



# NORTH ISLAND RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 3183 Courtenay, B. C., Canada V9N 5N4

Vol.12 No.9

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## **May 6**

Executive meeting will be held at the home of Guy Courchesne at 2781 Windermere, Cumberland. Drive down the Cumberland Road from Courtenay and when you get to the Y in the road, take the left-hand road and look for the 2nd street after the Y. If you are lost, phone 336-8642.

## **May 13**

Annual General Meeting and garden tour will be held at the home of Linda Easton, 4077 S. Is. Hwy, Campbell River. If you are driving north, drive up the hill from Oyster Bay, and watch for a driveway with a big old iron wheel, on the right-hand side. If you see York Road on the left, you

have gone too far.

There is little parking - share a ride if possible! Bring garden chairs and a mug if you wish. Plastic cups will be available also. If driving from the north, look for parking near the mailbox a few houses south of York Road, and walk across the highway.

## **THANK YOU,**

**THANK YOU!** to all the members who turned out to plant Bed No. 3 at the Rhodo Garden. 16 enthusiastic people made light work of the job, and the results are impressive. The garden is looking just beautiful, with more flowers opening every few days. Many thanks also to everyone who helped with the Rhodo Show and Sale on April 20. Tables were set

up, trucks unloaded, plants placed, all in jig time. The sandwiches and cakes were very much appreciated by the crew, after all that work. Special thanks to Linda Easton for her efficient organization, and to Gwen Wright, who supervised in the kitchen.

## **April 8**

Everyone enjoyed the visit from Bill Dale. He had some outstanding pictures of outstanding rhodos in various Victoria gardens. His presence reminded many members of the bus trip taken several years ago to that city. Bill was an entertaining tour guide and took us to many lovely gardens. Thanks, Bill, we always look forward to your visits.

## MEMBER NOTES

Welcome to new members **Phyllis Stapley, Chris Bellamy, Kim Sleno and Bill & Hilda Fawcett.**

The annual BBQ will be held at the home of **Bob and Marion Lofthouse**, on Munster Road, date not yet set.

There are a few bags of fertilizer left at **Harry Wright's** nursery.

On May 12, 7:30 p.m., **Harold Greer** will be a guest of the Mt. Arrowsmith Rhodo group, and will show his dramatic presentation on rhodos past and present. It will be well worth the trip to the Qualicum Beach Civic Centre.

The North Island Rhodo Garden Tour is all set up, with 7 gardens around Courtenay for \$6. What a bargain!

### **RHODODENDRON HARDINESS**

Every winter is different in our area. This past winter, as you all know, was comprised of unexpected snow storms, as early as 15 Nov. and continuing well

into March, severe gales, the wettest March in years - what else? So naturally everyone's thoughts were on rhodos - did the snow break the branches? Did the frosts in April ruin the flowers? Is a rhodo rated hardy at +5F REALLY HARDY ENOUGH for my garden?

A letter received recently from **Herb Spady**, President of the ARS and a resident of Salem Oregon (yes, they had winter too), requests the following:

"The Hardiness Committee of the ARS is in need of data regarding the hardiness of rhodos. This data can be obtained only through the participation of members evaluating the hardiness of the rhodos that they grow and submitting that information for inclusion in the database. The task is not difficult or excessively time-consuming. This is especially true if one has a list of his(her) plants. No narrative description of your weather or the plants is necessary, but strict conformation to the criteria for plant qualification is necessary.

If you are willing to participate in this program please contact **Herb Spady**, Chairman of the Hardiness Committee at 9460 Sunnyview Road N.E., Salem, OR 97301-9060. Phone 503-585-2427, FAX 503-585-4816, or Email: [spadherb@AOL.com](mailto:spadherb@AOL.com) for additional information".

**AMATEUR GARDENING** recently printed an article on Primroses which gave plenty of useful advice on how and why to grow these colourful plants. The wild primrose, *Primula vulgaris* and the cowslip, *Primula veris*, crossed, give us Polyanthus and these come in some amazing colours including deep blue. They start blooming early in spring, and are quite happy as companions to rhodos. They prefer damp, mossy banks in well-drained acid soil, but are quite happy growing in the shade of rhodos or other shrubs.

In order to conserve moisture around the plants, in summer, dig in plenty of well-rotted manure (stacked for six months please) when

you first plant them. Mulch with organic matter to help prevent drought in summer, and give them a fertilizer with extra potash twice a year.

You can dig them up after flowering, plant in a shady spot where they can be easily watered in summer, and replant the crowns in their original places, in fall. This is extra work which can be avoided by careful planting in the first place.

^ Weevils sometimes attack the roots and cause the plants to collapse. You may be able to save the crowns by shaking off the weevils and replanting in a different position.

Primroses and polyanthus give a bright, cheerful look to the garden for several months in spring, and combined with crocuses, early tulips and daffodils, give a lift to the gardener and to visitors which can keep keep them going until the first frost-proof rhodo flowers appear.

### **THE CORNELL FUNGICIDE FORMULA**

This spray will help prevent and/or control blackspot on roses, powdery mildew on summer squash, and early blight on tomatoes. Has anyone tried it for powdery mildew on rhodos or azaleas?

1 tbsp. each of baking soda and oil (light horticultural oil or regular vegetable oil) to 1 gallon of water. With vegetable oil, add a little insecticidal soap. Shake well before and during application. If weather is humid, spray every 5-7 days, both sides of the leaves, and spray at the first signs of disease.

ALWAYS test any spray on a small area before spraying the entire plant - or crop. I once saw a row of leafless miniature roses, the result of too high a concentration of baking soda.

### **SLUG-TIME AGAIN**

In a recent copy of Organic Flower Gardening, I found 32 (count them) ways to deter slugs. Here are some of these suggestions.

Cleanliness - don't leave bits of old newspaper or boards lying around - they make wonderful slug hotels. Check the edges and bottoms of any flower pots or other containers stacked up in corners. Slugs, they say, can travel 3 city blocks in a day, so keep the compost pile as far away as possible. Prune away the slug paths - shrub branches trailing on the ground or leaning against fences or buildings make wonderful slug highways.

When possible or when it stops raining, 2" barriers of wood ash, sawdust, eggshells and/or table salt help melt the slugs on contact.

Hand-picking (ugh) or setting up some of Bill Rozel's slug traps (just dump them out) will help. Slugs prefer non-alcoholic beer! It's the lager yeast that attracts them, not the alcohol. So, if you don't want to buy beer, mix your own - 1 cup water, 1 tsp. sugar, 1/4 tsp. yeast, placed in dishes or slug-trap bottles.

Encourage birds in the garden - they eat large

quantities of slug eggs. If you live outside town, get a couple of ducks - no more slugs. Baby plants need to be protected from the ducks of course, but some ducks never eat garden plants, I have been told.

### HEELING IN

Here is a quick way to look after rhodos you are unable to plant immediately: Dig a hole and line it with a piece of black landscape fabric. Take the plant out of the pot, and put it in the fabric-lined hole. Tuck the ends in the top and fill around the package with soil. Give it a good drink if the weather is dry. When you are ready to plant, just pull the package out of the hole, take off the landscape fabric (to be used another time) and plant your rhodo in a prepared hole in its permanent location. Hint from Organic Flower Gardening Spring 1995.

### CUTTINGS

How are the rhodo cuttings taken last fall? Some members have had problems, and I believe the main reason is lack of strict cleanliness. Rinse containers with a

bleach solution, dip knives and pruners in it also. Use sterilized soil. New peat moss and perlite are unlikely to have germs or mold but if they are left around in a damp condition for a few months, they are almost sure to attract green algae.

Check with Harry Wright for his recipe for the cuttings mixture - rhodos started in that are doing fine, but others have succumbed. Let's hear how your plants are, so others can benefit from your experience.

### CHLOROSIS AND EPSOM SALTS

(Magnesium sulphate) **Clint Smith**, writing in the Cowichan Valley newsletter, advises that chlorosis is common in rhodos up and down the coast, from Prince Rupert B.C. to Morrow Bay, Calif., because the whole region is deficient in magnesium.

Make a solution of Epsom Salts, 2 tbsp. to a gallon of water, add 1 tbsp. iron chelates, and wet the root area at two-week intervals, 3 times while new growth is forming.

How can you tell if your plants need this treatment? Yellow leaves, some as yellow as lemons, with greenish veins. This treatment should be given every year, because heavy winter rains wash the chemicals out of the soil.

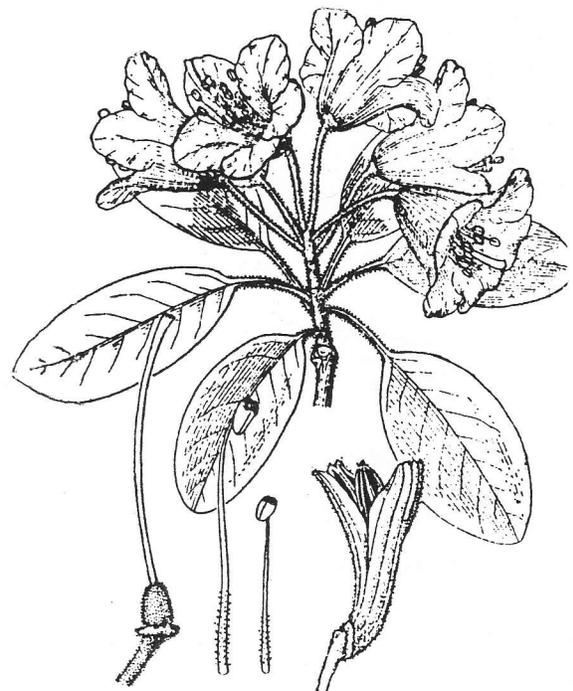
Are you on the internet? Here are some rhodo websites.

American Rhodo Soc. - <http://www.rhodie.org/~ars>

ARS, Nanaimo  
<http://www.island.net/~editor/rhodo.html>

ARS -  
<http://www.whidbey.net/~kabowers/arsmaster.html>

Alpine Plants Societies -  
<http://www.eskimo.com/~mcalpin/soc.html>



R. SELENSE