival in Claremont. We were naïve enough to think that we were in sunny southern California and the plants would be okay on the patio for a few November nights!

The principal reason for launching **Davidsonia** was to provide information about the activities and research at the Garden. Regular articles featured plants of the flora of British Columbia, the weather records at the garden, garden components, special places and plants on the UBC campus and responses to queries that we regularly received from Hort-Line (the telephone horticultural information service). The journal also provided a venue for news and notes about activities associated with the garden, as well as a means to document the growth and development of the overall garden program.

Much has happened at the garden during the past twenty years. A successful plant introduction program (PISBG), launched in cooperation with the BC Nursery Trades Association (now the British Columbia Landscape

Dr. Roy L. Taylor was the director of UBC Botanical Garden from 1968 to 1985. He now resides in Lantzville, BC.

and Nursery Association), added to the British Columbia palette of horticultural plants from 1985 to 1999 through the release of 19 new cultivars and recommendations for 15 less well-known cultivated taxa. Establishment of working agreements with China has resulted in many new plants for the Asian Garden. A new building complex was completed to house staff, library and laboratories, and to provide space for special events and teaching programs. A garden shop with an associated sales area for plants was created. Improvements have continued in many garden components.

During the same period there have been many advances in our knowledge of the British Columbia flora, the publication of a new illustrated multi-volume flora of British Columbia (Douglas et al., 1998-2001) and several new field floras, some by former UBC students (Pojar and MacKinnon, 1994; Brayshaw, 1996). There have been other important plant research developments in the past twenty years that relate to the communication of information about taxa. The Flora of North America program has now published five volumes – the garden was actively involved in the compilation and editing of this program. The application of computers to large plant databases has resulted in the new Interagency Taxonomic Information System (ITIS) based in the United States Department of Agriculture with cooperative relationships with Agriculture Canada. In 1987, the Royal Horticultural Society in the United Kingdom initiated a yearly publication called *The RHS Plant Finder*. This is a wonderful resource listing suppliers of cultivated plants in the UK. Concurrent with these developments was the completion of the *European Garden Flora* in 2000.

We now have a number of excellent native and horticultural plant resources that were not available 20 years ago. These new resources help to make published information more accurate and informative, and they are particularly germane to the horticulture publications that are plagued with misinformation regarding the nomenclature and origin of cultivars. These new resources, coupled with the forthcoming revision of the *International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants* (by the reactivated International Commission for the Nomenclature of Cultivated Plants), will provide nomenclatural clarity for our cultivated taxa. Such clarity is critical to convey standard information to the users and buyers of cultivated plants.

The UBC Botanical Garden is entering a dynamic new phase in its growth as part of the new Botanical Garden and Centre for Plant Research program

of the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences. Through the activities of the staff and volunteers, the garden is in a unique position to influence the growth and development of programs in the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences.

This is an appropriate time to resurrect **Davidsonia**. There is a responsibility to let members of the garden and the broader communities know of the new activities and programs. Today, just as in 1982, there is a great need for botanical gardens to provide leadership in the stewardship of our green world. Ever-increasing urbanization makes education and communication with our growing populations imperative if we are to recognize and understand the role and importance of plants in our environment. The garden can also play an important role in continuing to increase the range of new plants for the nursery trades.

Davidsonia will be a valuable communication vehicle to promote the garden's programs, educate its members and help the community at large to understand that the University of British Columbia supports a greater understanding of plants and their role in our environment. **Davidsonia** will also provide an information bridge to sister institutions in the larger botanical and garden community. I know that the staff and supporters of the garden will ensure that this new initiative is successful.

Brayshaw, T.C. 1996. *Trees and shrubs of British Columbia*. Vancouver/Victoria: UBC Press/Royal British Columbia Museum.

Douglas, G.W., Straley, G.B., Meidinger, D. and Pojar, J. (editors). 1998-2001. *Illustrated Flora of British Columbia*, seven volumes. Victoria: British Columbia Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks and British Columbia Ministry of Forests.

Pojar, J. and MacKinnon, A. *Plants of Coastal British Columbia*. 1994. Victoria/Vancouver: British Columbia Ministry of Forests/Lone Pine Publishing.