

A refreshing urban garden

VanDusen Botanical Garden is an oasis in the heart of Vancouver.



A hummingbird enjoying the cherry blossoms. — Photo courtesy Van Dusen Botanical Garden

Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival

"Under a cherry tree, there are no strangers."

—Japanese poet Kobayashi Issa

The 10th annual Cherry Blossom Festival will be held at VanDusen and elsewhere in Vancouver from April 3 to 28, 2014.

The celebration began when founder Linda Poole returned to Vancouver after 13 years of living overseas with her husband, who was in the Canadian Foreign Service. Each year away, she had missed the glorious cherry trees in bloom at her Vancouver home.

As Poole tells the story on the [festival website](#), when she learned about the age-old Sakura Festivals of Japan and realized many of Vancouver's 40,000 cherry trees originated as gifts from that country, her idea for a Vancouver festival was born.

Festival events

Events for all ages and interests are scheduled during the Cherry Blossom Festival, including visits to the Bloedel Conservatory, walks, bike tours and garden lectures. A few of the main events are listed below. Dates, locations and other details of the complete program can be found at vcbf.ca/community-events

Sakura Days Japan Fair

April 5-6 at Van Dusen

Sakura Illuminations

April 7 and 17

Haiku Invitational Competition

March 1 to June 2

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Vancouver has many green spaces to delight not only garden fans but also historians, photographers and art lovers. Today's story welcomes you to just one of them: the city's magnificent VanDusen Botanical Garden.

History

As you stroll along the pathways of a myriad of displays in the 55-acre (22-hectare) VanDusen garden, it is hard to believe that a century ago the area was nothing but untended bush land owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway.

The official history tells us that from 1911 to 1960 the property was the home of the Shaughnessy Golf Club. When the club moved away, the land again lay fallow—used only by birds, squirrels, children at play and families walking their dogs.

Named after forester-philanthropist W.J. VanDusen, the botanical garden was opened to the public in August 1975. Forty years on and—thanks to the vision and efforts of hundreds of miracle-workers—the garden has become the essence of artist Victor Hugo's wish for a "garden to walk in and immensity to dream in."

The garden

In the singular, the term garden is a misnomer for VanDusen. There are so many displays that each one is a garden—or an art gallery—unto itself. Each of them is so different, so perfect, that a single day is not enough to see them all.

From sweeps of manicured lawns as far as the eye can see to multi-coloured banks of rhododendrons, from heron lakes and stone gardens to the Korean Pavilion or an intricate maze, these gardens fill the senses and make poets of us all.

How long can a bird lover stand, oblivious to all else, to watch a stilted heron move slowly and watchfully around the lake? How long to read a book, while blessed with sunshine on an early summer's day? How quietly to wonder at the talented minds of sculptors as they crafted wood and stone to display throughout the gardens?

Rebirth in springtime

VanDusen is a feast no matter the season, but springtime gardens tell us, as little else can, that we humans can put aside the trials of years gone by and begin anew.

So if you can scramble your gear together in time to visit VanDusen in April you, too, can enjoy any or all of the events planned year round and for the 25-day Vancouver Cherry Blossom festival—and even take a side-trip to this year's Chilliwack RV Show.