

# Sechelt Garden Club

## Jon Bell - Raising Tropical Plants Outdoors

Jon is a botanist who trained at McGill University and worked across Canada for the Federal Dep't of Agriculture with a focus on insect & disease inspection & control and international importation standards. Jon became interested in tropical plants and was a member of the Palm Society in the late '80's. His first outdoor tropical was a banana and now at his farm in West Sechelt he has a twenty-foot-tall banana specimen. Jon's current projects include setting up an olive grove on his property. He has served as the President of the Sechelt Farmers Market and as member of the SCR D Water Advisory Committee.

Jon suggests that to evoke a tropical feel to your garden, consider including the 5 following elements: Palm Trees, unusual leaves, saturated colours, sounds (rustling of leaves and long grasses) and fragrance.

Jon showed a selection of slides of lovely gardens in the lower mainland area, all featuring Palm Trees and unusual plants with dramatic leaves such as Yucca, Agave, Eucalyptus, Cactus, Banana, Gingers, Bottlebrush, Mimosa, Bamboo, Canna Lily, Tree Ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*). For fragrance - Star Jasmine, Brugmansia (Angels Trumpet), Citrus.



go bananas outdoors



ginger plants

**Palms:** *Trachycarpus Fortunei* is the most hardy and can survive to -18 without winter protection once established as long as they are kept dry - sitting in water is the kiss of death. There are up to 10,000 surviving in the Lower Mainland area. *Trachycarpus* means hairy body - the trunk can be shaved to make it neater looking.

Palms are either palmate (like your hand) or pinnate (like a feather), and can be planted in groups or singly, but not under the eaves of your house.

Some are less hardy and require winter protection.

## John Bell cont'd

Jon's is partial to **Banana plants** and he grows 2 varieties: Ensete Ventricosum (Abyssinian) is not hardy, so must be dug up annually. Jon cuts off all of the leaves and roots and lays the remaining corm-like stems flat on newspaper and stores in a frost free cool area. They get potted up in spring and grow amazing giant leaves with a red tinge.

Musa Basjoo (Japanese) can be left in the ground with some protection. (Japanese make coarse cloth from the fibre). To get the plant to flower and fruit it takes 400-500 days of tropical conditions, and then the plant dies after fruiting. They are grown for their impressive leaves.

For winter protection, Jon wraps his in styrofoam and covers with a tarp to keep dry.

Ideas for winter protection - acrylic boxes, straw and tarps, styrofoam and tarps, household insulation and duct tape. Old fashioned Christmas lights for a bit of heat - can be on a timer using a thermocube switch with a thermometer (\$15 at Home Depot). The key is to keep the plants dry, protected from frost and insulate/heated if extreme cold temp is expected. Individual needs vary.

It is possible to enjoy some exotic and tropical plants in our area if you are willing to do a bit of work to make the conditions required for their survival.

Phoenix Perennials is one of the best places to source tropical plants.

Jon is growing olives because they are drought tolerant and he feels our climate is becoming more similar to the Mediterranean climate that olives enjoy. The ancient olive groves in Europe are starting to collapse due to disease problems.

## Tropical Plant List

Bottlebrush Shrub (Callistemon) - Australian, hardy to -18

Ginger - exotic flowers. It will be killed by frost, but the root is hardy and will grow back (if not waterlogged).

Mimosa Tree (Silk Tree)-Albizia. Drought resistant, beautiful pink flowers, compound leaves, looks especially nice from above.

Bamboo and Miscanthus - great for screening and rustling leaves in the wind.

Citrus - Trifoliate Lemon and Yuzu are the hardiest, but some citrus can be grown in zone 8b with winter protection. If grown from seed it may take 15/20 years to fruit - get a grafted tree for best results. Citrus like Epsom salts.

Star Jasmine is fragrant, sprawling and climbing and can be grown in containers, requires moisture and might need some winter protection.

Brugmansia (Angels Trumpet or Datura) - dig it up, take the root and leaves off, pot it up and keep it in a cool room - water occasionally. It flowers on the ends of the stems so you want lots of side shoots. It is poisonous, but very dramatic and fragrant in the evenings.

Eucalyptus - grows really fast, it will be a big tree in 10 years.

Gunnera (Chile) - require a lot of sunshine, nitrogen fertilizer (chicken manure) and water and are easy to grow here. Cut the leaves down in the fall and invert over the

# Go Native!

## Lewis's Mock Orange

*Philadelphus lewisii*

by Suzan Essiembre



**Philadelphus Lewis's mock orange is a twiggy, branching deciduous shrub with grey-brown bark, oval green leaves, and clusters of orange-like fragrant, four-petaled flowers with yellow centers growing to 3.5 m tall.**

**Flowers of mock orange are very attractive to butterflies. This BC native likes to be planted in partial shade and is a fire smart, pollinator friendly plant that prefers moist but well-drained soil. It has a graceful arching shape that looks great as a shrub border. The snow-white showy flowers appear late May to July. Prune flower-bearing branches once the flowers have died away in the summer. New buds develop on the new wood of the year, so pruning later in the year reduces the floral display.**

**Mock orange germinates readily from seed. For a wild effect, you can scatter seeds over a site and let nature take over. It also roots easily from cuttings taken in mid-July and treated with hormone.**

# Earth Day 2023

“Invest In Our Planet!”

## Cascade Green Park Butterfly Garden

5669 Cook Place, Sechelt, BC

### Plant more native plants!

Help us make a difference, join us

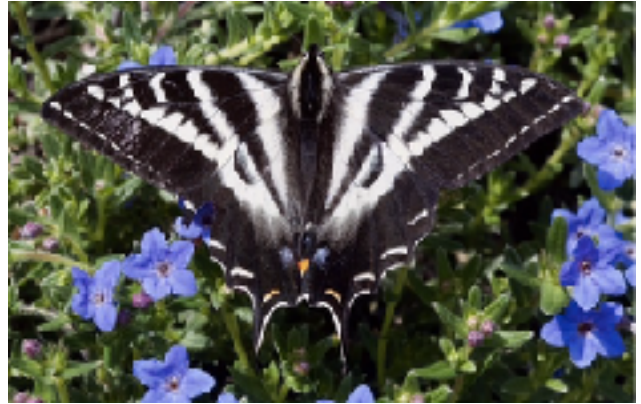
**Saturday, April 22nd, 2-4pm.**

Rain or Shine.

- Tour the butterfly garden site.
- Raffle ticket sales for 4 unique prizes. Draw will be held at the SGC monthly meeting May 29, 2023

Details at Earth Day event.

Refreshments will be available



### Bees

Two links to articles about bees and pollinators submitted by Cathy Hallam

<https://theconversation.com/what-a-buzzkill-early-ending-winters-disrupt-bumblebee-slumber-190885>

<https://theconversation.com/give-bees-a-chance-we-cant-afford-to-lose-our-wild-native-pollinators-116480>





## Basic Floral Design Workshop with Verna Kelso

Wednesday, May 17 from 6:30 to 8:30 PM

or

Thursday, May 18 from 10 to 12:00 Noon

**Location:** Home of Verna Kelso - 4946  
Laurel Avenue - Davis Bay

**Cost:** \$40 - Cash or cheque payable to  
Verna Kelso

**Supplied:** Flowers, greenery, container,  
accessories

**Bring:** Pruners, sharp paring knife, box  
suitable to take arrangement home

Floral Instructor - Verna Kelso, Floral Designer  
Carol Corbet – Budding Floral Apprentice



Members will learn:

- How to arrange flowers, greenery and accessories in a creative and skillful manner
- The mechanics of floral design by choosing proper tools, accessories, and container
- How to care for and handle floral products that will enhance and extend the life of their floral arrangement

❖ Verna will supply flowers, greenery, and a container for members to use in the course.

She stresses that floral arrangements can be made by using what plant material we have available in our own gardens.

❖ Health and spiritual benefits result from the creative aspects of flower arranging.

### To sign up contact:

Verna Kelso at [vbkelso@telus.net](mailto:vbkelso@telus.net) or phone 604 747.9048 or

Carol Corbet at [ccorbet@eastlink.ca](mailto:ccorbet@eastlink.ca) or phone 778 458.2287

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### **LAST CALL FOR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL**

Dues can be paid in cash at the meeting May 1  
Cheque made out to Sechelt Garden Club or  
on-line payment to [muguettem@shaw.ca](mailto:muguettem@shaw.ca)

\$25 single \$40 family

**NEXT MEETING MONDAY MAY 1 AT THE  
SEASIDE CENTRE 7 PM**

**SPEAKERS: Denise Lagasse, Grace Lewis  
and Phill Murray**

**TOPIC: Seed saving and sharing**

**Bring photos of your mystery bulbs  
purchased last fall.**