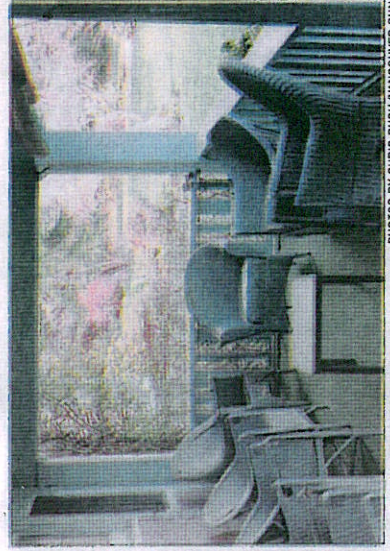


Wild and wonderful

The Milners' garden has been wrestled still embraces it in a living testan

PHOTOS BY CHRIS BUSH/VANCOUVER SUN



The Milner house's veranda is a relaxing vantage point.



Executive director Jim Cadwaladr shows a clever example of garden conservation.



The garden's huge eagle's nest has been measured and reproduced as a deck area.



Even the statuary in the garden blends in perfectly.



The royals are thought to have spent many happy hours looking at the ocean from this garden bench.



Rhododendron

Shrubs lost under a mountains of ivy have been recovered and revived. A series of cascading ponds — which double as a part of the site's drainage system — have been restored to full working order.

The entire garden, which occupies a mere 10 acres of the 70-acre estate, is protected by a high deer fence and has been mapped on a grid system by students from the college. The plant content of each area has been carefully documented.

Cadwaladr adds: "This is an artist's garden. It is a living testament to the Milners' passion, persistence and unerring eye for beauty."

The design, he says, shows a clear concern for form, texture and the colour of plants through the changing seasons. "This is really a wild place that has been wrestled away from the forest but at the same time embraces it. When you walk around the garden, it is really an adventure. Part of the brilliance of the design is that you happen upon things and it is as if you are discovering them for the first time."

The house, with its three sets of steep gables, includes features of a Ceylonese tea plantation house, each bedroom with a screen door leading into the garden. Wisteria, Boston ivy and espaliered flowering quince scramble up walls at the front and back. Purple finches and wrens nest in the camellias, while in the centre of the gravel courtyard at the main entrance, there is a beautiful old Spanish chestnut tree with large, sculptural branches.

Nearby there are magnolias and a small orchard of apple, pear and plum trees. Elsewhere, there is a dove tree, katsura, dawn redwood, stewartia, and various Japanese maples.

Being half a century old, the garden contains exquisite mature specimens that have been permitted to grow naturally into examples of their kind.



Tree hibiscus



Tree hibiscus

In one tree top, the nest is a huge eagle's nest that has been measured and reproduced as a deck area of precisely the same dimensions so visitors can get a true idea of its size.

Volunteer coordinator Pat Palmer works among piles of books in Veronica Milner's former bedroom, where Queen Elizabeth once slept. The books are destined for display in the home's refurbished library.

Bell's

"For healthy plants you need healthy soil"

Bell's Soil Booster is the organic way to revitalize your soil. Soil Booster improves soil texture and water retention and provides essential nutrients and microbial activity to bring garden soil and potting soil back to life!



Available now at leading garden outlets

From New Zealand, the solution to making moss baskets with a clear conscience

Gardeners with greenhouses or solariums like to get their hanging baskets started in April. But the problem today is how to make a moss basket with a clear conscience as sphagnum moss is often harvested from unrestricted forest and mountain areas, putting gardeners in direct confrontation with environmentalists.

An excellent solution is available this spring in the form of a new product called Just Moss, a basket liner made of pure natural sphagnum moss imported from New Zealand.

The moss is deliberately grown on swamp lands on the west coast of the South Island where there is an annual rainfall of 300 inches a year.

The land is leased from the New Zealand department of conservation and the moss is grown as a crop in thick carpets and then harvested every five years

board to soft moss is astonishing. It takes about 10 minutes for the dry liner to expand into the familiar look of freshly collected moss. Just Moss bricks are also available for lining other types of containers.

Victoria parks department tested the Just Moss liners in 60 baskets last year and were so impressed they are using them in 270 baskets this summer.

The liners can often be re-used a second year if old soil and plants are carefully removed. Alternatively, they can be recycled into compost or dug into the ground to add organic matter to the soil.

Available at most garden centres, the liners with wire baskets range in price from \$20 to \$30. On their own, the liners sell for between \$11 to \$15 for sizes 12 to 16 inches. The moss bricks are about \$10 each.

— Steve Whysall



The Milner House blends in perfectly with its surroundings in the Milner Gardens.

Wild and wonderful

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From E1

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Being half a century old, the garden contains exquisite mature specimens that have been permitted to grow naturally into textbook examples of their kind.

At the back of the house, there is a great

Cadwaladr's job as director is to restore and maintain the garden as well as generate funding. He reckons at least \$150,000 a year will be needed to pay for staff and to fund new projects.

To create revenue streams, Cadwaladr aims to set up a small nursery, so visitors can buy some of the plants they see in their garden.

"There are so many bulbs here, we can pull them out forever without doing any damage."

The house is also available for rent for academic retreats. Rooms are being converted to make a library.

Admission to the garden is \$10 and the number of visitors is limited to 200 a day to protect the site.

The most important role of the garden, however, will be to provide learning opportunities in both the art and science of horticulture.

"Our mandate is preservation and education," says Cadwaladr. "So we will have some very aggressive courses in horticulture. We're not a mini-campus. We're owned by the college but we also stand alone."

Students already use the garden to learn about turf grass management, irrigation design and installation, plant identification, and plant propagation.

"When plants are pruned, the clippings are not just thrown away or composted. We use them to grow new plants."

Some rhododendrons are already being propagated by air-layering.

"Veronica Milner knew her plants and she loved them, but she was also an artist who loved to paint. In the garden, she paid attention to sight lines, spatial definition, scale, texture, plant combinations. She didn't care if a plant was a weed, native plant or introduced plant. If it was right, it was right."

An official \$40-a-ticket "grand opening" gala with bands and bunting is planned for May 6.

The Milner Garden is located at 2179 West Island Highway in Qualicum Beach. For more information call (250) 752-6153, fax (250) 752-3826. The Website is: www.mla.bc.ca/www/discover/hortical/milner.htm

Sun gardening editor



Trillium



Pulmonaria



Tree blossoms



The natural glory of the woodland includes *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* and dawn redwood. The trees, some of them 500 years old, form the spectacular sight lines that are enjoyed by visitors who walk through the wood in summer.

RUSTY JOERN

FLOWERING NOW

Pulmonaria (Lungwort)

Height and spread: 12 to 15 inches by 12 inches

Pros: Popular hardy perennial, mostly loved for its beautiful gentian-blue flowers (also available with pink, white or red blooms) in tight clusters above attractive foliage that has dappled grey or silver spots. The spotted leaves are said to resemble the colour inside a lung, hence the unappealing common name. An excellent plant for use as a groundcover under trees and shrubs or as an edging plant. Many hybrids are now available. 'Escalibur' has pink flowers that turn violet blue; 'Trevi Fountain' has cobalt-blue flowers; 'David Ward' has tangerine-red flowers; 'Roy Davidson' has powder-blue blooms; 'Highdown' (pictured) pink turning to bright clear-blue flowers. *Pulmonaria saccharata* (Bethlehem sage) also offers many first-rate compact varieties, including 'Sissinghurst White', 'Argentea' and Janet Fish.

Cons: Prone to powdery mildew in hot, humid climates. Solution is often simply to move plants to a spot with better air circulation. However, hybridizers have been very active over the past few decades and produced excellent cultivars with improved resistance to mildew.

Site: An east-facing location gives plants the benefit of warm morning sun, which helps evaporate dew more quickly and therefore reduces the risk of powdery mildew. *Pulmonaria* has creeping roots, but plants are slow-growing and never become invasive.

Planting: Lungwort thrives best in light shade and requires the fertile, evenly moist soil of a cool woodland. But it has also been



grown successfully in sunny sites with afternoon shade. Good companions include primula, bleeding hearts, early-spring bulbs, astilbes and wood anemones.

Pruning: Trim away old, worn out leaves after flowering to make way for new healthy foliage.

Propagation: Clumps can be divided after flowering or in early fall every few years. New plants can also be grown from seed.

Nurseries: Available at most garden centres.

— Steve Whysall

To do list

- ❑ **Hydroponics show**
The International Gardening & Hydroponics Exposition and Trade Show, Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Agradome on the PNE grounds, Vancouver. Admission is \$10. The show is intended to raise the profile of the hydroponics industry.
- ❑ **Plant sale**
The Evergreen Garden Club's flower show and plant sale, Saturday, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Ladner Community Hall, 4753 51st Street, Ladner. For more information, call 948-0501.
- ❑ **Fuchsias forever**
B.C. Fuchsia and Begonia Society's spring plant sale, Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Floral Hall at VanDusen Botanical Garden, 37th and Oak Street, Vancouver. For more information, phone 524 0407.
- ❑ **Chrys cuttings**
Point Grey Chrysanthemum Association's early varieties sale, Saturday, from 10 a.m. to noon on the deck at VanDusen Botanical Garden, 37th and Oak Street, Vancouver. Call Bernie Milns at 590-3016 for details.

RUSTY JOERN

