

July in the Garden

July is a very colourful time for a walk in the Botanical Garden. The front entrance is full of annual colour taking centre stage as the peonies fade away. As you head into the David C. Lam Asian Garden, the area around the pond is appealing with the flowers reflected in the water. You might even spot a goldfish, although the kingfisher did his best to dine on them all this spring. If you choose to wander along the main path through the Asian Garden, the bright pink flowers of *Rehmannia elata* will start you on your way. In this area there is a lovely collection of lilies, with many coming into flower at this time including *Lilium henryi* var. *citrinum* and *L. taliense*. A little further on the left is the diminutive *L. formosanum* var. *pricei*. To the right, past the big *Thuja plicata* (western red cedar) is the *Acanthus* relative, *Strobilanthes attenuata* whose purple buds are just coming out. Sharing the bed is my favourite rose, *Rosa* × *odorata* ‘Mutabilis’, a cultivar that never has mildew or black spot. Its flowers start out a shade of peach and turn to crimson as they age. On the right, there is a small, shrubby tree in flower, *Sinocalycanthus chinensis*. It has white, camellia-like flowers and is related to the North American genus *Calycanthus*, with its dark, almost maroon flowers.

If you turn right on the second wheelchair path and follow your nose, you can't miss the giant Himalayan lilies, *Cardiocrinum giganteum*, with their large white trumpets stained maroon. The species can reach over 4 metres in height, although usually they are not quite so tall.

Around the Asian Garden, look for the climbing *Rosa filipes* ‘Kiftsgate’ with its large umbels of single white flowers, and *Schizophragma hydrangeoides*, another white flowering climber, but one that resembles the climbing hydrangea. The shrubby *Hydrangea aspera* is in bloom with its tiny pink or blue fertile flowers that appear to sparkle. White showy, four-petaled sterile flowers surrounding the inner flowers are tinged with pink or mauve. Large clumps of *Inula hookeri* line the paths in the centre of the Asian Garden. Its yellow daisy flowers have neat furry buds. The expanding buds with twisted yellow florets remind me of a ball of yarn.

As you leave the Asian Garden, which is always cool on hot days, and emerge from the east end of the tunnel, you will see a number of perennials in bloom including *Astrantia*, *Gaura*, *Phlox* and *Persicaria* to name just a few. I am particularly fond of the combination of pale pink *Lavatera* × *clementii* ‘Barnsley’ with the thin bright red/pink spikes of *Persicaria amplexicaulis* in the perennial bed by the Pavilion.

The Food Garden is full of vegetables that crop well in the cool West Coast climate. We have sown early plantings of ‘Progress #9’ peas, ‘Yukon Gold’ potatoes, ‘Giant Red’ mustard and ‘Rhubarb’ Swiss chard. Visitors are often impressed not only by the produce, but by the volunteers who make the weekly harvests. By special arrangement, a local soup kitchen picks up and distributes the bounty. We have all been fascinated this past winter with the very attractive *Wasabia japonica*, the true wasabi plant. Its leaves are a shiny bright green and slightly crinkled, and its flowers, though unremarkable to look at, appear impervious to the weather.

In the Physic Garden *Lilium candidum* and the wonderfully tall cardoon, *Cynara cardunculus*, are in flower.

As you look across to the Alpine Garden, your eye will be drawn first to the African section where *Phygelius*, *Kniphofia*, *Crocosmia*, *Agapanthus* and *Spartium junceum* are all flowering in bright primary colours. *Eucomis bicolor*, the pineapple plant, *Crinum* × *powellii* and several species of *Watsonia* are sure to intrigue you as well, but my number one favourite is *Dierama pulcherrimum*, the angel’s fishing rod.

Beyond Africa, near the top of the Garden, *Fabiana imbricata* f. *violacea* lights up the South American section. It is a large heath-like shrub with masses of minute, tubular pale purple flowers. Many are surprised to learn that this is a petunia relative. There are a number of other members of the Solanaceae in this area, including the unusual shrub *Iochroma australe* with its lovely mauve bell-shaped flowers with recurved tips.