

IN THE GARDEN



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Climbing hydrangea

Q: My climbing hydrangea has not flowered since we planted it three years ago. All I get is foliage.

SW: Is it getting enough sunlight? Too much shade can inhibit a plant's flowering. The other possible cause could be too much nitrogen. Are you using a fertilizer with a high nitrogen content? Pruning at the wrong time could also be a factor. I assume you are not pruning in early spring, which would remove the flower buds.

If all of the above are not applicable, try stressing your hydrangea a little by reducing watering and by pushing a spade around the root zone. You could also try fertilizing with a high phosphorus fertilizer to promote flower production.

Q: A friend in Abbotsford wants to grow a tree in a planter on his deck. The tree needs to be large enough to support a small bird feeder for bird watching. Do you think a Japanese maple would be suitable? Would it have to be wrapped in the fall? Would a ceramic, fiberglass or plastic pot be best? What would your choice of tree be?

SW: A Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*) is an excellent choice. There are many first-class cultivars such as 'Bloodgood', 'Sieryu' and 'Sango-Kaku'. But he should also consider a *Styrax japonica*, *Stewartia pseudocamellia* or *Cercis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy'.

In the winter, the container should be wrapped to protect the roots. A frost-proof container, perhaps ceramic, would be ideal.

Q: Can you recommend a CD that I can buy that would show me how to properly landscape our property?

SW: I don't know any instruction CDs on garden design. I'm thinking hard right now, but, nope, can't think of one. But I recommend you start by getting a detailed plan drawn up by a professional garden designer. I did a couple of podcasts on design and planting in my *How to Garden* series. You might find them helpful. They are available for free at www.vancouver.sun.com



Coral bark maple.

Check out Steve Whysall's new In My Garden podcast series and his In the Garden blog, both available at www.vancouver.sun.com.



Linda Poole, director of the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival, enjoys some fragrant blooms (above). *Prunus sargentii* 'Rancho' (left) flowers in mid-April.

Time to take in the cherry blossoms

STEVE WHYSALL
VANCOUVER SUN



It's time again to stop and appreciate cherry blossoms.

Have you seen any? No, me neither. But don't worry, we will see lots of blossoms very soon, even if this relentlessly cool weather has slowed things down a bit.

The month-long Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival, now in its fourth year, gets underway Saturday with the reading of winning haiku poems at the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra's Musically Speaking concert at the Orpheum.

These poems were submitted by people from all over the world.

Pearl Bird, an 11-year-old Winnipeg student, won in the best youth category with her entry:

*Late for school
cherry blossoms in the way
I can't get through
Jill Stanley, of Victoria, won the best B.C. entry with her lovely clipped image:*

*Just a petal
the mountain vanishes
into pink air*

Linda Poole, who started the festival in 2006 out of a desire



Prunus yeodoensis 'Somei-yoshino'.



'Kanzan' flowers from mid-April to mid-May.

to get people to stop and appreciate cherry blossoms, has been working frantically to raise money and get publicity for this year's event.

It's been a tough slog. The festival is a great idea, a gentle reminder of natural beauty, but there is even less



'Accolade' flowers in March.



'Shogetsu' flowers in late-April.

money available in this economy to support such a luxury.

To raise funds, the festival has published a great little cherry tree guide, written by Douglas Justice, of the University of B.C. Botanical Garden.

The guide sells for \$15 and contains excellent profiles of 35

new art, new music, new design, new cuisine, new crafts."

Designers at Bing Thom Architects, for instance, have come up with four special "haiku cherry trees" designed specifically as places to enjoy reading the poems.

These will be on show at the Orpheum concert as well as at VanDusen Botanical Garden Saturday and Sunday for Sakura Days, a celebration of cherry trees with various activities including a tea ceremony, sake tasting and plein-air painting.

On Tuesday, March 31, the festival will make a loud public proclamation with its annual Cherry Jam at Burrard Street SkyTrain station from noon to 1:30 with various musical acts.

On Sunday, April 5, from 2 to 3 p.m. winning haiku poems from last year's festival will be set to music by Leslie Uyeda at the Bloedel Conservatory in Queen Elizabeth Park.

And on April 18 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Slow Food Vancouver and Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition will team up to bike the cherry blossom routes with refueling stops at various eateries.

Maps will be provided. For more information on this part of the festival go to www.slowfoodvancouver.com.

whysall@vancouver.sun.com

A MATTER OF TIMING

What most gardeners want to know about ornamental cherry trees is which one to plant.

Some flower as early as January and February.

These are mostly cultivars of *Prunus subhirtella*. 'Autumnalis', 'Accolade' and 'Whitcomb' are three of the best.

But home gardeners are smart to pick a variety that flowers later in spring to keep blossoms from being damaged by frosts.

The end of March is usually the time beautiful varieties like 'Akebono', 'Okame', 'Spire' and

'Somei-yoshino' bloom.

April and May are certainly the most exciting months for viewing cherry blossoms.

In early April, we see the white flowers of 'Umineko' and 'Shirotae' and the soft pinks of 'Pandora' and the Oshima cherry.

By mid-April, the Sargent cherry (*P. sargentii*) joins up with 'Rancho' and 'Takasago' to put on a knockout display of soft pink flowers along with the famously upright 'Amanogawa' and pure white 'Shogetsu'.

The great white cherry, 'Tai Haku'



Prunus subhirtella 'Whitcomb' flowers from February to March.

also blooms around this time. Towards the end of April, there's the subtle yellowish-green flowers of 'Ukon' and chrysanthemum-like pink flowers of 'Kiku-shidare-zakura' and 'Shirofungen'.

By early May, you can expect to see 'Pink Perfection' and all the 'Kwanzan' cherries — the most



TO SEE A MONTH-BY-MONTH PHOTO GUIDE TO CHERRY BLOSSOMS, GO TO VANCOUVER.SUN.COM. FOR A GUIDE TO WHERE TO SEE ALL THESE TREES IN BLOOM, GO TO THE FESTIVAL WEBSITE AT WWW.VCBCF.CA.



'Takasago' flowers in mid-April.

widely planted cherry in the city — filling streets with great clouds of pink.