

NORTH ISLAND RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

P. O. Box 3283 Courtenay, B.C., Canada V9N 5N4

Vol. 13 No. 2

October, 1997

Oct 7

Executive meeting will be held at the home of Marion & Bob Lofthouse, 4307 Munster Rd. Drive west on Lake Trail Road to Munster. First house on the left. IF there is a last minute change, to Linda Easton's home, 4077 S. Is. Hwy, Campbell River, you will be phoned.

Oct. 19 Sunday afternoon.

Meet at Filberg Lodge grounds at 1:00 p.m., and after admiring fall colours on the trees in the park and one other garden with guide Harry Wright, we will convene at the church for a brief meeting and coffee. Harry Wright will demonstrate starting rhodos from seed. Bring a pencil and notebook.

Sept. 9

What an entertaining evening we were treated to by Kristi O'Donnell of Meerkerk Garden. Kristi must be the most vivacious speaker we have ever had, and she presented lovely scenes of rhodos, trees - Meerkerk in all its glory, at various times of the year. Everyone had a wonderful time.

Thanks, Kristi - please come again!

MEMBER NOTES

By now everyone has heard about the terrible bloopers made in the Sept. newsletter. Anyone who planned to buy rhodos or rock garden plants can phone either Harry Wright (338-8345) or Bernie Guyader (338-5267) and arrange to visit their gardens. And of course birds don't eat the flowers or the berries of Pernettya plants. Please accept my apologies.

October is the time to think of renewing membership in the ARS, and because we have a tidy sum in the bank at present, the fee will remain the same for 1998 as for 1997.(\$35)

The fee has actually gone up to US \$28, which is about \$40 CDN. Money-raising efforts by the club make up the difference.

COURTENAY RHODO GARDEN

Bed #4 was planted up on 13 Sept. Please stop by the garden to see how well the plants are doing. Take along a plastic bag and gardening gloves, so you can dispose of a few weeds while you are there. It is now 2 years since this project began, and results so far are impressive.

DID YOU KNOW there are 460 members of the ARS in District 1, which covers Vancouver and the Fraser Valley, and all clubs on Vancouver Island?

CONGRATULATIONS to Dot and Ken Gibson, who received a Silver Medal from the ARS at the Conference in Vancouver last May, and to Les Clay, who was given a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Vancouver Rhodo Society "for his unselfish dedication to the promotion of rhodos on a local, regional and international scale".

THE WEATHER.

Sometimes I think people have nothing else to talk about. I heard on the news a few days ago that

Victoria had the wettest year (Sept

1/96 to Aug 31/97) on record - 1200 mm. So I dug through my own records, and, yes, it was a wet one. 2020 mm here at Oyster River.

The previous time period was similar, in fact years have been getting wetter for the past few. However, we always have our heaviest precip. in the winter months, and a dry spell sometime during the summer. In my garden, that 3-week hot spell in August did damage to the rhodos in the form of sun-scald. Some leaves look terrible, some plants died (all of these in pots so it was my fault). I finally smartened up and rushed around with pieces of Reemay and old glass curtains to protect the scorched plants from further damage.

Hopefully, most will recover.

LET US CONSIDER THE SOIL

The June issue of Mid-Atlantic Rhodo News and Notes has a useful article on how to keep our soil in good health. This article was first published in "The Home Garden" in 1943.

It cannot be assumed that once a soil is brought into good fertile condition it will remain in that state. Not only must fertility be built up in the first place, it has to be maintained.

Let's consider the steps which will give us the proper start in making a 'good' soil. First, the incorporation of manure to induce the many needed soil organisms to develop quickly, to provide the aeration needed, to help hold the quickly evaporating water in the summer, to

supply the needed hormones for plant growth, and to add a certain amount of nutrition to the soil. The manure may be from any natural source, or may be man-made, out of straw, litter, leaves or other plant debris, together with a complete fertilizer if available added for quick decomposition. About a ton to 1000 sq. ft. of ground is a sufficient amount.

To give us the proper structure, to produce air-conditioning in the soil, it is necessary at times to mix our soil with some foreign material. For a clay soil, sand or coal cinders (remember this was 1943) may be added, while for sandy soil, clay, peatmoss or manure would be beneficial.

Were you able to peep underneath the surface of an air-conditioned soil, and one which is "stuffy", the spaces between particles filled with water and toxic gases, you would marvel at the difference in activity of the roots. In the well-aerated soil you would note little white roots spreading out like a network of roads, pushing here and there, meanwhile absorbing needed nutrients for the plant. Roots in poor soil would be skimpy, stubby and often brown. Growth under these condition would be slow and upon the slightest provocation, the tops wilt. The plants are also more susceptible to disease and the depredations of pests. Continued next month.

RHODODENDRON CAMPYLOGYNUM

Peter Cox, in his book "The Smaller Rhododendrons"(Timber Press 1985) says "This is a splendid plant in most of its forms and it is well worth making a collection of these. There is a great variation in foliage, flower, habit and flowering time and no one should be satisfied with one

campylogynum".

If you have a very small garden, or a rock garden, this rhodo will be very satisfactory. It is usually a prostrate, creeping or mound-shaped little gem, with tiny dark green leaves and dense growth. The flowers are large for the size of plant, held up well above the leaves on long stalks, and come in an amazing variety of colours. You can find forms with creamy white flowers, claret, black-purple, reddish, plum-purple, and often with a lighter colour on the outside of the little bells, darker inside.



They do not like a really hot position or dry soil, but prefer a damp mossy spot. In their native Burma and Yunnan, Peter Cox found them at 8,000 to 16,000 feet, in moist moorland, on mossy boulders on open rocky hillsides, cliff edges and clefts, and in open situations among bamboo and larger rhodos.

These plants are not easy to find in the average nursery - you will have to check with Harry Wright (Haida Gold Nursery), Linda Easton, who buys rhodos from Benjamin Nursery in Wash. State, or ask Robin Harrison (Little River Nursery) to check with his supplier.

President Robin Harrison	339 4754
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WHAT IS AN ERICACEOUS PLANT?

In general use, it is a plant which hates lime, or in other words, has to have an acid soil in which to thrive. Ericas, callunas, rhodos, pieris, all belong in this category.

Acid soil often has a high organic content, but light sandy soil can be acid also. We add organic matter in the form of bark mulch, compost, broken-down leaves, manure mixes and peat moss to sandy soils to make happy homes for our rhodos.

Under acid conditions, some nutrients are 'locked into' the soil by chemical reactions. Nitrogen has a low conversion rate in acid soils, which means it doesn't readily convert into a form that plants can use. Phosphates also tend to remain insoluble.

Iron and manganese become more available, so we add chelated nutrients to the soil of ericaceous plants. A good rhodo fertilizer therefore should have small amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus as well as trace elements. A mix such as 6-8-8 or 6-8-10 plus trace elements would be very satisfactory. Remember, all plants must have lime, so a little Dolomite lime in January (sprinkle on top of snow) will assist the rhodos in taking up nutrients in the spring. If rhodo leaves are yellowish, give

them a little nitrogen in spring, or magnesium sulphate (epsom salts) any time.

We don't normally give rhodos any fertilizer after the end of July, because we don't want to encourage new growth late in the year. However, some rhodos don't open their new leaves until August, so I gave my *R. auriculatum* a little phosphate and a little potash when the rain came at the end of August. I will find out if that was a good idea! Some books suggest fertilizing at the end of November, but that likely refers to people who live in California. So much depends on the garden's microclimate, the extent of drought in summer, the amount of water dumped by the fall rains, the number of days of dry freezing weather in winter - we can only check with local 'experts' and use our common sense. And hope for the best, of course.

GARDEN COLOUR IN WINTER

Every year at about this time, I get the urge to remind everyone, once again, that we can have colour in the winter garden. It takes a bit of planning, but is so very much worth the effort!

My feelings are exactly the same as those of M. J. Jefferson-Brown, writing in "The Winter Garden", published by The Garden Book Club (Foyles), 1969.

"The winter flowering shrubs *Viburnum fragrans*, *Hamamelis mollis* and *H. japonica*, *Garrya elliptica* and *Chimonanthus praecox* are a few reliable ones that grow almost as easily as privet. Surely room can be found for these shrubs. Better by far to oust one or two spring or summer flowering shrubs to make way for them than to do without. A single shrub blooming in the winter rejoices the heart more

than a forest of roses and magnolias in spring and summer.

How rich is the miracle of *Crocus* species covering the naked ground with silken robes. How many times more rich is this sight in the fleeting sunshine of winter than the most riotous display in borders below the golden summer sun."

This past winter was rather exceptional in that winter flowers either tried to bloom time and time again, between snowstorms, or simply waited until March when they all bloomed together. Gardeners being the most optimistic of humans, we always say "We are sure this winter will be - different - better - warmer - " Time will tell, but we can be sure that cheerful little *Eranthis*, species *Crocus*, *Galanthus*, *Cyclamen cuum* and various *Hellebores* will bloom sooner - or later - and will be welcome any time.

Long before January, when we expect to start seeing the plants mentioned in the previous paragraph, we are treated to masses of *Colchicums* and fall-blooming *Crocus*. These look lovely mixed with continuously-blooming *Geraniums* such as "Ann Folkard" and "Phoebe Noble". Many trees and shrubs are beginning to change colour also, contrasting strongly with shiny dark green *rhododendron* leaves.

I must digress to tell yet another deer story. Several people have reported the deer are very fond of *gladiolus* flowers this year - for the first time. In my garden, some of the *geraniums* were cut back hard after flowering, and have grown lovely new clumps of leaves which the deer have cleaned off. Others, like the two mentioned above, have not been touched by our little friends.

One of the most reliable groups of plants we can have in the winter garden, is heather, for various forms of *Erica carnea* bloom from October to April, and many have striking coloured leaves as well as flowers. The worst kind of winter doesn't seem to bother them, and they make wonderful companion plants for the rhodos, happily filling in spaces between taller shrubs and choking out weeds.

Many shrubs have bright berries in winter - some eaten quickly by the birds, some left. *Pyracantha* and *Cotoneaster horizontalis* berries are eagerly eaten by the robins that return in January. Other *cotoneaster* berries are finished off by robins moving south in Sept. and Oct. *Berberis wilsonii* berries are in huge clumps like grapes, coloured pink then red, but never touched by the birds. The leaves of this shrub, before they fall, are the brightest red and orange you can imagine.

The bark of some trees shows up brilliantly in winter, especially if the sun shines. Some *Eucalyptus* are quite hardy here, with pale grey-blue evergreen leaves and beautiful bark. *Arbutus* trunks are brightly coloured. *Acer griseum* and *prunus serrula* have striking bark also.



"I don't know about the deer, but it scares the pants off me."
(Amateur Gardening, Aug./97)

'And Now, For Something New!'" (Monty Python)

Something for everyone is your editor's motto. Personally, I am not fond of puzzles, but my husband is and, once in a while he prevails upon me to give some space for a puzzle. There's only one qualification. The puzzle must have some connection with rhododendrons. So here is an original RHODODENDRON WORDSEARCH from my husband's computer.

One prize, a lovely book, *Gardens of the National Trust*. If there are ties, we'll determine the winner with a draw.

E	R	Y	T	H	R	O	C	A	L	Y	X	E	A
L	T	A	M	A	X	I	M	U	M	G	D	S	R
A	T	V	U	L	E	M	A	W	E	U	E	P	B
V	L	I	R	I	R	O	O	F	R	D	K	E	O
I	Y	N	O	R	D	N	E	D	O	D	O	H	R
N	I	T	L	A	N	Q	S	I	S	H	R	I	E
T	R	I	F	L	O	R	U	M	U	L	T	Q	U
L	M	C	I	L	I	A	T	U	M	P	H	O	M
A	S	W	B	U	R	M	A	N	I	C	U	M	B
M	U	I	L	O	F	I	T	R	Y	M	K	T	A
G	O	X	A	R	B	O	L	A	T	G	P	X	L
L	A	C	T	E	U	M	U	C	I	D	N	I	A

These are the rhodos for which you must search.

RHODODENDRON
ALBIFLORUM
RUDE
CILIATUM
MYSTIFOLIUM
ARBOREUM
ERYTHROCALYX
TRIFLORUM

INDICUM
LACTEUM
REX
EROSUM
MAXIMUM
NIVALE
BURMANICUM

NORTH ISLAND COLLEGE

The college, in its community education program is offering some interesting courses.

Bonzai - Campbell River, \$60 for 5 classes, Oct.20 - Nov.17. The instructor is Anton Nijhuis.

Miniature Bulb Gardens - Comox, \$16 for 1 class, Oct.18. The instructor is Becci Russell. Bulbs may be purchased at the class.

Residential Landscape Design - Courtenay, \$125, 9 classes, Sept.29 - Dec.1. The instructors are Alison Mewett and Judy Walker.

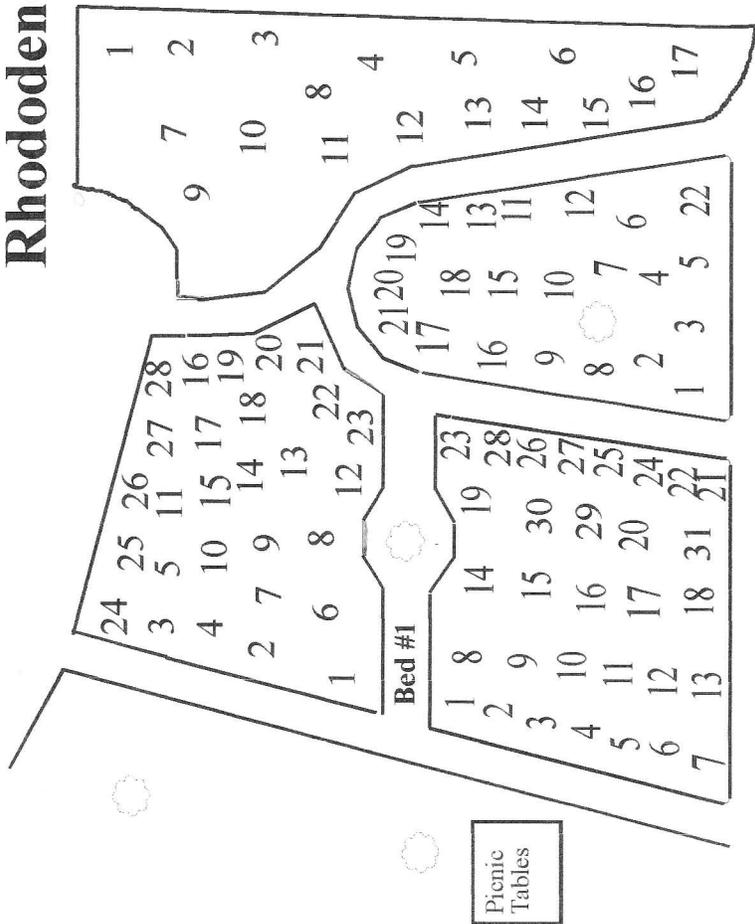
Winterizing Your Garden - Courtenay, \$16 for 1 class, Nov.1. The instructor is Becci Russell.

Ikebana (Japanese Flower Arranging) Courtenay, \$30 for 3 classes, Oct.7-11 and Dec.2-12. The instructor is Yoko Jensen.



Grande series : R. grande

Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden



Plant Identification

Bed #2

- 12 Catawbiense Boursault
- 13 Chionoides
- 14 PJM
- 15 fortunei
- 16 Stoplight
- 17 Taurus
- 18 Hotei
- 19 Mucronatum
- 20 Exbury Naomi
- 21 yakushimanum
- 22 rubiginosum

- 23 Dopey
- 24 yumanense
- 25 Rosamundi
- 26 psuedochrysanthum
- 27 Royston Red
- 28 Lavender Queen
- 29 White Gold
- 30 Yellow Pages
- 31 sanguineum

Bed #3

- 9 Florida Gold
- 10 augustini
- 11 America
- 12 Wheatley
- 13 beesianum
- 14 fargesii
- 15 oreotrepes
- 16 Pink cameo

- 1 Buttermint
- 2 thompsonii
- 3 Virginia Richards
- 4 Marehioness of Landsdowne
- 5 schlippenbachii
- 6 St. Tudy
- 7 Isabel Pierce
- 8 carolinianum

- 1 April Dawn
- 2 Purple Lace
- 3 Daphnoides
- 4 Caroline
- 5 yakushimanum #3
- 6 yakushimanum #2
- 7 yakushimanum #1
- 8 Pillow Party
- 9 Yellow Pippin
- 10 President Lincoln
- 11 Warlock

Bed #2

- 1 Black Magic
- 2 County of York
- 3 Tessa
- 4 Lavendula
- 5 callimorphum 'Edn Form'
- 6 Spellbinder
- 7 Tribby
- 8 Everestianum
- 9 Albert Schweitzer
- 10 Macrophyllum 'album'

Bed #3

- 11 Catawbiense Album
- 12 minus
- 13 Blue Peter
- 14 auriculatum
- 15 Mars
- 16 Olive
- 17 Belle Heller
- 18 Malahat
- 19 Mrs A.T. de la Mare
- 20 Vulcan
- 21 Anna Rose Whitney
- 22 Bruce Brechtbill
- 23 concatenans KW #5874
- 24 Mission Bells
- 25 Molly Ann
- 26 Jock
- 27 Canadian Sunset
- 28 metternechii

Bed #4

- 1 Red Walloper
- 2 Anna
- 3 Markeeta's Prize
- 4 Lem's Monarch
- 5 Pink Pearl
- 6 diaprepes

Bed #4

- 7 PJM White
- 8 Point Defiance
- 9 Creamy Chiffon
- 10 Furnivall's Daughter
- 11 Emasculum
- 12 Crossroads

- 13 Lady de Rothschild
- 14 High Gold
- 15 smirnowii
- 16 Grand Slam
- 17 Sierra Sunset

Sponsored by:

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