

## February in the Garden

There is more than a hint of Spring in the air and my new neighbour cannot understand why *Ocimum basilicum* (basil) plants are not yet for sale in the garden centres. But as Vancouverites know, but usually deny, we can still have a snowstorm. If it snows it is a perfect opportunity to visit the Botanical Garden. Everything looks fresh and the trees, especially the evergreens and espaliered fruit trees, are quite lovely covered with snow.

As you enter the Garden look down to the pond, where there are often ducks, usually a pair of mallards but sometimes mergansers, hunting for fish. As you head down the black top path in the David C Lam Asian Garden you will smell the small yellow flowers of *Chimonanthus praecox* (winter sweet) before you actually see the shrub. It is on your left just past the *Thuja plicata* (western red cedar) and before the tunnel. There are more specimens of winter sweet in the Winter Garden including the clear yellow flowered *C. praecox* 'Luteus'.

At the edge of the stream below the Winter Garden there is a nice planting of red and yellow-stemmed *Cornus stolonifera* (red osier dogwood) waiting to catch your eye. I am always attracted to the nearby lovely *Salix daphnoides* (violet willow) with its silky pale grey catkins set off against the rusty red bark. On the streamside bank of the Winter Garden, *Cornus mas* (cornelian cherry) is just showing its small yellow flowers. Along the north end of the Winter Garden several shrubs are in flower. *Abeliophyllum distichum* (white forsythia) with its small white flowers is under-planted with hummocks of *Erica carnea* (purple heather). *Lonicera* × *purpusii* has fragrant white flowers and *Jasminum nudiflorum* forms a mound of green stems and clear yellow flowers. *Mabonia* × *media* 'Arthur Menzies' has dramatic clusters of long spreading, bright yellow-flowered racemes. Other plants in flower include *Helleborus* × *hybridus* (*H. orientalis* Hort.), *H. argutifolius*, *H. foetidus* (hellebores), *Salix gilgiana*, *Viburnum tinus* and *Hamamelis* × *intermedia* 'Fireglow'.

The E.H. Lohbrunner Alpine Garden has many wonderful February gems.

Judy Newton, Education Coordinator.  
 UBC Botanical Garden and Centre for Plant Research,  
 6804 SW Marine Drive, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z4.  
 judy.newton@ubc.ca

Under the *Corylus avellana* ‘Contorta’ (Harry Lauder’s walking stick), there are clumps of *Galanthus* spp. (snowdrops) [or “of a *Galanthus* sp.”], the similar but larger flowering *Leucojum vernum* (spring snowflake), *Cyclamen coum*, and the yellow-flowered *Eranthis hyemalis* (winter aconite). Nearby is the tiny daffodil, *Narcissus* ‘Sir Cedric Morris’, which is always the first narcissus to flower in the garden. Near the lawn as you walk along the road to the Winter Garden there is a large cluster of *Narcissus* ‘February Gold’, although in a cold winter, it may be March before it flowers. You will also see the exquisite *Rhododendron moupinense*, one of my favourites, although in some years it can be damaged by an unusually hard frost. The unopened pink buds contrast with the white flowers. There are also some of these plants growing below *Magnolia kobus* immediately south of the works yard fence at the north end of the Winter Garden. Behind the magnolia, *Garrya elliptica* (silk-tassel bush), with its long male catkins and shorter female ones, is festooned with *Clematis cirrhosa* var. *balearica*. The throats of the cream coloured flowers have spots or dashes of red and it will flower through out a mild winter. Both plants do well in their sheltered spot. The clematis also grows over the of the building in the works yard.

In the South American section of the Alpine Garden *Azara microphylla*, a fragrant vanilla-scented evergreen shrub from Chile and Argentina, is in flower. It has many conspicuous golden stamens but no petals.

It is early for flowers in the Physic Garden, but it is a lovely sheltered spot to sit in the sun and *Petasites albus* buds should be pushing out of the ground.