



# THE CARY BULLETIN

## THE FRIENDS OF GOVERNMENT HOUSE GARDENS SOCIETY

<http://fghgs.com>

Since 1993

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### Introducing the New Friends President: Elspeth Westby



Elspeth Westby has been a member of the Board since 2021 and joined as a Pearkes Peak gardener in March of 2019.

Having spent her early years in Kamloops and Victoria, Elspeth attended the University of Victoria and then travelled to Europe for six months. Upon her return she married, started a family, and moved to Prince Rupert. Her husband's teaching career then brought them to Chilliwack and while raising their two daughters, Elspeth continued her education in career development. She was a career counsellor for students in the Chilliwack School District, members of the local First Nation Bands, and attendees at Adult Education Centres and at New Westminster Employment Programs with Fraserside Community Services.

Continuing her person-centered professional development, she attended Langara College for Integrative Energy Healing and Trauma Therapy.

Elspeth and her husband built their retirement home on Mayne Island where they lived for 26 years, volunteering in the boating community and at the Japanese Memorial Gardens. She was also Mayne Island's Deputy Leader for the Emergency Services Neighbourhood Program. After relocating to Victoria, Elspeth and her husband volunteered with the Friends gardening in Pearkes Peak. In 2021, she was asked to join the Friends' Board."

*"Let us be grateful to people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom."*

*- Marcel Proust*

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Cut Flower	Terry Hanak
Dogwood Azalea Walk	Carol Dancer
English Country	Raynette North
Floral Designers	Liz Thompson
Friendship	Carol Dancer
Herb	Nancy Murray
Iris (Thursday)	Carol Dancer
Nursery	Caroline Dabrus
Pearkes Peake	Sharon Vermaning
Pool	Heather Macleod Clark
Rock and Alpine	Laraine Fowler
Rockland Border 1	Kate Cino
Rockland Border 11	Alex Muir
Rotary International Garden of Friendship	Susan Penner-Davis
Sunken Rose	Nancy Chu
The Terraces	Laura West (Tuesday) Caelin Rose (Thursday)
Vegetable	Mary Cake
Victoria Rose	Vaughn Edwards
Winter	Carol Dancer
Woodlands (Tuesday)	Dave Clark/Janet Renouf
Woodlands (Thursday)	Rosemary Balfour

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Greeters	Patti Shaughnessy
House Archives	Caroline Duncan
In-House Floral Designers	Audrey Van Osterhout
Tea Room	Sheila Connelly
Website	Eleanor Wallace



## Tools Up!

It was another great Tools Up to welcome volunteers back to a season of welcoming visitors to the beautiful grounds and attractions.

Chef Aleks and his crew outdid themselves once again with delicious offerings.

It was also an opportunity for many of the Friends to meet Her Honour, who graciously stopped at every table to personally thank and meet the volunteers.







Dear Friends of Government House Gardens Society:

On behalf of Her Honour Wendy Cocchia, and our entire team at Government House, I extend our heartfelt thanks to each and every volunteer who gives their time, talent, and energy to this extraordinary place. Whether you're caring for the gardens, welcoming guests, arranging flowers, guiding tours, or supporting the tearoom, archives, museum, or events – your work is noticed and deeply appreciated.

A special thank you to all who joined us for the Annual "Tools Up" Spring Reception. It was Her Honour's first, and she thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to meet so many of you and to celebrate your dedication. She was also delighted to recently try the tearoom for the first time, explore the museum, and get a better sense of all the magic that happens here at Cary Castle.

This spring also marked a significant moment as Her Honour had the privilege of meeting His Majesty King Charles III, King of Canada, and Queen Camilla in Ottawa during their visit to deliver the Throne Speech. It was an honour to represent British Columbia and to share the important work being done by volunteers at Government House.

As we look ahead, we're excited for the upcoming Concert on the Lawn series and the ArtisTree Art Festival, two wonderful summer traditions that thrive thanks to your support. From event prep to greeting guests, your efforts make these community favourites truly special.

Thank you as well for your patience and cooperation during recent film productions. We recognize that these projects can create disruption, and we are grateful for your flexibility and continued support.

Every corner of the estate reflects your care: the gardens and woodlands are vibrant, the museum exhibits outstanding, and the Mews and tearoom are having a stellar year thanks to our warm and welcoming greeters and servers.

We'd like to acknowledge the tireless contributions of the Garden Management Board representatives, who work so thoughtfully and collaboratively with our staff and landscapers. A special nod to those who've helped restore and maintain our water features and ponds; your efforts are making a noticeable difference.

Behind the scenes, the archives team continues their quiet but essential work preserving our history, and of course, we are grateful to Liz Thompson and the floral team for the gorgeous weekly bouquets that brighten Government House and lift the spirits of all who visit.

Thank you, Friends, for all that you do. It is truly a privilege to work alongside you in the service of this historic estate and the people of British Columbia.

Jeremy Brownridge  
Private Secretary to the  
Lieutenant Governor



## Introducing your 2025 Board of Directors



*L-R: Lauren Hay, Barb Peterson, Valerie Murray, Brian Rogers, Patty Grant, Elspeth Westby, Deborah Shera, Sandra Fraser, Nancy Kostyrka, Thomas C. Esakin. Missing: Nairn Hollott*

## Another Great Season Ahead - Exciting Events, Gorgeous Gardens

**By Elspeth Westby, President**

After our AGM in early May, I became the President of the Friends. I'd like to thank **Patty Grant** for her recent term as president. I've asked **Deborah Shera** to be my vice-president. Deborah volunteers in the vegetable garden and brings to our board a wealth of experience. New to the Board this year is **Nancy Kostyrka** who will be the Director of Non-Gardening. Nancy works in a variety of roles from the Museum, Tea Room, to the House Archives, Coat Check and Ushering.

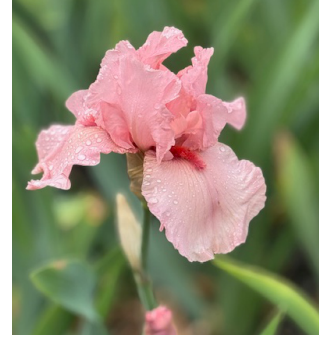
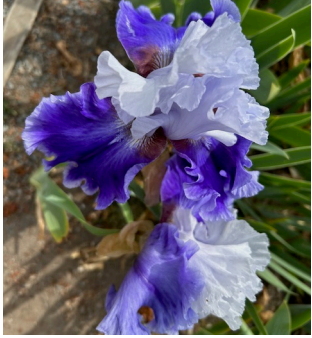
It has been a joy to watch the gardens bursting forth these past months. Every garden is just gorgeous at the moment. It's fun to walk around and listen to the camaraderie coming out of each and every garden on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. And now the **Museum** and **Tea Room** are open on Tuesday through Friday and will be until the end of August. Delicious items are available. All the volunteers within the Friends – both gardening and non-gardening volunteers - have been very busy. Your efforts are noticed and very much appreciated by everyone.

If you love roses, both the **Sunken Rose Garden** and the **Victoria Rose Garden** are now bursting forth with a profusion of blossoms – a photographer's paradise! Both the fountain in the Sunken Rose Garden and both fountains in the **Duck Pond** are flowing again thanks to two of our volunteers. There's nothing quite like the gentle sound of water to relax the soul as you walk by or stand and gaze.

An exciting new project is in the works. **The Tree Management Assessment Plan**, a legacy from former **LG Janet Austin**, has been produced and gives a very detailed report on the health of the trees on this Estate. The management plan provides the information we need to guide us forward for the sustainability of the grounds for the next 100 years. This is very much a work in progress and we look forward to hearing from the team as to how to proceed with suggested recommendations.

A pop-up by the **Operatic Society** is planned and **Concerts on the Lawn** by the band shell/orchard will be held Thursday evenings through July. And **ArtisTree** is again holding a two-day event at the end of July so stay tuned for that. I look forward to meeting you all at the gardens.





## Another Year of Spectacular Irises - Thanks Carol Dancer

The Iris Garden once again welcomed its usual crowd of visitors, all devoted fans of the tall bearded Iris which always display their flowers like the most colourful jewels. For a few short weeks they are the stars of the garden.

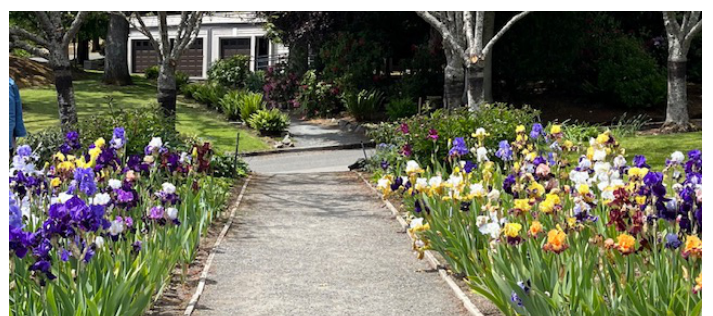
Our Iris Garden was the vision of one of the original volunteers. Joy Flint's passion was iris. She donated and planned the original iris garden. Over the years many new cultivars have been added to the collection creating all the colours of the rainbow.

In ancient times the Greeks associated the flowers of the iris with the goddess Iris, divine messenger and personification of the rainbow. She carried messages from the gods to us mortals using the rainbow as a bridge between heaven and earth. Through millennium, the iris has often appeared in religious art as a symbol of communication between the heaven and earth.

Bearded Iris are thought to have originated in Southern Europe and the Mediterranean region. It is a naturally occurring hybrid between *I. pallida* and *I. variegata* and scientifically is known as *Iris x Germanic's*, the x denoting a hybrid. It has been cultivated in European gardens since the Middle Ages. The French monarchy elevated the iris to royal status with the Fleur-de-lis and of course it appears on the flag of Quebec. Today there are literally thousands of iris cultivars grown all over the world. The root or rhizome is known for its floral scent and through the ages has been used to make perfume. Also in some cultures it is used in traditional medicine.

Bearded Iris grow and flower best in full sun and free-draining soil is essential. They grow from creeping rhizomes which need to be planted just below soil level. Planted any deeper and they will not flower to their full potential. To keep them in good health they need to be dug and divided every three to four years. In our iris garden we give them a balanced fertilizer in the early spring and keep the plants clean and weed free, a relatively easy care care perennial that the deer never touch.

Our bearded iris bed has finished flowering for this year but our Japanese iris are about to come into bloom. Again all the colours of the rainbow.





## First we fix the Sunken Garden Fountain.....



*Bryan Westby, Iain Hughes, overlooked by Lauren Hay.*



*Bryce Fleck approves the fountain repair done by volunteers Iain Hughes and Bryan Westby.*

## ...Then we get knee deep in the Duck Pond Fountain



*Having been successful with the Sunken Rose Garden Fountain, volunteers Bryan Westby and Iain Hughes were given permission to try and fix the fountains in the Duck Pond.*



The Friends of Government House Gardens Society is very lucky and very fortunate to have a wide variety of volunteer skills to call upon. In this case, two of our go-to handymen, Bryan Westby and Iain Hughes.

The boys got stuck in to address some much needed repairs on both our fountains, and even had time to do a quick glamour photo shoot. Handy *and* gorgeous - aren't we lucky!

*After a successful day, Iain poses as our own 'Little Merman'!*







## Our Most Senior Greeter - 100 Years Young

At 100 years old, Gerry Houlden holds the title of “vintage” volunteer for the Friends.

“I joined the Friends in November 2019 when my wife, Junine, got me started. We found a spot as Greeters which we enjoy and can do together,” says Gerry. “I also spend time at the downtown harbour Visitors Center as a member of Destination Greater Victoria. Meeting and helping tourists is very enjoyable.” He has volunteered extensively over the past 40 years.

Jerry was born on October 3, 1925, in South Burnaby, B.C. and attended school where Metrotown now stands. He enjoyed most sports and excelled in baseball and soccer. His first job was at the Vancouver CPR Depot Purchasing Dept. He ordered food from requisitions provided by the chief stewards of the B.C. Coast Steamships, now known as the C.P. Pacific Railway Coast Service. At age 18, he joined the Royal Canadian Navy for two-and-a-half

years during World War II. Following his discharge, Gerry worked for Chevron Canada for 38 years in locations throughout southern B.C. and Alberta.

During early retirement in Victoria, he joined a group of men and women to form a slow-pitch team that won gold medals in the first senior provincial tournament in Vernon in 1988.

“My first wife passed away after 41 years of marriage. I met and married Junine 35 years ago. We have three daughters, six grandchildren, and four great grandchildren,” says Gerry.

When asked his secret to longevity, Gerry says, “It seems I have been blessed with good genes. Exercise and a good diet are also important.”

## New This Year In the Veggie Garden

by Mary Cake

Always on the lookout for more delicious varieties that will thrive in our changing climate, we are trialing a citrusy cucumber named Mojito; a new green bean, and an Italian heirloom zucchini. We will have a whole row of cantaloupes, including a few “icebox” sized watermelons.

Our salad mix has been redesigned with new varieties of red and green lettuces. Instead of the more delicate baby lettuces, these new varieties will be mature at harvest giving us more flavour, be crunchier, and have a longer shelf life. Also, new this year, our lettuces will be growing on weed-suppressing paper mulch that gradually becomes soil by the end of season, reducing our use of plastics.

To increase production of our heat-seeking crops, we are growing tomatoes on red plastic mulch and squashes, cucumbers and melons on blue. These specific coloured plastics promise to suppress weeds and warm the soil better than black, and promote early growth and increase the number of fruit.

Also on show, is our just finished second quadrant of raised bed frames. The plan is to save our aging bodies from too much hands and knees weeding, and give us more space for crops.





## Thank You, Volunteers

One of the cakes brought to the Cottage by Tania and Ryan from the House. They dropped off 2 large cakes along with forks, napkins & plates at a coffee morning as a surprise thank you to the Friends in celebration of National Volunteer Week.

A shout out to those Friends that volunteered with the clean up!

*Photo by Victoria Craig*

## Did You Know...

...that the gardens that the current Friends volunteers maintain are much more extensive than the original gardens maintained by the original 17 gardeners? Since the Friends volunteers have come to the grounds the Friends have created Rockland One and Two, the Rotary Garden, the Terraces, the Victorian Rose Garden, the English Country Garden, the Iris, Dogwood Azalea Walk, the Heather garden, the Herb Garden and the expansion of the Rock and Alpine. Then there is the Nursery, the Vegetable Garden and Flower Arrangers Garden.

Full credit should go to the Friends volunteers for most of what visitors see when they visit us.

## Friends Enjoy Discounts at:

Borden Mercantile (Saanich)	10%
FGHGS Nursery	25%
Garden Works (Oak Bay & Saanich)	10%
Hilltop Nursery	15%
Home Hardware	10%
Seaberry Garden & Flower(Cook St. and Matticks Farm)	10%
Castle Building Centre (Cook St.)	10%

It never hurts to ask.....

If you receive a discount using your FGHGS membership somewhere not mentioned on this list, please let us know!

## Did You Know...

*June is named for Juno, Roman Queen of the gods, protector of love, marriage and motherhood.*

*One of the birth flowers associated with June is the Rose, appropriately named 'Queen of Flowers'.*

*A timeless symbol of love.*

## Volunteer Handbook Available online, and Board Meeting Minutes

Please note that we have updated our Volunteer Handbook, which can be located on our website [www.fghgs.ca](http://www.fghgs.ca).

To access the Handbook: Go into Members, Click on Members Only, Enter the password. Your group coordinator can give you the password for this section, or check in at the Cottage to pick it up.

You will also be able to view the most recent Board of Director Meeting Minutes.