



Iris 'Speeding Again' blooms behind an eye-catching collection of plants on the patio. The pot on the left features black petunias, Phormium 'Taya' and Chamaecyparis obtusa 'Sunlight Lace' while the pot on the right features Oxalis spiralis 'Aurea,' Ligularia dentata 'Britt Marie Crawford,' Phormium 'Alison Blackman' and Geum 'Fireball.' Calibrachoa 'Aloha Tiki Orange' adds a splash of colour in the chimney pot on the left while Bolax gummifera grows lushly between the stones below.

A Plant Lover's Paradise

 **By Joanna Drewry Adam Gibbs Photos**

Paul Murphy never intended to have a career as a landscape designer and gardener. While paying his way through university working as a seasonal gardener for the Greater Victoria School District (GVSD), he became hooked on gardening. Gradually he found himself studying books on plants and garden design more than he was studying for his courses in environmental studies and anthropology. By the time he achieved his degree from the University of Victoria, he had already decided to make a career doing what he loves most – working with plants and designing gardens. That was 15 years ago and he's never looked back.

When Paul's garden was featured on the Victoria Conservatory of Music Garden Tour, it was the star attraction of the two-day event.

Over the past four years Paul has worked tirelessly to transform his

Saanich city lot into a plant lover's paradise. He says that his passion for gardening was inspired from his time working with the head gardener at GVSD, and by his family. "When I was a kid, my parents encouraged me to work in their garden and mow lawns in the neighbourhood. I was unusual. I actually liked doing that work."

Paul's own garden is testament to his passion for plants and for the

This is the rear garden as seen through the branches of Acer palmatum 'Emperor I.' The Itoh peony Misaka blooms to the right.



The deck and patio showcase potted plants and bonsais. The miniature climbing rose 'Work of Art' grows in the foreground.

ADAM GIBBS PHOTO

knowledge he has acquired. "When my wife April and I bought this house it was lawn from fence to fence. I stripped all the sod, brought in good soil and delivered multiple truckloads of more than 400 plants in pots from my old house. All that remained were an old apple tree in the back garden and an escalonia at the front. It was a clean slate. "What I didn't know was that a previous owner here had had a market garden. Instead of the usual clay and

Colourful sari fabric creates an exciting backdrop to the patio's deep built-in seating. The oversized, rough-cut cedar construction gives the deck a sense of permanence in the landscape. Clematis 'Vancouver Morning Mist' climbs the post in the foreground while C. 'Horn of Plenty' works its way up the trellis at the back. Potted plants help decorate the deck. Notable plants include Pseudopanax 'Sabre,' Acer palmatum 'Chishio' on the right, and Aeonium 'Sumburst' and Acer palmatum 'Shishigashira' on the left.

PAUL MURPHY PHOTO

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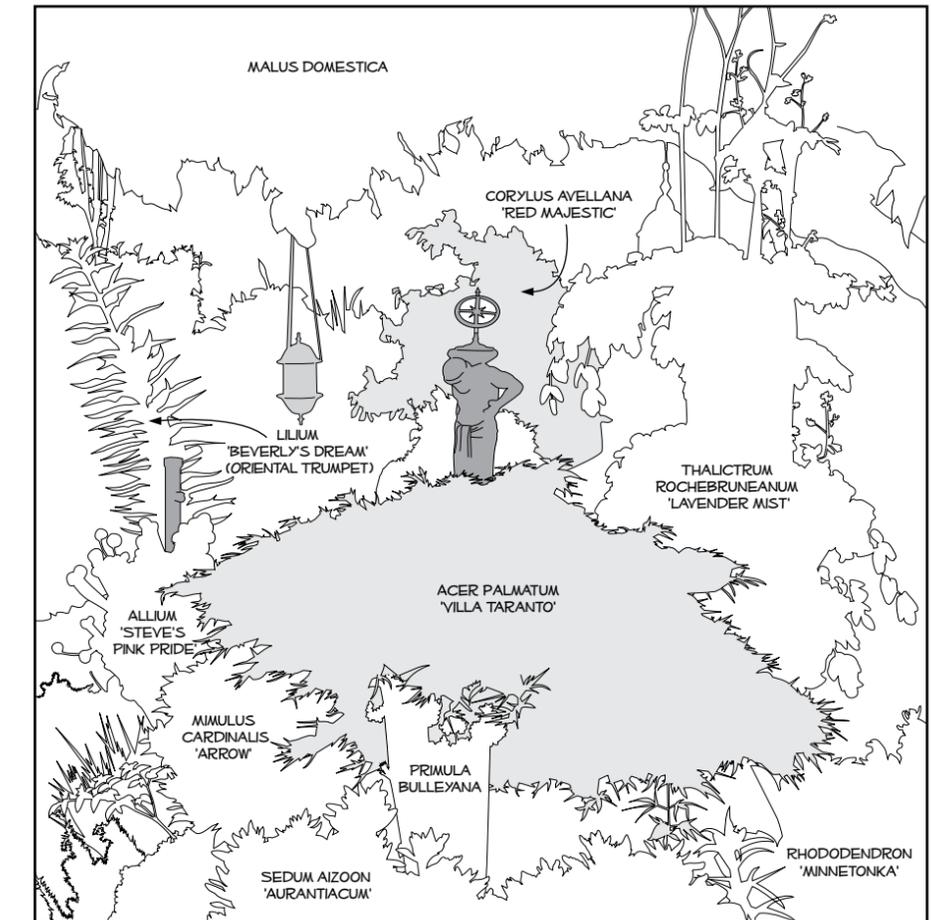
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The apple tree frames a statue of Atlas tucked in amongst yellow candelabra primula, hostas and astrantia. A giant daisy statue by Birgit Piskor shows in the background. Growing in the foreground from left to right are: Primula bulleyana, Helleborus foetidus 'Chedglow' and Hosta 'June.'

rock, there was a deep layer of good soil here. This was an added gift."

With the help of friends and family, Paul built the back deck and patio. It is Moroccan-themed with swag lamps and a brilliant backdrop curtain that April fashioned from sari cloth. April also made the cheerful cushions that soften the deck benches. Friends and family have helped at every stage of the garden's development.

Before completing the back garden landscaping, high gates were installed to prevent visits from the small herd of deer that live in the neighbourhood.

The apple tree is the central anchor for the rear garden. Paul enjoys using dense plantings of different textures and placing colour echoes in his garden

Ceanothus thyrsiflorus 'Victoria' blooms on the right and purple-leaved Sambucus nigra Black Lace shows on the left with gold-leaved Weigela florida 'Rubidor' and its red flowers. The pink flowering ninebark Physocarpus opulifolius Coppertina is visible behind.

designs. He also loves to use unusual plant material, making his garden a magical creation, weaving together plants that are not commonly seen.

"I know many people like to be in zonal denial and push the envelope with plants that really aren't hardy in this climate. I try not to do that because you know that some year you are going to lose a lot of plants if you take that risk. Pretty much everything in this garden is hardy to Zone 8 and I really like to put the right plant in the right place.

"I have a boggy area in a back corner of the garden, so I've planted things there that really like to be wet – *Salix magnifica*, *S. elaeagnos* subsp. *angustifolia*, *Gunnera manicata*, *Acer rubrum* 'New World,' *Lyschiton americanus*, *Symplocarpus foetidus* and *Miscanthus x giganteus*. Their root systems also help wick up some of the excess moisture.

"I enjoy pairing plants in eye-catching ways. I love sambucus (elderberry) and have over 10 varieties. Each is a different cultivar and provides a different look for its site. Three of my favourites

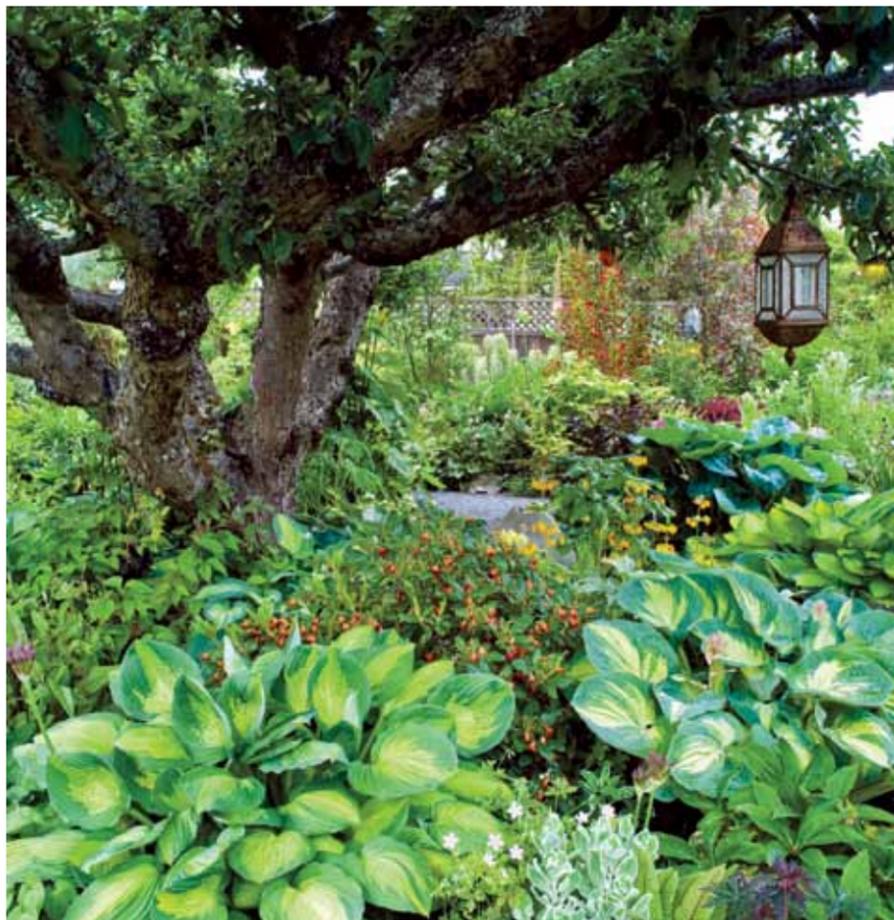


Photo top left: Captured in this shot (from left to right) are: *Cornus controversa* 'Variegata,' *Sambucus nigra* Black Lace (middle back), *Rosa glauca* (middle of frame), *Verbascum bombyciferum* (middle front), *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* 'Heronswood Globe' (right back), *Rheum palmatum* var. *tanguticum* and a 1970s glass lampshade featuring *sempervivum* growing out of its opening.

are *Sambucus nigra* Black Lace, *S.n.* 'Pulverulenta' and *S. canadensis* 'Aurea.' Crushed gravel paths weave through the garden providing fresh vistas at every turn. The eye-catching *Rosa sericea* ssp. *omeiensis* f. *pteracantha* is grown for its luminous blood red thorns. The orange of the Itoh Misaka peonies echoes the rheum seedheads

Photo left: Hostas flourish beneath an apple tree decorated with a lantern, adding to the exotic look of the Moroccan-themed deck. Hostas 'Captain Kirk' (bottom left), 'Great Expectations' (bottom right), 'Stained Glass' (middle), and *H. sieboldiana* var. *elegans* (top) grow here. *Sedum* 'Frosty Morn' (bottom middle) and *Primula bulleyana* are also pictured.

Photo above: *Euphorbia* hybrids have self-seeded in the deer-resistant front garden. Bright *Kniphofia uvaria* (red hot pokers) provide a focal point.

Photo top right: *Rosa sericea* ssp. *omeiensis* f. *pteracantha*, grown for its blood red thorns, stands out against a lush backdrop of green.

and orange blooms of *Rhododendron* 'Arneson Flame.' Every plant has been thoughtfully chosen for its particular colour and texture.

Plants with a golden tinge or variegation are strategically placed to brighten corners of the garden. Examples include variegated hostas, *Sambucus nigra* 'Madonna' and *Weigela* 'Rubidor.' The tallest plants grow near the fences. This way the garden is kept to a scale that is not too tall in relation to the central apple tree.

Photo right: Featured from left to right are: flower stalks and leaves of *Eremerus robustus* (left), *Kniphofia uvaria* (middle), *Poncirus trifoliata* 'Flying Dragon' (bottom middle), *Cornus* 'Rutban' (top right) and *Crinum x powellii* (middle right).





Blue 'Speeding Again' irises are showcased against the backdrop of rich perennial borders.



From left to right: The yellow blooms of *Cytisus battandieri* (top left), *Ginkgo biloba* 'Pendula' (to the right and slightly below), *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Elegans Aurea' (middle left), *Berberis thunbergii* Cherry Bomb (bottom left), *Allium giganteum*, *Rosa* 'Blanc Double de Coubert' (middle of frame), *Clematis* 'Horn of Plenty' (right side, top of trellis), *Clematis* 'Belle of Woking' (next one down), *Rhus typhina* Tiger Eyes (middle right) and *Sedum aizoon aurantiacum* (tucked in behind the rhus).

ADAM GIBBS PHOTOS

"One of the challenges of this garden is that there are few mature trees in this neighbourhood, as it was previously farmland. I have planted a lot of fast-growing trees and shrubs to create the illusion of a mature garden. In fact, there are 25 small trees on this property and each is going to be a suitable shape and size for the space where it is placed. I like the look of dense plantings.

"I have weaved in filler plants like cranesbill geraniums, sedums and hemerocallis to create this densely planted look. These fillers will be removed as the shrubs and perennials around them mature. Also, I prune heavily to keep some plants like the sambucus, buddlejas, hydrangeas and shrubby cornus and salix to size in scale with this garden."

The front garden is planted with deer-resistant plants. Here Paul grows kniphofia, osmanthus, ornamental grasses, irises, dwarf conifers, *Grevillea victoriae*, sedums and succulents as well as cranesbill geraniums among the beds of self-seeded hybrid euphorbia.

He is also growing a carefully netted David Austin *Rosa* 'Teasing Georgia,' which he plans to train across the house, out of reach of the deer. Sedums, cacti and cranesbill geraniums are scattered along the walkways.

Paul loves gardening so much that on Saturdays he volunteers at Government House garden, under the direction of Valerie Murray, the Head Gardener, to help refurbish the rock and alpine beds. "I really enjoy working with her and the other volunteers. She is incredibly knowledgeable and very giving. She just donated an enormous *Rhododendron macabeaenum* from her own garden and I helped her move it up to Government House with other volunteers."

Paul's artistic inspiration comes from the Victoria Arts and Crafts style, and he has studied Gertrude Jekyll, William Robinson and other noted gardeners from this period. "I love studying plants and learning more about gardening," he laughs. "You can never know everything. I have developed a gardening style that uses bold, beautiful, truly hardy plants that thrive in this climate. My designs are always plant-based. I like to use repetition of textures and colours instead of using the same plant over and over again."

Paul's garden beautifully demonstrates both his artistry and his passion for plants.✿