

SUMMER 2023 Newsletter

The Irish tell the story of a man who arrives at the gates of heaven and asks to be let in. St. Peter says, "Of course, just show us your scars." The man says, "I have no scars". St. Peter says, "What a pity was there nothing worth fighting for?" - Martin Sheen

THANK YOU

- To all who have brought our issues to the public, supported us, come to our tree walks this summer, and volunteered in Serenity Garden.
- To Richard Stewart and Coquitlam City Council for the supportive letter they wrote to BC Housing requesting that they reconsider their decision to charge tree walk fees.
- To The Friends of Government House Gardens Society in Victoria, and Urban Roots Garden Market Coquitlam, for their generous plant donations to RHCS for Serenity Garden this summer.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT RIVERVIEW

The future of Tree Walks

BC Housing has instigated an onerous fee for us to hold our tree walks at səmíqʷə?elə/Riverview.

Last year we had to pay BCH \$825.00 for our October walk.

This year we can only host five tree walks without a fee.

Next year, according to BC Housing's Sara Goldvine, VP Communications and Public Affairs, "RHCS will be required to pay all associated Special Event fees as of January 1, 2024" for every tree walk.

We have recently engaged the media to highlight the injustice of these outrageous fees.





RHCS in the Media Spotlight:

Thank you to the following journalists who have done excellent reporting. Click on the links below to read more.

1. We did an 8-minute CBC radio interview with Jason D'Souza, July 7th "On the Coast"

<https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-46-on-the-coast/clip/15996487-b.c.-housing-charging-expensive-fees-community-horticultural-group?share=true>

2. We did a CBC TV interview with Cali McTavish on July 20th "Beloved Coquitlam, B.C. walking tour faces uncertain future" CBC

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5mpdufRjhU>

3. On cbc.ca, Michelle Gomez posted a web story August 18th "Tree tours on former Riverview Hospital grounds may come to an end after 3 decades"

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/horticulture-tours-1.6939928>

4. Tri-City newspaper journalist, Janis Cleugh posted an online article August 16th "BC Housing to end free tree tours at səmiqwəʔelə/Riverview"

<https://www.tricitynews.com/local-news/photos-bc-housing-to-end-free-tree-tours-at-smiqwelriverview-7419877>

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

We held our 2023 AGM on July 9th, 2023.

We would like to thank Linda Asgeirsson and Nancy Furness as they step down from the board to pursue other interests. We would like to welcome Neal Nicholson, Phil Buchan, and Harvey Su our new board members.



Board members at the 2023 AGM

HAPPY BIRTHDAY Elaine!

Dr. Elaine Golds, an environmentalist of note who has received many accolades and awards, was celebrated this summer. MLA Fin Donnelly, Mayor Richard Stewart, and MP Bonita Zarillo all spoke highly of Elaine's many accomplishments. We are pleased to have her as a long-standing member of the RHCS Board.



Elaine at her 80th Birthday



THE RHCS VOLUNTEERS

"Volunteerism is the voice of the people put into action. These actions shape and mold the present into a future of which we can all be proud." – Helen Dyer

The Riverview Horticultural Society has a wonderful new group of dedicated volunteers this year, all of whom have taken the archeological course and are covered by insurance and vetted as required by BCH.

These volunteers have been diligently watering Serenity Garden during the heat of this summer. They have all weeded, pruned, raked, cleaned, and repaired as they worked to restore Serenity to a lovely tranquil garden space again.

Our volunteers have supplied us with many lovely free plants including a donation of hardy indigenous perennials from Urban Garden in Coquitlam.

They are an inspiration to all of us who have an emotional stake in this magical corner of the Riverview Lands.

Please visit Serenity Garden to see the wonderful garden come back to life.



SERENITY GARDENERS

Finding Peace at Serenity Gardens

by Marsha Drake, RHCS Serenity Volunteer, June 2023

I always knew that Riverview existed but never knew its history or importance from a First Nations or Settlers point of view. I'd drive past and marvel at the scope and beauty of the place and the massive buildings but never got close. Then just before Covid I attended a Horticultural Society tree tour and after that visited the site on my own. When Covid got into gear I started visiting Riverview on my own for the beauty and the relative safety. It's hard to describe how much the peaceful environment comforted me during that time. It seemed a serene and magical place that removed (and protected) me from the negativity of the Covid world.

When Covid ended I joined the Horticultural Society and now volunteer in Riverview's Serenity Garden. Since I live in an apartment with no garden, I thoroughly enjoy gardening with other volunteers and seeing the outcome of our collective labour. I find this bonding with people and Nature uplifting and rejuvenating. And after a few hours I leave the people and the garden feeling elated, optimistic and positive.



Marsha is centre in blue

'Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.'
Martin Luther King



Watering in Serenity

by Sadhna Datta, RHCS Member and Volunteer

As I water the plants at the beautiful Serenity Garden, I feel like their thirst is being quenched. Everyone on the volunteer team is doing such a great job. This hot weather is not making it easy for us. But the dedication is so strong and I'm proud to be a part of that team.

Unfortunately, there is no water connection in the garden, so we must trudge up to the HEY building to connect to the tap there. We use four or more hoses and connections to get the watering done. This takes over 30 minutes to set up before watering can begin. After one and a half to two hours of hand watering we have to gather up all the hoses and put them away in the shed – a very hot and heavy job.

Speaking for myself (5 feet one and a half inches tall) it is hard to maneuver the hoses in and out of the shed, hook them all up and then put them all away again. It takes at least two people to do the job. However, many of the volunteers do it on their own.

Many of us have either back or shoulder issues yet we still strive to water the garden, carrying the hoses "firefighter" style (so as to not strain our shoulders) to get all the watering done.

As I go around the garden watering the plants, I usually make a second round to give them another soaking, and in that short time I notice how much perkier they look. So, I really feel happy about that. Plants are so resilient, too bad they must put up with this climate change that we humans are causing.

However, the effort by the Serenity Gardeners is making a difference, and I look forward to watering the gardens as often as I can. Here's hoping my shoulders will bear the burden.

Note: This year the washroom in Serenity has not been open to the public for tree walks or for our gardeners who are working there for four to six hours. We have asked BC Housing to provide water in Serenity so that we can have a working washroom and an easier watering system. Fin Donnelly is contacting BC Housing on our behalf.



Dedicated volunteers at Serenity



TREE WALKS

Thoughts on a Tree Tour...

by Rhea Rose June 2023
RHCS Member and Tree advocate

"I think that I shall never see a poem lovely as a tree." Joyce Kilmer

If trees are your thing (and they should be) the Riverview Horticultural Society Tree Tour on Coquitlam's southeast side of the city is a gem hidden among highway traffic, overpasses, and dilapidated buildings.

If you'd like more info on the history of the arboretum on the Riverview lands, check out Coquitlam's online Archive Exhibit about Riverview, here's a link:

<https://www.tricitynews.com/local-news/riverview-trees-gardens-the-focus-of-new-coquitlam-archives-exhibit-7165008>

But read on because I took the tree tour led and narrated by Allison Luke from UBC's forestry department and organized by the men and women of the Riverview Horticultural Society. A rare Sunday of sun and breeze, and a healthy crowd of every age and doggy type gathered in the parking lots behind the Henry Esson Young building, and once we all signed a waiver, off we went, we three, my sister, my husband, and Maui, the dog, to learn about the amazing trees, some planted over a hundred years ago, many brought from all over the world.

This working landscape, as it's called, put together by a small army of gardeners, arborists, volunteers, and tree lovers over the last century, have created one of the most important and unique tree collections in the world. We visited only a handful of conifers and deciduous giants, but the trees were happy to see us, and we learned about needles, leaves, cones, and seeds.

My favourite--the Ginkgo Biloba tree with its fanlike leaf grows in a hidden corner behind an English Holly. The Himalaya Sugi, with its green egg-shaped cones, looked fake! But it wasn't. And then I hid under the canopy of the tent tree (not really called that but should be.) Its real name is--I think --Aristolochia Macrophylla, makes a great tent!



Allison Luke



Ginko leaf (above) and cones (right)

We ended the tour in the shade filled grounds of the Serenity Garden under the thick arms of a massive London plane tree with a really warty main trunk and lovely smooth upper branches. Entering the Serenity Garden on the tour made the adventure special because folks aren't allowed to garden there without special permission. Let's hope BC Housing does the right thing and preserves these trees and continues to add to our tremendous tree collection in the spirit of reverence, education, and healing solace from which it all began.



Tentative Tree Walk Dates subject to approval by BCH

- Sunday, September 17th 1pm -3pm
- Sunday, October 22nd 1pm – 3pm

Please go to our website rhcs.org for more information



WE NEED YOU TO STAND WITH US TO ADVOCATE FOR WHAT IS RIGHT:

- To stop BC Housing wasting tax-payer money by charging a non-profit society which provides free public tree walks on public land
- To make BC Housing provide water access in Serenity Garden for a public washroom and for gardening

After our recent media exposure, a supporter sent the following compelling letter of complaint to BC Housing complaintresolution@bchousing.org;

There is a significant difference between using the grounds for a wedding or a film shoot and the educational service that the RHCS provides to all residents of the lower mainland. A film shoot can afford to pay fees and it is very disruptive. Weddings can budget for their venue and benefit only a small group of folks. RHCS provides a free instructive and informative tour of the arboretum which helps us all appreciate the beauty of the diversity of the trees there.

If it's about fairness to other organizations that use the area then how is it fair to charge for a tour that is free given by a non-profit organization?

With the ongoing burning of so many of the trees in our province I think it's rather poor timing that BC Housing chooses to implement this \$845/tour which would, in effect, end the tours. With climate change I wonder if any trees will be left.

I implore BC Housing to reconsider this fee and continue to allow RHCS to conduct their tours.

*Sincerely
T. Radke*

We need you to tell BC Housing that you want RHCS to continue to provide free tree walks for the public and to maintain Serenity Garden as a place for all to enjoy. You can voice your concerns to BCH and the government at complaintresolution@bchousing.org;

Then forward/cc your letter to your own MLA and the following who can bring about change if they have the political will:

- BC Housing Minister Ravi Kahlon ravi.kahlon.MLA@leg.bc.ca
- BC Premiere and former Housing Minister David Eby david.Eby.MLA@leg.bc.ca
- Coquitlam MLA Selina Robinson selina.Robinson.MLA@leg.bc.ca
- Coquitlam City Council mayor_council@coquitlam.ca



NEW MEMBERS WELCOME!

Our membership is growing thanks to all those enthusiastic attendees at our tree walks this summer. Each membership gives us a stronger voice and a greater presence in our community that cannot be ignored. Encourage your friends and neighbours to join.

Membership forms are available on our website rhcs.org Membership renewals come due in April of 2024

MEMBER FEEDBACK

Send us your thoughts, suggestions, and any responses from your MLA's actions to riverviewRHCS@outlook.com

Please Follow and like us on Instagram: Instagram link:

https://www.instagram.com/riverview_society/?igshid=MjEwN2lyYWYwYw%3D%3D

