



University of Victoria

# University of Victoria Friends

As many of you know, I have been keeping rainfall records at Galiano since 1987—a period of over 20 years. This past

Dear Friends,

The months do roll by quickly, and here we are almost into spring. In fact, you could say it was already here these last few days which have been so lovely.

Do visit Finnerty Gardens soon—the spring bloom is well under way and a number of the rhododendrons are in flower. This time of the year is so wonderful that I feel I want to share it with everyone. And I was hearing last evening from my brotsunny day, the hillside acts as a sun trap. The plants love it and thrive, provided I can keep enough water on them.

The soil is very shallow—about a foot deep—and is underlain with conglomerate rock. It is very well drained! I suspect that I am mad to consider trying to garden under these circumstances, but!! My water tanks are almost full, so that will give me a good start. However, one advantage of the early spring is that I do not have to water. As a result, I wander around, pulling weeds, and admiring the various plants as they bloom. I have been quite excited recently to discover that one of my seeding hellebores is a double very dark reddish-purple. I do not have a 'mother' plant that resembles it.

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#### UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

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# Coffee A ?

Margaret deWeeses



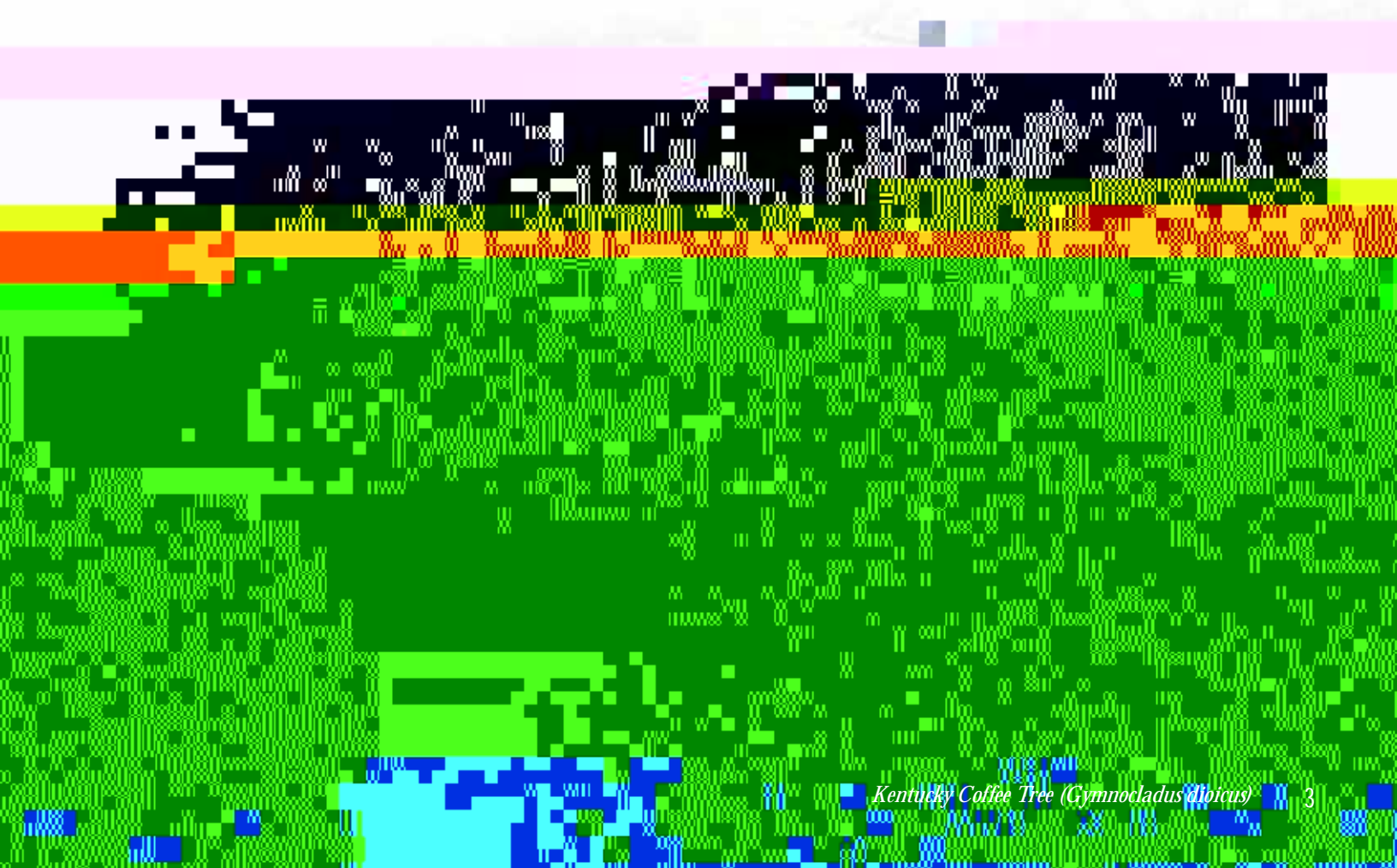
Gardener, if you listen, listen well. Some guests from Lexington, Kentucky came to stay. After they had taken a stroll round the garden, I asked if they had seen the Kentucky Coffeetree for I was delighted to have them welcomed by a tree of their state. They had not noticed it, nor had they ever heard of it!

The tree's scientific name is *Gymnocladus dioica*, which means "naked branch." In the winter and spring it looks like a dead stalk that needs to be ripped out and deposited on the compost heap. Seemingly the French in Canada called it Chicot (the dead tree), but in very late spring the buds swell on its upper stalks which grow to be pinnate leafed branches of great beauty. It is my Cinderella tree for when fall ticks to nearly ten o'clock it goes to the ball in green and gold dress.

Large specimen trees have a rough grayish scored bark, but my tree, only fifteen years old,

has two brownish stalks for a double trunk and is about ten feet tall. The bipinnate compound leafed branchlets which drop off after the frost are still short compared to the mature width of about forty feet! The record height was recorded at eighty feet but I won't see that. The tree has long brown pods which have large seeds that were used to make coffee in the early immigrant years, although I would imagine a Tim Horton's nearby would soon have stopped such practice.

It likes the wet of the pond and provides an umbrella of light on dark rainy days. I think that in the future any more guests from Kentucky will certainly notice their state beauty. Now I need its two beautiful sisters from Asia, the Chinese Coffeetree *Gymnocladus chinensis* and the Burmese Coffeetree *Gymnocladus burmanicus* in Myanmar and watch as they all vie for the sparkling slipper.



# University Finnerty Garden Friends Newsletter





All Friends of Finnerty Gardens—including present and past members of the Advisory Board—are invited to submit articles of interest to horticulturists for publication in the newsletter. The purpose is to maintain the eclectic range of horticultural interests that the newsletter has espoused in recent years.

Ideally, articles should be of 500-1,000 words in length, and should be emailed to the editor as soon as they are ready. When articles are accepted, they will be published as quickly as space becomes available. Since the editor is an English professor rather than a horticulturist, authors must hold themselves responsible for the accuracy of the horticultural content.

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## MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Friends of Finnerty Gardens is \$10 per year (single or couple). Membership includes an informative newsletter published four times a year. Funds raised through membership support the Friends of Finnerty Gardens. For more information, contact the editor at [slmacey@shaw.ca](mailto:slmacey@shaw.ca).

