

The Neglect

By Clive L. Justice, PhD, LMBCSLA, FCSLA

of Vancouver's Tree and Landscape Heritage

Wide boulevard streets, continuous urban landscapes, and gardens were feature concepts in Vancouver's town plan proposed by Harland Bartholomew in 1929 and again in 1940. Trees along streets and landscaped front gardens were not something imposed by Bartholomew upon the city however, for Vancouver, was already then a city of heritage trees and gardens. People like Raoul Robillard, MBCSLA #034 (deceased), and his father landscaped and planted trees and made gardens around the homes in the West End in the period just before and during World War I. Today, there are several West End Heritage houses but not one garden designated heritage.

Following the Robillards there was University of British Columbia's new campus landscape architect and Professor of Horticulture, Frank Buck with landscape-enlightened architect George Thornton Sharp, who, having won the competition for the design of the University campus jointly formed the Point Grey Advisory Town Planning Commission: the first in Canada. One of their chief aims was to beautify Point Grey's residential development planting trees along the municipality's streets. Some of this landscape legacy remains to this day, such as the maple and oaks along each side of the Arbutus Street tracks. The single row of maples on the east side of the tracks between 45th and 49th Avenue and the avenue of oaks and maples on both sides of the tracks from 41st to 45th Avenue are but two still remaining examples. In 1924 the Point Grey Municipal Hall faced this avenue of trees. The Hall is long gone but the trees still flourish.

A third example of a pre-Bartholomew trees and garden city concept is the magnificent avenue of *Liriodendrons* and majestic-leaved *Catalpas* with their clusters of orchid like flowers lining 10th Avenue from Dunbar Street to Kitsilano High School. There are others, such as the pre World War I "Loudian" forest grove in Clark Park off Commercial Drive, the City's first park and the Thornton

Park trees on Main Street. It is a shameful oversight that none of these grove and boulevard legacies have achieved heritage urban landscape recognition or status by Vancouver's Heritage Commission.

In 1938, Vancouver was fortunate to gain landscape architect William (Bill) Livingston as Parks Foreman with the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, who, over the next 36 years created, built, and managed the physical park system in the city. He oversaw the development of more than 30 of Vancouver's parks, beaches, recreation grounds, playing fields, display gardens, treed streets, and boulevards. He also carried on the tradition of the tree shaded wide median and tree-lined residential streets concepts of the Bartholomew plan. Bill Livingston died in 1990 leaving us, in Vancouver and British Columbia one of the greatest legacies of treed park landscapes and treed streets of any city in the North America. He is hardly remembered and little honoured by his fellow landscape architects and almost forgotten by the Park's Board and city he served for over 40 years.

Cambie Heritage Boulevard and Queen Elizabeth Park and arboretum were among Bill Livingston's special creations. The Vancouver Heritage Commission should highlight the Queen Elizabeth Park arboretum and the



The variety of large Beech, *Fagus*, including purple-leaf weeping, fern leaf, and rosea, as well as elms, maples, Katsuras, magnolias, and the oldest and largest, big tree, *Sequoia Dendron giganteum*, in Vancouver along Granville Street and in front gardens on West 49th Avenue from Oak Street to SW Marine Drive is representative of the great diversity of tree species that can be grown in Vancouver. The writer has always fancied it as his own private arboretum. Image courtesy of Clive L. Justice.

quarry display garden to create Vancouver's and Canada's first heritage urban forest landscape. Groves, newly planted and replacement trees throughout the parks and open spaces throughout the city could be named in honour of Vancouver's landscape pioneers.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s a small group of new professionals formed the BC Society of Landscape Architects (BCSLA). We met monthly in a Kerrisdale restaurant on West Boulevard. Our main objective was to gain the provincial registration and licensing of our profession, but we also looked to ways that we could provide some service to the city. It took nearly 15 years, but in 1982 our idea of creating a Heritage tree inventory for Vancouver finally gained traction with a grant from the BC Heritage Trust. In excess of 150 trees were identified with aspects of the tree's horticultural history noted as well as stories commemorating, births and marriages related to the trees.

Today, Vancouver has a digital tree inventory that locates and identifies every tree on every street along with ornamentals in the city's parks. It was developed primarily as a tool to track the management and continuing maintenance of this half billion dollar city resource that contributes beauty and helps provide a healthy environment for living in the city. Here is an opportunity to extend and ►



Late blooming, the Korean Dogwood, *Cornus kousa*, does well in Vancouver's cool cloudy climate. On Cambie Street Heritage Boulevard, they line the west sidewalk from West 49th Avenue south to Marine Drive. Along with other Dogwoods, *Cornus florida* in white and pink forms, our native, *C. nuttalli*, the Pacific dogwood and its locally created hybrid Eddies White Wonder Dogwood. the best street to see White Wonder is the two blocks of West 57th Avenue before SW Marine Drive. The Korean Dogwood has dark red seeds as big as strawberries and fiery Autumn colour as do all the dogwoods. Image courtesy of Clive L. Justice.

expand this heritage designation to additional trees such as the large elm on the corner of Arbutus Street and York Avenue, to the magnificent Lawson's Cypress on 16th Avenue just east of Arbutus Street, or to the 100 year old Golden Cypress and Birch boulevard on 15th Avenue.

Throughout Vancouver in every neighbourhood there are street trees, groves, and specimen trees with distinctive natural beauty. The two blocks of Liquidamber trees in Marpole that have fall leaf colour so intense as to out do the fabled maples of the Gatineau

Hills spring to mind. Every neighbourhood could participate in selecting their favourite trees, and these could be celebrated by the City of Vancouver's Parks, Recreation, and Culture Department Public Art Program by including this information in their mapping of public art in the Vancouver's Downtown, for example. This information, useful for our visitors, will also serve as a reminder to those of us who call Vancouver home that we are the stewards of one of the greatest treasures of living art. The BCSLA, in tribute to its founding goals, has a role to play in all of these initiatives. **SL**

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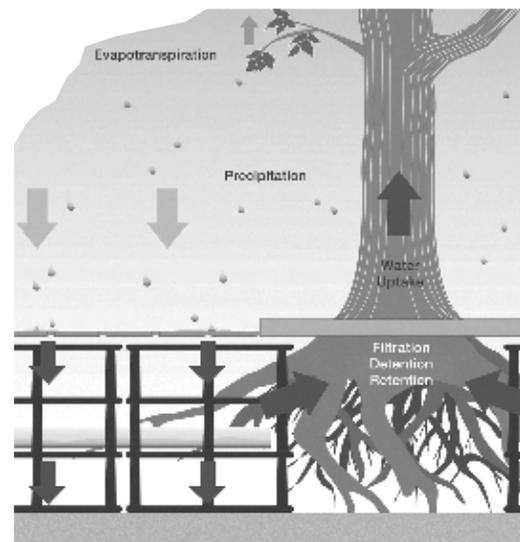
1. "Loudian" is the author's term used to describe this park. J. C. Loudon and his wife Mrs. Loudon edited a journal called *The Garden*. Loudon wrote an encyclopedia of gardening, landscaping, and horticulture, etc., which he recommended planting woodlands of many different species of trees both coniferous and deciduous varieties (one or two of each, mostly exotic species that had been newly introduced to the UK, including Douglas fir, Colorado Spruce, and Lawson's Cypress).



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