



# Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

Newsletter

Volume 33:2 February 2022

## *Message from the President*

Hi Friends,

Just think; it won't be long now before our yards will be in full bloom. Already we see the life-signs as we saunter along on daily wanderings. We also catch the drift of Spring from conversations with our gardening friends.

"So, what are you doing in your garden these days?" This question is posed as if it is a given that I have been out there in the wet and cold, freezing my hands to numbness and my feet to deadened stumps. Instead of protesting, as I could because it is January and a snowfall is still in the forecast, I smile twistedly and say that I have been doing basic garden clean-up – you know, fall duties that someone of my laidback nature failed to complete before winter.

Really, I thought I still had time to address those ten important tasks to complete in winter. I was still working very hard on number one:

***Dream, scheme, and plan for next season***, which means hiking along trails and observing Nature's designs – such as how its forces have shifted the boulders, river rocks and fallen logs in the creek.



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## CVRS Meeting Zoom Format

**Wednesday  
February 2, 2022  
7 – 9 pm**

Special Guests:

***Expert Panel***

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*Banner Photo: Rhododendrons in bloom at the, formerly, Stone property on Maple Bay Road*

## President's Message (continued)

Yes of course, Sandy, I have seen some of your enthusiastic projects in Facebook conversations. Pressure? Not at all – we all love to hear our friends are outside where we love to be as well. We can hardly wait for the warmth that will allow our garden fixes to lengthen. There really is a direct relationship between a sunny day and a garden tool belt, isn't there?

Okay, maybe a bit of pressure then, because I find myself mumbling how my efforts have meant that *poor Georgie* had to haul a truckload of garbage bins filled with my *rakings* and *prunings* to the Bing Creek Compost drop. I often, fondly, remember my dear mother-in-law's words, "*Oh poor Georgie*", whenever she heard how he periodically completed these heavy tasks for me.

The CVRS Executive, however, *is* feeling pressure this Spring. It is difficult to announce that we are continuing to hold back on in-person meetings for a while longer. Several of our friends and CVRS members who work in the medical profession advise us that the COVID positive cases in the Cowichan Valley are as high as they ever have been. As tired as we all may be of COVID wariness, we would rather err on the side of caution by practising more patience than cause risk to vulnerable loved ones in our circles of relationships. We are aware that several other chapters have been hosting in-person meetings; they too have felt compelled at times to postpone some of these plans.

**Planning for outdoor activities and gatherings seems to be the best way to move forward this season. An email notice with a few ideas will follow but we wish to hear of yours.**

- *Dreaming, Scheming and Planning*
- *Select seeds for George to order and sow; get him to sort and discard old ones*
- *Tidy up the greenhouse, getting rid of any broken pots, old compost or debris that could hide unwanted visitors*
- *Clean and sharpen hand tools; oil metal tools*
- *Install the cleaned and sharpened chains on the super mini-chain saw in the correct direction rather than buy new chains*
- *Clear away soggy, collapsed stems of perennials and compost them*
- *Clear soggy leaves, algae and moss from paths, patios, decking and steps*
- *Remove and dispose of hellebore foliage marked with black blotches, to limit the spread of leaf spot disease*
- *Prune out dead, damaged, congested, diseased branches on trees and shrubs*
- *Make a list of plants to lift and move, divide and pot up; gather the materials to execute the tasks*

In the meantime, back to those Late Winter/Early Spring Tasks. I research carefully to find a list that appeals to me. It has to be short and begin with: **Dreaming, Scheming and Planning.** I do hope to attack some of the other nine soon.

See you at the Expert Panel Meeting on Wednesday.

Verna





# EXPERT PANEL

FEBRUARY 2, 2022 6:45 – 9:00 pm

(6:45pm Social, 7pm CVRS Meeting, 7:15 Panel)

Does this photo remind you of a hilarious evening where very useful tips and information were delivered in an unmatched format of dry wit and humour? If you were there, you are probably smiling and chuckling right now.



Two of these experts, Sean Rafferty and Ken Webb have agreed to return; we welcome Garth Wedemire to this year's event. Al Murray, who has appeared on the panel before and planned to participate, will not be able to participate due to "lambing" season responsibilities.

- Write down questions to ask our experts. They have answers for everything
- Record their responses and ask for clarity or common names if necessary
- Bring a sense of humour; they will

## **Join Zoom Meeting:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89354365766?pwd=aWtwWnNhVnc2MGowNmo4akZETUpGdz09>

Meeting ID: 893 5436 5766

Passcode: 341681

# GARDEN STOREYING

~ Verna Buhler ~



Towner Crest

## GARDEN DESIGN - Part Two The Middle Storey

*For purposes of this design article focusing on garden layering, I am identifying the middle storey as the plants between the upper storey (described in the January 2022 newsletter) and the lower storey or ground level. This eye-level view, directly in front of viewers, is what most of us notice first as we wander through gardens. Sometimes, without consciously realizing we are doing so, we suddenly pause, overpowered by the magnificent display unfolding before us. Perhaps we are attempting to absorb the sensation and memorize the image in hopes that we will be able to take this with us and re-experience the impact of that moment. What combinations create such special effects?*



The language and terms used by garden designers vary because narrowing artistry and design down to a few specific terms is almost impossible. Joseph Hudak, of Harvard University considers primary organizational forms of design to be **repetition, sequence, and balance**, and values of design to be **scale, proportion, emphasis, and rhythm**. Other designers use other terms, yet the essential or characteristic components are very similar.

Hopefully, the terms chosen here to describe **plant layering** in designing the middle storey in a West Coast garden will be suitable.

## **CONTRASTS and SIMILARITIES**

Successfully layering the middle storey here on the West Coast offers many options because of the diversity of plants that are happy to grow here. Multiple design elements are evident in this artistically layered combination of trees and shrubs in Carrie's garden.



Carrie chose small trees and shrubs that **contrasted in shape, texture, and colour**. The **habit** of the two focal plants, the lacy, horizontal and spreading *Acer palmatum* 'Sango-Kaku' and densely rounded species *Rhododendron pachysanthum* contrast pleasingly. The **shape and texture** of foliage of the Japanese maple are small, pointed, veined and delicate, whereas the rhododendron leaves are larger, oval, and of substantial thickness. The muted coral and buttery autumn maple leaves strikingly leap against the upright gray-blue foliage of the rhododendron.

However, Carrie also utilized the **elements of similarity and repetition** of red hues; the slim, brilliant-coral bark of the maple's branches accentuate, **emphasize**, the burgundy bronze indumentum of the rhododendron. The artistry is further developed by the green hues in the plants framing these two focal plants. Cedar, maple, and taller, large-leaved rhododendrons form a backdrop of shades of deep forest green in various shapes and textures; interspersed are lime-green ferns unified in the foreground by perky green rhododendrons.



## SCALE and PROPORTION

Gardens that have a layered look generally appear lush and vigorous. Although it's often assumed that a large property is required to achieve this, carefully planting shrubs with an array of form and habit in one area, however small, can produce the same desired effect. Al and Sandy designed a sunken garden in a small area leading to the entrance of their house. Again, considerations of shape, texture, and colour, applied using both similarities and contrasts, resulted in a charming garden. A low rounded hedge, a repetition of clipped boxwood plants, subtly defines the upper boundary of the cozy enclosure. Japanese maple forms in three distinct, yet harmonious colours offer more of the layers: bright green, horizontal *Acer* 'Waterfall'; coral, upright *Acer* 'Brilliantissimum'; and rounded, burgundy 'Bloodgood'. The pyramidal *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Sekkan-Sugi' contrasts structurally, and its bright highlights accentuate yellow tones in nearby plants.

But no rhododendrons?

Oh, but they are there, beautifully featured. The loveliest collection of dwarf rhododendrons displays tiny, adorable foliage and flowers on the stone terraces of this garden. Among other special perennials, the dwarf stars are perfectly situated where they can be fully appreciated, away from overpowering larger plants of the genus. They are listed on the next page.



A step closer means another pause in the garden tour. Artistically placed, at the edge of the garden bed, the soft blue needles of a *Pinus strobus* 'Nana Compacta' lead guests to reach out to pet the cuddly conifer. The golden fingers of the *Cryptomeria* above appear to protect the delicate golden buds of new growth on the pine.





On whatever **scale**, skillful layering in a garden generally begins with the woody plants and shrubs and then a selection of companion plants to fill in the spaces. This photo of the sunken garden could be used in the discussion of the lower storey, but it also shows that understanding how plants grow is important in shifting seasonal focus. On the small slopes rising from this area are fourteen small and dwarf rhododendrons which have finished blooming. The description of these from Alan is too charming to exclude from this article.

"Coming in the gate on the right is *R. augustinii* 'Betty Farmer', named by Ken Gibson for an old-time gardener out on Clayoquot Island. Next on the border are two *R. campylogynum*, 'Wales Wood' (an old-time gardener in Oregon) and 'Jade'. Next is *R. 'Snow Lady'*. Coming up the path on the right is *R. moupenense*, *R. pseudochrysanthum* 'Chancellor's Choice', *R. 'Songbird'*, then *R. pemakoense*. On the left from the gate is *R. scabrifolium*, *R. 'April Glow'*, *R. canadense*, *R. perycleminoides*, *R. atlanticum*, then another *R. pemakoense*."





## REPETITION and BALANCE



These designs demonstrate **balance** through positioning and **repetition** of a few colours of plants of different shapes and sizes conveying harmony in the landscape.

Odd numbered, five burgundy-leaved maples, and three lime-green shrubs allow eyes to accept the single bright pink rhododendron in the middle as a focal plant in Whitney Gardens in Brinnen, Washington.

Soft contrasting colours of pale yellow and soft peach flowers against bronze foliage, bronze buds and taupe verticals of tree trunks offer similar balance in Rob and Susan's garden (above)



Similarly, in this composition in Don and Louise's garden (left), rosy buds and red throats in two soft yellow rhododendrons are emphasized by the rose-pink and the red rhododendrons planted nearby. A triangle of lime green foliage plants add contrasting dazzle to the garden bed.

Vivid purple trusses of a rhododendron accentuate the burgundy stems and wine-coloured veins of the foliage in the rhododendron behind it. Separated by a bright green foliage shrub, they also deepen the rich purple and blue tones of *Fagus sylvatica purpurea pendula* in Ali's garden.





Very effective in layering, repetition also serves other purposes in garden design.

It is effectively displayed in the uniform row of white birch on Clayoquot Island, also known as Stubbs Island, near Tofino; in the formal garden at Royal Roads University in Victoria; in the sturdy bamboo stand in Finnerty Gardens at the University of Victoria.



## ***RHYTHM and UNIFORMITY***

Some garden designers excel using a harmonious **sequence** of elements such as shape and colour. Many of the gardens on the Maple Road property originally developed and owned by a Stone family, illustrate this. Following three seasons of shades of deep green, hundreds of rhododendrons and flowering trees burst into bloom at the same time, or in overlapping sequence, resulting in unmatched garden masterpieces for weeks of the year. Rounded, **uniform** rhododendrons in varying sizes and sweeping green expanses of lawn harmonize the canvas.





At Towner Crest, Nick and Evelyn applied the same design principles by planting a border of *Rhododendron yakushimanum* species and hybrids, a vibrant spring rainbow, against the backdrop of coniferous and deciduous trees, also viewed from across an expanse of green and a kidney-shaped pond. Through selection of rhododendrons with similar habit and bloom periods **rhythm and uniformity** is achieved.



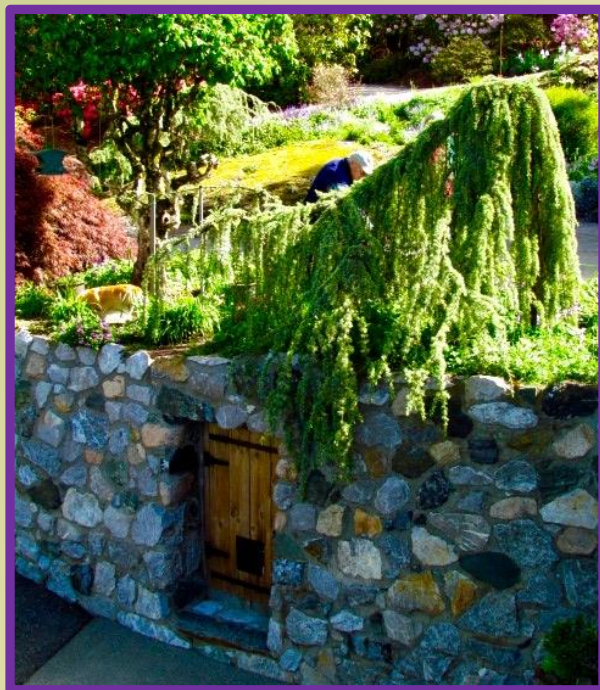
## SPACE and RHYTHM

The Stone and Towner Crest gardens both used open expanses of lush green lawns to showcase their middle storeys in full bloom. Spaces are important to the rhythm of a garden. Without spaces in the layers of the middle storey, remarkable features of the bark on trunks of trees such as *Acer griseum*, *Heptacodium miconoides*, and species Rhododendrons such as *R. ciliicalyx x formosum*, *R. barbatum*, *R. parryae*, and *R. triflorum* would be lost.





Space allows viewers to appreciate the fluffy lemon mat of *Ginkgo biloba* 'Autumn Gold' leaves in fall at George's, and the draping tendrils of *Cedrus atlas glauca pendula* above and over the sturdy stone wall in Al and Liz's garden.



## NATURE'S LAYERS

Landscaping with Nature's own layers inspires pleasant interpretations.



Dorothy and Randy's garden interprets the rocky slope in the opposite way. Here larger and brighter shrubs are layered on the slope, and interspersed are plants with vertical and spiked habit. The limited colour palette of rose and blue tones create harmony. In this landscape, the stones appear in smaller spaces serving supporting roles in the lovely composition.

Al and Sandy chose blue-toned foliage plants of smaller habit to emphasize the uneven natural folds of the moss-covered rock. They added a stone wall to replicate the dominating stone features for additional plantings of blue juniper. A few plashes of lime green and rose tones provide contrasting highlights.





## COMPLEXITIES of the LIVING CANVAS

As if consideration of the visual elements of landscape design isn't enough, challenges grow in multiples in recognizing the landscape as a living and changing entity.

*Therefore, understanding the specific growing conditions for each of the components is essential in designing a thriving tapestry.*

Consider this slope. The design of this garden began with **consideration of the natural forces** of the environment where it was situated. The slope rose from a low poorly-drained area of the property composed entirely of hard-pan clay. The soil was saturated in the rainy season, and impenetrably rock-hard in summer drought. Prevailing west winds, hot and drying in summer, and icy and desiccating in winter, whipped up the slope challenging or destroying most trees and shrubs planted there – deadly for rhododendrons.



### **Purpose: A Windbreak but Not a Hedge**

What was required was a **middle storey**, all-season windbreak, composed of trees and shrubs tolerant of both heavy, drenched soils and lengthy periods of drought. The foliage must withstand drying winds. Plants with these qualities were selected to provide the windbreak.

Planted in groupings were deciduous flowering shrubs, conifers of differing size, habit and colour, and several flowering trees:

*Prunus x cisterna*, (Purple Sandcherry), *Thuja occidentalis* 'Golden Globe', *Thuja occidentalis* 'Smaragd', *Spiraea prunifolia*, (Bridal Wreath), *Pinus mugo*, *Pinus* 'Bristlecone', *Rosa glauca*, *Spiraea japonica* 'Goldflame', 'Goldmound' and 'Anthony Waterer', *Rosa* 'Morden Blush', *Magnolia virginiana*, *Magnolia* 'Susan'



The plant selections serve the wind-break purpose well, and as a bonus, provide seasonal weeks of enjoyment. In Spring, new foliage in fresh versions of green, flowers in whites and pinks augment the ornamental flowering trees of the upper storey above and behind on the slope. In Fall, vivid shades of red, yellow and orange flood the slope for a few weeks.

Rhododendrons, approximately thirty, now protected from powerful natural elements, spread through the middle storey beneath the deciduous trees.



Always, the very best thing you can do when dreaming and planning your garden is to study and research.

Examine the natural conditions that will affect your living design; consider soil, sun, shade, wind, and moisture available. Continue learning about plants.

*Knowledge of a plant's growing requirements is fundamental to successful design.*

According to Joseph Hudak, in his book *Design for Gardens*,

*"[a] unified garden is one that suggests a single, coherent unit, whereby the various parts and colours in a composition have pleasurably blended into an agreeable and satisfactory statement of purpose. It promotes repose and serenity to an observer and is the most prized landscape quality because it shows the truest design artistry."*

### PLANTS FOR THE CVRS PLANT SALE

*It is that time of the year again, when we are asking for interesting and unique plant divisions from your gardens.*

**Small groups of individuals from the Propagating Club are willing to come to your gardens this month to dig, divide, and pot up plants that you may be willing to share but find the task too onerous to complete on your own.**

**Simply contact one of the Executive to arrange a suitable day!**



# Winter Interest Plants

## Companion Plants for February

~ Ali Morris ~

When my husband and I first moved to the Cowichan Valley 25 years ago, I told him that my dream was to have a four seasons garden. At that time, Anna's Hummingbirds were just beginning to move up the Island. What a delightful surprise it was, when after two years, I spotted my first hummingbird feeding at one of my Winter interest shrubs.



Anna's Hummingbird appreciates gardens with winter flowering shrubs such as *Mahonia x media* 'Charity', its name deriving from the story that the hybrid had been donated.

*Mahonia x media* 'Charity' is one of the first winter flowering shrubs to bloom in my garden, beginning as early as December. It is a strong grower and best placed in dry shade but is adaptable to almost any location. Importantly, it does not seed nor send runners, and therefore, is most cooperative in the garden.

In the summer, it produces lovely blue berries that can be used to make a jam that is rich in antioxidants.



I have learned that most winter blooming shrubs produce small flowers but do reward gardeners with some fabulous fragrance to attract pollinators and nectar loving birds.

Where we live, on Vancouver Island, we have many attractive choices.



*Hamamelis mollis*

*Hamamelis mollis*, commonly known as Chinese Witch Hazel, is often in bloom at Christmas. This one is a dramatic pale yellow that leaps out in the garden.

*Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Diane', another in my garden, has cheerful orange-red blossoms and begins to bloom later than *Hamamelis mollis*.

*Hamamelis* faithfully gift winter gardens with intoxicating fragrance. Brightly coloured blossoms last a long time. Admirably tough, these trees were not fazed by the recent two weeks of frost and snow.

In Fall it displays gorgeous golden foliage.

*Sarcococca hookeriana*, Sweet boxwood, is an evergreen shrub with tiny white scented flowers in the leaf axils in the winter. It easily makes up for tiny flowers with its handsome forest green foliage and tantalizing fragrance. Black fruit follows.

Different cultivars are available; several are stoloniferous and will form a non-invasive ground cover. It is hardy in Zones 6 – 9, is best grown in shade, and responds well to pruning.

I grow several *Sarcococca* in my garden, but the one I enjoy the most is in a pot near my front door.



*Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Jelena'





*Viburnum bodnantense* 'Pink Dawn', as its name indicates, has fragrant pink flower clusters on bare wood. Although the flowers may freeze in a cold snap, new buds will open again as temperatures rise.

It is a multi-season deciduous beauty, with cinnamon coloured bark and scented foliage.

It seems that deer tend to choose other plants on the menu.



This little beauty, *Olsynium douglasii*, pushed its head up after the snow was gone, perhaps checking the weather. Satin Flower, native to Vancouver Island, blooms from mid-February to April; it is often found on south facing slopes

*Galanthus* is a small genus of approximately 20 species of bulbous perennial herbaceous plants. Several are rare, but any of these wary birds are welcome in the early Spring garden.

For best results, Snowdrops are best transplanted after flowering when the foliage is still green.

Every garden should have drifts of *Galanthus*. If yours does not yet have these stars, speak with your gardening friends – they'll be happy to share some starters.



*All my winter plants give me a lot of pleasure.*

*Enjoy,*

*Ali*



# OPPORTUNITIES

**VANCOUVER ISLAND ROCK & ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY**

## **VIRAGS ANNUAL SPRING SHOW & SALE 2022**

**APRIL 1st 1-8PM & APRIL 2nd 1-5PM**

**MARY WINSPEAR CENTER, SIDNEY, BC**



**Entry by donation**

- **Plant Show and Sale**
- **Silent Auction and Door Prizes**
- **Tea and Lunches Available**
- **Crevice Garden Demon (April 1, 2-5pm)**

**Info @ [virags.com/the-spring-show](https://virags.com/the-spring-show)**

## **Welcome to the 2022 ARS Spring International Convention**

**Hosted by the chapters of ARS District 4**

**Portland – Tualatin Valley – Eugene – Willamette – Siuslaw**

After a two-year delay of our scheduled 75th Anniversary celebration, we're excited to announce a reunion of the ARS in its founding city, Portland, Oregon.

Here you will find all elements of the planned 2020 convention, including information about the Pre-Tour (May 2-3) and Post-Tour (May 8-10), while including even more enhancements to the original features.

**ARS 2022 Registration opening Wednesday, December 1, 2021**

***[ars2022.org](https://ars2022.org)***



**2021 – 2022**  
**Calendar of Events**

Contact CVRS:

cowichanvalleyrhododendron@gmail.com

Wednesday, February 2, 2022 7pm  
CVRS Monthly Meeting  
Expert Panel: Sean Rafferty, Ken Webb, Garth Wedemire

Monday February 7, 2022 7:15  
VRS Guest Speaker: Jeff de Jong  
*"The Garden in a Changing World"*

Thursday, February 10, 2022 7:30pm  
NRS Guest Speaker: Jo-Ann Canning  
*"Bulbs in the Rhododendron Garden"*

Tuesday, February 8, 2022 6:30 pm  
Willamette Chapter Presentation: Win Howe

**NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY EVENTS**

**May 4 - 8, 2022**

**ARS Annual Convention, Portland, Oregon** More information <https://ars2022.org/>

**2022:**

**ARS Fall Eastern Regional Conference, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Dates to be determined.**

**2023:**

**ARS Fall Western Regional Conference, Florence, Oregon. Dates to be determined.**

**2023:**

**ARS Annual Convention, Atlanta, Georgia. Joint ARS/ASA meeting. Dates to be determined**



## USEFUL LINKS

**Cowichan Rhododendron Society:**

[cowichanrhodos.ca/](http://cowichanrhodos.ca/)

**Victoria Rhododendron Society:**

[victoriarhodo.ca/index.html](http://victoriarhodo.ca/index.html)

**Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society:**

[marsrhodos.ca/](http://marsrhodos.ca/)

**North Island Rhododendron Society:**

[nirsrhodos.ca/ws/](http://nirsrhodos.ca/ws/)

**The American Rhododendron Society:**

[rhododendron.org/](http://rhododendron.org/)

**Nanaimo Rhododendron Society:**

[nanaimorhodos.ca](http://nanaimorhodos.ca)

**Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden:**

[rhodygarden.org](http://rhodygarden.org)

**Nanoose Garden Club:**

[nanoosegardenclub.ca/](http://nanoosegardenclub.ca/)

**Linda Gilkeson:**

[lindagilkeson.ca/](http://lindagilkeson.ca/)

**Vancouver Island Rock and Garden Society:**

[virags.com](http://virags.com)

**Linda Chalker-Scott:**

<https://puyallup.wsu.edu/lcs/>

**Steve Henning:**

[rhodyman.net](http://rhodyman.net)

**Rhododendron, Camellia, Magnolia**

<https://www.rhodogroup-rhs.org/>



**Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society**

A Chapter of the American  
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Duncan, British Columbia V9L 3Y2

<http://cowichanrhodos.ca>

### 2020-21 Executive

**President:** Verna Buhler  
**Vice-President:** Ali Morris  
**Treasurer:** Wendy Willson  
**Secretary:** Diane Allen  
**Director-at-Large:** Barrie Agar  
**Director-at-Large:** Candice Feeney  
**Director-at-Large:** Carrie Nelson  
**Director-at Large:** Mary Pike  
**Membership Chairperson:** David Annis

### Convenors

**Sunshine:** Mary Gale  
**Tea:** Judeen Hendrickson  
**Raffle:** Hilda Gerrits  
**Program Planning:** The Executive Team  
**Fundraising:** The Executive Team  
**CVRS Garden Tours:** Candice Feeney  
**CVRS Bus Tours:** TBA  
**Library:** Verna Buhler  
**Newsletter Editor:** Verna Buhler