



Flower Power

by Dave Doroghy

I went to the Van Dusen Gardens one night this last Christmas season to look at all the nice lights they had on display. Although it was cold and crowded, all in all it was a fairly pleasant and festive evening. As I strolled around the flickering display I thought to myself that the botanical park really shines and only realizes its full and perfect potential during the All British Field Meet. As far as I'm concerned, Van Dusen Gardens was custom designed for a giant car show. Don't get me wrong; it's not that I don't like flowers. They're OK, and I even visited the gardens in the early 80's once before the car show debuted to look at the flowers. However it's only when you place 550 old British cars in the middle of all that colourful foliage and sprawling grass that Van Dusen Gardens really finds its *raison d'être*.

I have been to car shows all around the world from shows on the lawn of Leeds Castle in England to shows in a Wal-Mart Parking lot in Memphis, Tennessee. And make no mistake about it – the surroundings and environment where a show is staged is the number one factor in the shows success. Granted you need great cars too, but it's the combination of great cars in a super natural setting that sets great car shows apart from amazingly spectacular ones. It's like the cars are the masterpiece paintings on a canvas and the setting where the car show is held is the matching frame.

Everyone knows that first impressions are the most important and lasting ones. That's why the car show organizers decided to display all the Morgans at the beginning of the pathway as you first enter the gardens. It must be nothing short of overwhelming to a first time car show attendee on a bright sunny Spring morning as he or she walks into the

gardens to be confronted by all the rhododendrons, begonias and hydrangeas complimenting the Plus 4's and Plus 8's. Oh the colours, the shapes the smells! And I am just talking about the cars now. The All British Field Meet at Van Dusen Botanical Gardens is a celebration of the best that nature and engineering have to offer.

Van Dusen Gardens has it all and is just so perfect for a car show. The undulating grounds with their gentle slopes and small hills accentuate the cars. The tranquil lakes and dramatic rock-works provide an interesting backdrop. Trees provide shade, contrast and reference points. Oh and did I mention the flowers? Van Dusen's collection includes more than 7,300 plant families and 225,000 individual plants from around the world.

The Gardens size of 55 acres is ideal too. If it were any smaller you couldn't fit all the cars in there, and if it was any bigger it wouldn't feel as cozy and intimate.

Heck, I fell in love with Morgans for the first time at the All British Field Meet. I still can remember that day so vividly. Was it the faint distant scent of the flowers, the light spring breeze, the subdued shadow of a fir tree, or the subtly curved British racing green fenders that so deeply stirred my emotions? Who cares - the show is an orgy of the senses. The ABFM at Van Dusen stirs the heart unlike any other event in the city. One of the reasons I bought my Morgan was so I could display it at the show.

A rose is a rose is a rose. And a Morgan is a Morgan is a Morgan. Let's get together again next Victoria Day long-weekend at Van Dusen Gardens and marvel at their co-existence.

All of my Dorg's Morg stories can be accessed at www.dorg.ca.

