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## Newsletter of the Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden Society



Photos by Heather Vince, Mary Blockberger, Sean Harper

**NEW LIFE AT THE GARDEN:** The spring blossoms throughout the Rhododendron Walk (happy hellebores, masses of snowdrops and cheery cyclamen) are vibrant even on a grey day, the witch hazel in the Terrace Garden is looking spectacular at this time of year, and this big old barred owl has been a regular visitor lately.

# Time to Revisit the Master Plan

Ten years ago, we created a Master Plan for the Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden. The plan took a couple of years to create and has guided the development of the Garden since that time. When we look at that plan, we can see how much has changed in the last ten years. We've accomplished many of the things set out in the plan: the new entry to the Garden, the Mountainside Habitat (that at the time we called the Mt. Elphinstone Garden), the Cascadia Garden, which is still being developed, and of course, the beautiful pathways that wander in the most purposeful way to connect visitors to these garden areas.

We also see what we've set aside, the things we didn't anticipate, such as the more dramatic weather events that are brought on by our changing climate. When the plan was created, we weren't thinking as

deeply about our role in creating spaces for biodiversity to flourish nor about how we could have a critical impact on helping preserve vulnerable ecosystems through propagating species native to this area.

This year, we are embarking on a review and overhaul of our original Master Plan. It's time to discard, update and chart a path forward for the next ten years, bringing into focus all we have learned in the past ten years. The work will be challenging as we let go of some cherished ideas that may no longer be relevant, and exciting, as we consider possibilities that we couldn't imagine back then. Over the course of the next year, we will be inviting members, volunteers and visitors to share their responses to our emerging visions and help us shape this Garden's future.

— Jean Bennett, Botanical Garden President

## President's Message

If you haven't been up to the Garden recently, it's definitely worth the trip to see the masses of snowdrops that are blooming along the Rhododendron Walk. They are such a spectacular harbinger of spring, which is on its way despite some pretty cold days.

The winter vegetables in my own garden made it through the freezing weather with the assistance of some good mulch and a few days under tarps. I look forward to harvesting my winter cauliflower and leeks in a month or two. In the last few years, I've been growing more winter veggies as I don't have to worry as much about pests or drought. To that end, we have a couple of workshops coming up to help you with managing the impacts of our changing climate and getting healthy seedlings started for your own garden. These workshops are a great source of information with knowledgeable presenters who are experienced in dealing with our coastal conditions. You can find more information elsewhere in this issue of *Salal*.

Those who are regular visitors to the Garden will have seen the work to build the base for our new greenhouse that will house our propagation program. While we had planned originally to reuse the old hoop house for this purpose, research by our gardeners revealed that purchasing new would be more cost effective and more stable in the long run. We're anticipating that the greenhouse will be up by the end of March, then Sean, Nola and Rob, our gardening staff, will start getting it ready to receive seedlings. It's a very exciting project for the Garden, and thanks to generous donations, we can do this sooner than anticipated. Oh, and the old hoop house will still find its place somewhere as our commitment is always to reuse where we can.

In February, we said goodbye to Sue Chipman, who has decided to step down from the Board to pursue other interests. We will miss her buoyant energy and ready smile; however, she has promised that she won't be a stranger to the Garden. Thank you for your support of the Garden, Sue.

Hope to see you in the Garden!

— Jean Bennett, Botanical Garden President



## Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden

### Salal Newsletter

**EDITOR & DESIGN:** Heather Till

**EDITORIAL TEAM:** Mary Blockberger, Rosemary Bates Terry, Paddy Wales

**CONTRIBUTORS:**

Jean Bennett, Susan Box, Steve Clifford, Allison Forbes, Robert Haines, Sean Harper, June Meyer, Heather Vince

Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden Society  
P.O. Box 1518, Sechelt, BC V0N 3A0

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Heather Till: [till@dccnet.com](mailto:till@dccnet.com)

*The Garden acknowledges its responsibilities as an occupant of this land in the swiya of the shíshálh people. We pledge to treat this land with respect and welcome all to share in our journey of learning and knowledge sharing.*

### Board of Directors

**President:** Jean Bennett

**Vice-President:** Cathy Hallam

**Treasurer:** Will Heerschop

**Directors-at-Large:** Joyce Gould, Douglas Justice, Rosemary Bates Terry, Paddy Wales

Contact any of the above by email:  
[info@coastbotanicalgarden.org](mailto:info@coastbotanicalgarden.org)



Photo from *Salal* Volume 7, Issue 4, August 2009

The old hoop house as it stood in 2009 at the northwest corner of the Garden. In May of that year, 24 kids, leaders and parents from the 1st Gibsons Scout group worked with Botanical Garden volunteers to haul away junk, chop blackberries, and sort old pots for reuse.

### OCTOBER TO APRIL

Open Friday - Monday

11 am - 4 pm

Closed Tues, Wed, Thurs

### MAY TO SEPTEMBER

Open Friday - Tuesday

11 am - 4 pm

Closed Wed & Thurs



## Garden Goings On

Spring is just around the corner, and we're seeing signs of its impending arrival throughout the Garden. It seems that every day, a new plant is nudging its way through the soil in its quest for light. Leaf buds on trees are beginning to swell, and the frogs and salamanders have been busy laying eggs in our ponds. This is the time of year when we see the most dramatic changes from week to week, and even day to day.

Our Programming Committee has been hard at work lining up educational events. In fact, we have two of these coming up in the next couple of weeks.

Drought & Deluge is your chance to learn how to prepare for the effects climate change is having on all of our gardens. Paddy Wales and Sheila Watkins bring their decades of experience to this presentation on March 9 and will share the tips they have used to deal with both heavier rains and a longer dry season.

Mel Sylvestre from Grounded Acres Organic Farm will help you get a jump start on your food gardens when she shares her knowledge of starting vegetables from seed.



What to plant? When to plant? How to plant? Join us March 16 at 1 pm to find out.

We kicked off our 2024 programs with a return of our popular Pruning Workshop. As always, Cheryl Topping provided a knowledgeable and humour filled afternoon. We are so grateful for her expertise.

Kelly and Dale from RR7 Farmstead helped staff and volunteers prepare and inoculate some alder logs with golden oyster mushrooms. Watch for the unveiling of this feature in late summer or early fall. A fall workshop will offer you the opportunity to create your own mushroom garden. Details will be announced in late summer.

The Potting-Up Team is back at work tending a huge assortment of plants that will be available at our Plant Sale on May 5. Mark your calendars to stock up on some great garden additions.

In my opinion, and I may be a bit biased, the Garden in spring is breathtakingly beautiful. I do hope you have a chance to visit soon.

– *Mary Blockberger, Garden Manager*

## Upcoming Events

### Drought & Deluge

**Saturday, March 9, 1 - 2:30 pm**

*Experienced gardeners Paddy Wales and Sheila Watkins will share their tips for creating and maintaining a garden that is tolerant of extreme weather conditions. Learn about the benefits of long grasses and ground covers for moisture retention, various varieties of do-it-yourself mulches to add nutrients, how to direct water flow, and more. Seating is first come, first served. Admission by donation. Suggested amount \$10-15. Cash at the door.*



### Seed Starting: Jump Start Your Food Garden

**Saturday, March 16  
1 - 2:30 pm**

*Join us for an informative session on seed starting vegetable crops presented by Mel Sylvestre of Grounded Acres Organic Farm. Mel will share info and tips that*

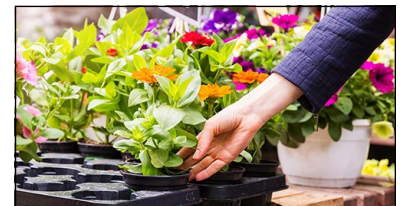


*you can take away to implement in your garden. She'll touch on what can be grown successfully in our Sunshine Coast climate, the correct timing for indoor starting and outdoor direct sowing, optimum soil conditions, the best tools to use, and recommended fertilizers. Admission: Members \$10; Non-Members \$15*

### Plant Sale

**Sunday, May 5  
10 am - 1 pm**

*Our Potting-Up Team has been working hard in preparation for this year's giant annual Plant Sale, with an excellent selection of plants, shrubs and trees, including new additions from the Garden's own Plant Propagation Group. Bring along a box or cart to carry your treasures. Please park in the main parking lot while you're shopping. There will be a loading zone set up close to the sale area for purchase pick up. Cash, cheque, Visa, and MasterCard accepted.*



### Fiesta Botánica: The Garden's Summer Fundraiser

**SAVE THE DATE: August 7**

*Watch for details to come!*



## Notes from the Development Officer

2024 is wasting no time moving along, yet it feels like we just finished packing away all the holiday décor. Were you able to visit the Pavilion in December? If so, you would have seen the magical woodland treatment created by our talented decorating volunteers.

**Holiday Campaign:** This past holiday season, we put a different spin on our year-end holiday campaign; instead of a simple request for support, we wanted to inspire the generosity of our donors. We took the opportunity to celebrate our incredibly hardworking volunteers and the impact of the work they do for the Garden; we wanted to educate donors about the *Salix scouleriana* (Scouler's willow) – a workhorse plant species that doesn't get nearly enough credit; and we wanted to showcase the various species of life that are supported here at the Garden. It seems that it worked: despite the impacts of rising costs on wallets, our donors responded. And to top it off, an anonymous donor came forward with an offer to match all gifts, and we were able to bring our total raised to over \$60,000! THANK YOU to all who gave!

**Tax Receipts:** It's getting close to tax time, and all official donation receipts have been sent out by email – if you haven't received yours, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

**Fund Development:** Our Fund Development team has

regrouped to discuss this year's fundraising and community initiatives, including our big summer party and other exciting plans. As always, members are first to know about the Garden's goings-on, so stay tuned for more details. We are always in need of volunteers, so if you think you'd like to help us out with events (or in other areas), we would love to hear from you. Get in touch by email: [info@coastbotanicalgarden.org](mailto:info@coastbotanicalgarden.org) or give us a call: 604-740-3969.

**Thank You Supporters!** We are fortunate to have volunteers and members who have been with the Garden for much of its history, and they are in a unique position: Not only have they witnessed the Garden's transformation, they have been essential to it. Many of our Perennial Friends are the same, and we are so grateful. Perennial Friends are donors who have opted to spread their financial gift to the Garden into smaller monthly contributions. These stable and predictable funds allow us to plan ahead and spend responsibly for the ongoing essentials to keep the Garden open and available to our members and the community. If you would like to support the Garden in this meaningful way, we would be delighted. Please connect with me at [development@coastbotanicalgarden.org](mailto:development@coastbotanicalgarden.org) or by phone at 604-740-3969.

– Heather Vince, Development Officer

## Learning Experiences at the Garden



Photos by Heather Vince

In February, Kelly and Dale (pictured) from RR7 Farmstead helped Garden staff and volunteers prepare and inoculate alder logs with golden oyster mushrooms. A fall workshop will offer the public the opportunity to create their own mushroom garden. Watch for details to come. Also in February, Cheryl Topping held a well-attended Pruning Workshop at the Garden, sharing her knowledge, expertise, and humour.

## Update from the Potting-Up Team

Last year was a substantial year for the Botanical Garden's plant sales (affectionately called The Bot Shop). After 20-plus years of guidance and nurturing, Karin Tigges retired as Potting-Up Team lead. Karin was a founding member and was instrumental in making us what we are today. Kudos to her. I took over the reins in June of 2023, and will do my best to maintain Karin's level of excellence as I navigate our group through what I see is the next period of substantial growth.

Not only do our plant sales financially support the Garden, but I also see them as an integral part of the Garden's mission to engage the community in plant appreciation and act as a catalyst for learning, conservation, and land stewardship.

We have always relied heavily on plant donations from our volunteers and you, our supporters. Recently, the Garden's Plant Propagation Group also made their first contribution. Given the growing interest in and importance of native plants, I see them as invaluable additions to our offerings. We've also seen a substantial increase in donations from businesses, namely Rona and Southland's Nursery. The calibre and quantity of their contributions has been phenomenal. I'm extremely excited about what we will be able to offer at our plant sale this coming May 5.

Now more than ever, we garden in difficult times. Climate change issues aside, the headwinds our economy has faced over the past few years have been substantial. I don't think it is unreasonable to say that retail horticulture



Photo by Heather Till

*After more than 20 years as lead of the Potting-Up Team, Karin Tigges passed the reins to Allison Forbes in June 2023.*

has seen inflation rates in excess of 20 per cent per year. But for many reasons, I also don't see plants as a luxury – in a way, they are a necessity. It's important to me that what we offer is affordable and encourages you to try growing a variety of plants. For this reason, we will be reducing our prices to make our plants more accessible. But since we are also tasked with financially supporting the Botanical Garden, now more than ever, your plant donations are needed to make up the shortfall.

*– Allison Forbes, Potting-Up Team Lead*

## Preparations Underway for Plant Sale in May



### **DONATED PLANTS WELCOMED NOW AT THE GARDEN**

**Friday to Monday, 11 am to 4 pm at the Pavilion  
Tuesdays, 1 pm to 3 pm at the plant sale area**

*Plants are identified and potted by our group of Master Gardeners,  
then sold to the public at our Plant Sales.*

**100% of your donation goes to support the Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden.**

 **Sunshine Coast  
Botanical Garden**

**Plant Sale**  
**Sunday, May 5**  
**10 am to 1 pm**



Photo by R. Tingman, Spirithouse Gardens

## Dry-Shade Tolerant Plants Available at the Plant Sale

With each passing year, we are increasingly being asked about plants that are drought tolerant – especially those that will grow under cedar trees. Although extremely few plants can grow in complete shade, if there is at least indirect or filtered sun, consider growing the following:

*Clethra alnifolia* (sweet pepperbush) is a versatile shrub typically growing 6' with tiny, white blooms in July and August. Dark green leaves turn a bright yellow in fall. Flowers are borne for 4-6 weeks and are very attractive to butterflies and bees. It is also good for wet locations or for retaining slopes given its colonizing growth pattern.



*Epimedium x versicolor* 'Sulphureum' (bishop's hat) is an evergreen groundcover growing 18" with short-spurred yellow flowers that bloom above the leaves. If given enough sun, leaves turn brilliant red in fall. If growth is removed in winter, newly emerging heart-shaped green leaves edged in red

are easily seen. Spreads slowly by rhizomes to create a weed-suppressing mound. We also have *E. Lilafee* which is a deciduous and grows 12" with light purple flowers. Leaf behaviour mimics *Sulphureum*.

*Athyrium niponicum* (Japanese painted fern) is a deciduous fern growing 18" and features slowly spreading triangular fronds. Fronds are grayish green with an overlay of silvery hues accented with contrasting dark maroon midribs. Although drought resistant, it does need water until established.



*Bergenia* (pigsqueak) is an extremely versatile, evergreen groundcover which can grow anywhere but bog (that is debatable) or hot/full-sun conditions. It has rounded, dark green leaves (8" w x 10" l) which turn red in winter under ideal conditions. Leaves spread slowly, forming a weed-suppressing mat, 12" high,

which produces pink flowers in April to May. The Bot Shop also offers B. 'Snow Chimes' with narrower leaves and white flowers. Although leaves are deer resistant, the flowers are not.

*Brunnera* (Siberian bugloss) is a deciduous clumping perennial not often included in dry-shade plant lists, but in my experience, it does surprisingly well under my cedar trees, even the variegated varieties. There are many cultivars of *Brunnera*. The Bot Shop currently has B. 'Looking Glass' which produces blue, forget-me-not-shaped flowers in early spring to a height of 20".



*Geranium macrorrhizum* (cranesbill) is semi-evergreen groundcover, 18" high, which has 1.5" purple-pink flowers from May through June. Leaves may turn red in fall under ideal conditions. It spreads quickly through rhizomes but is easily controlled by gently pulling wayward branches.

*Polygonatum* (Solomon's seal) is an upright, arching perennial that grows 1' to 4' depending on the variety. Pairs of small, bell-shaped, white flowers appear in late spring, dangling along and underneath the usually arching stems. There are several "collector" varieties currently available at The Bot Shop. Although pest free, it benefits from a little slug deterrent when emerging in the spring.



*Convallaria majalis* (lily of the valley) is a 10", deciduous groundcover producing very fragrant white flowers in April. Under optimum conditions, orange berries follow, persisting into fall. It has received the Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. But it is best left in drier conditions

given its vigorous tendencies. It can go summer-dormant in severe drought conditions. It also tolerates heavy clay.

With all the above plants, the more filtered sun that can be provided, the better the plant's features. But all are very hardy and are considered disease and pest free. Except for bergenia flowers, mine have also proved deer resistant.

I encourage you to visit The Bot Shop early at our annual plant sale on May 5 for the best selection of these and other plants. Knowledgeable volunteers with years of experience will be available to answer your gardening questions.

– Allison Forbes, Potting-Up Team Lead

## The Buzz About Bees

Seems there's nothing but good news for Coast Beekeepers. 2023 was a wonderful year for honey production, and I'm sure that has contributed to our bees being in exceptional shape this spring. Normal winter losses are generally high across North America these days, and certainly worse in the colder climates.

Our Sunshine Coast Bee Club held its first meeting of the year at the Botanical Garden on February 16, and as you can see by the pictures, the Club hives are in great condition. This will result in fewer expensive bee imports and more local bees for sale.

Our club holds regular meetings at our apiary in the Botanical Garden, which we are so grateful to be able to use. For information on the Sunshine Coast Bee Club or upcoming beekeeping courses at the Botanical Garden bee yard, email [cliffordsteve5@gmail.com](mailto:cliffordsteve5@gmail.com)

– Steve Clifford, president  
Sunshine Coast Beekeepers Association



Photo by Robert Haines

The bees at the Botanical Garden had an excellent year, and the hives are in great condition.

## Children's Corner

### Let's Discover Birds

It's almost spring, and the birds are coming back. Outside in my garden, the birds come flying into the trees and bushes when they see me open the drapes. They know what is going to happen. Quickly I pick up my bird feeders, which are filled with tiny chips of sunflower seeds, and go out to hang them on branches. The bird bath is filled daily with warm water so the birds can enjoy a drink and sometimes they dip in to have a quick bath. The hummingbird feeder is filled with sweet nectar and placed nearby the bird feeders.

There are little birds, medium-sized and big birds all fluttering around. The tiniest ones are the hummingbirds and chickadees who have black heads and bright tiny eyes. Soon I see the red-breasted nuthatch with blue wing feathers. Can you guess why he has that name? There are so many birds with black heads and dark eyes who flutter around the shrubbery. These are the juncos, and they stay in my garden for the winter time. Last year they came on April 22 and left on



Photo by Jess Findlay from birdatlas.bc.ca

*Stellar's jays are cheeky birds. They are curious and noisy and often have a lot to say.*

September 17. You can keep a record of when birds come and go, too.

There are some birds that look very similar with dark brown and light brown plumage, and they belong to the sparrow family. The ones that visit me are the fox sparrow, golden-crowned sparrow, white-crowned sparrow and the song sparrow.

The most colourful birds here all year include the varied thrush and the towhee that have beautiful orange, white and black

plumage. A special bird is the Stellar's jay. This bird is named the provincial bird for our province of BC.

The big, black birds that pass overhead making a very loud sound are the crows. They caw and caw and caw! Yet the very quiet large bird that flies over the ocean is the majestic eagle. Sometimes they perch on a tall tree near my house, and I whistle to them as I pass by. Gulls are often together as they fly over the ocean, swooping and soaring above the waves.

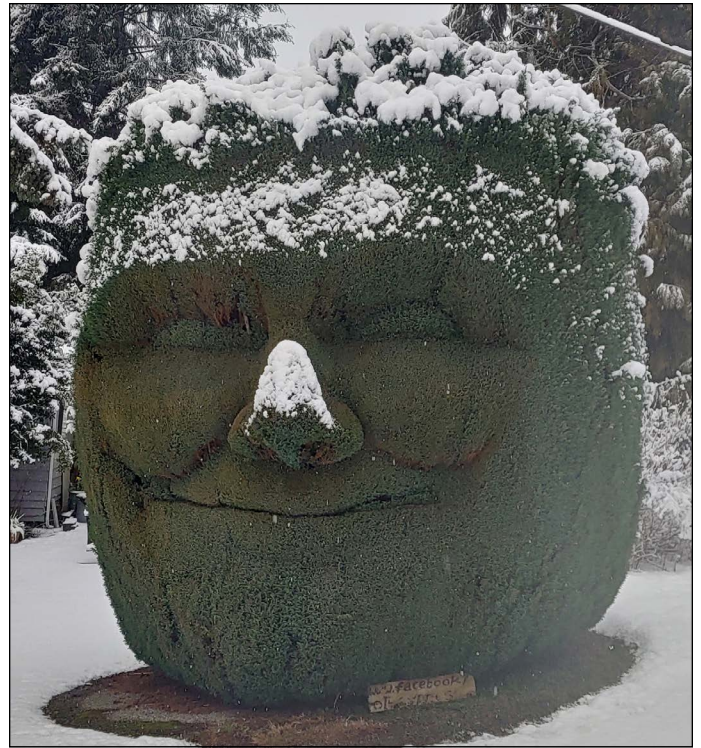
There are special places to visit and observe birds. The Sechelt Marsh has so many huge Canada geese, mallard ducks and pigeons that will follow you if you have some bird seed to toss on the paths. Visit the Botanical Garden and look for the tall heron that stands by a pond waiting to catch a fish. Sit quietly on one of the benches and listen for any bird songs.

Why not keep a record of all the birds you see? Maybe you could draw a picture of some birds, too.

– Grandma June Meyer



## Meet Oles, Friendly Roberts Creek Topiary



Photos provided by Susan Box

*Oles wears his serene smile in all weather.*

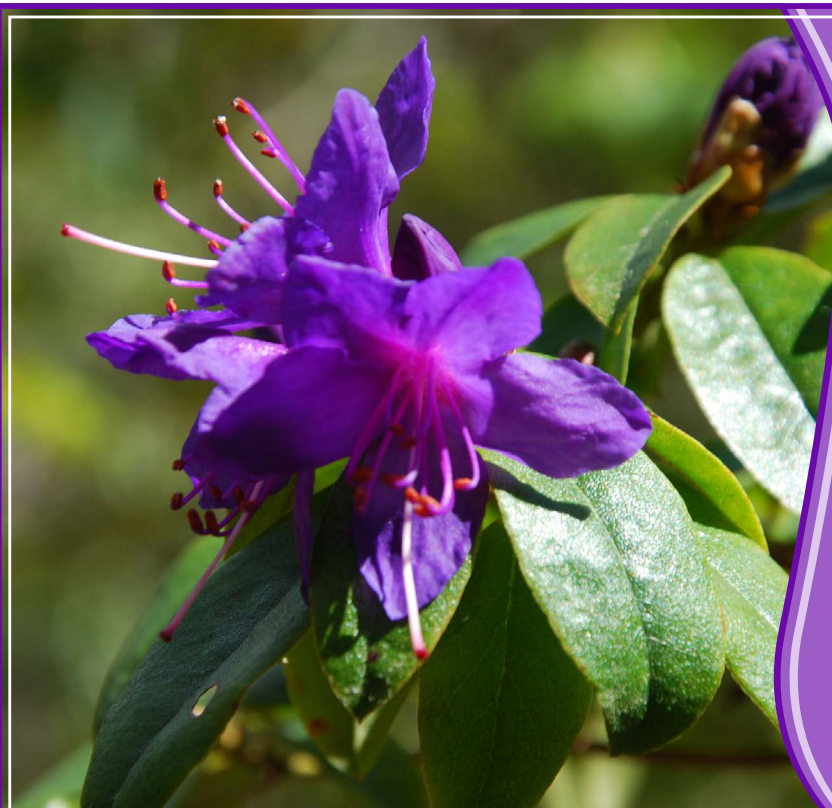
Susan Box, former gardener at the Botanical Garden, has created a captivating landmark at her home in Roberts Creek.

Susan says, "I have been developing my topiary sculpture since 2010, when I

looked at the topped Italian cypress at the end of my driveway and saw a small bump that would become Oles' nose. I shear him once a year in the fall, using both power and hand shears. He is 12 feet tall. Over

the years with every trim I have improved and enlarged his smile."

Susan has a background in both fine arts and horticulture, an ideal combination of skills for crafting massive living sculptures.



### Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden

**Winter Hours** (October to April)  
Friday to Monday ~ 11 am - 4 pm  
Closed Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday

**Summer Hours** (May to September)  
Friday to Tuesday ~ 11 am - 4 pm  
Closed Wednesday & Thursday

5941 Mason Road, Sechelt

• 604-740-3969 •

[www.coastbotanicalgarden.org](http://www.coastbotanicalgarden.org)

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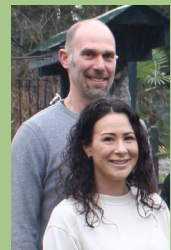
## Sunshine Coast Nursery Opening March 5

The Nursery has been bustling the past few months with new owners Brenda and Steve Reed working alongside building contractors and crew, growers and suppliers, and a host of staff in preparation for their opening date of March 5. Major renovations have taken place, new stock is arriving daily, and the team is excited to welcome back old and new gardening enthusiasts.

Manager Cheryl Topping, on staff since 2006, is keeping things running smoothly, and the knowledgeable team of experienced staff members has been retained.

Brenda says, "We really wanted to keep the same energy the Nursery has. It's what makes it special and why we love it. The staff is what truly makes the place, and they are all returning." A farm to table appreciation dinner was held Feb. 27 for staff and builders.

The Nursery was first built in 1986, and the Reeds have accomplished an extensive revitalization since they took over in December of last year. Brenda says, "I'm really pleased. This has been a huge undertaking, and we're going to make it happen!"



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Pruning Workshop - March 16

Tree and Shrub Planting Workshop - March 30



New owners Brenda and Steve Reed are pleased to welcome you.

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Brenda and Steve Reed, new owners of Sunshine Coast Nursery (at left), with their experienced, friendly staff: Anna Heilig, Kim Bower, Joyce Fundytus, Alan Ireland, Karen Buckley, and manager Cheryl Topping (in the pot).



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