

NORTH ISLAND RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

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5 May

Executive meeting will be held at the home of **Marleen Crucq**, 2301 Seabank Road. Continue on Waveland after you pass Coleman Rd., drive east on Seabank to the corner of June.

12 May

Stop at 1995 Beaufort, in Comox, at 6:30 to view **JoAnn and Dutchy's** lovely garden. The Annual General Meeting will be held in the church after everyone returns from the garden.

A few minor revisions must be made to the ByLaws, and some fortunate people will be elected to the Board. If you are asked to take on one of these exciting jobs, please say "Yes".

14 April

Jamie Wallace of Lantzville showed us beautiful pictures of Bhutan, where he travelled some 10 years ago. The sight of mountainsides covered with

beautiful rhodos always inspires us to try a little harder. We all enjoyed his descriptions of the country and people of that misty, unspoiled land.

MEMBER NOTES

By the time you read this, our rhodo shows and sales will be over for another year. Their success depends on the organizing skills of a few people during the year, (thanks to **Linda and Robin**) and large numbers of other members as well as the nursery people who put such effort into the shows. Hearty thanks to all!

The next date to remember is **May 17**, garden tour day. Several familiar gardens are included - the **Chevriers**, the **Bonneys**, and the **Guyaders**, have offered their gardens, and several gardens we haven't toured before are also included - the **Vanderhorst**, **Simundson** and **Walsh** gardens. Remember to finish your tour at the Rhodo Garden, where the raffle draw will be held.

A work party the night before the garden tour (**May 16**) will tidy up the weeds, if any, in the Rhodo Garden, ready for the crowd the next day. Remember to stop in any time you drive by

- more flowers are opening up every day and the plants are looking really healthy.

The annual BBQ will be held 20 June at the home of **Pauline and Dick Bonney**.

Many members will remember the tour we made some years ago to **Allan and Liz Murray's** garden, halfway up a mountainside near Duncan. They had an outstanding collection of rhodos. Now, they evidently have 80 Magnolias in the garden - (according to the Times-Colonist), hybrids and species. A tour of this garden is planned as part of the Cowichan Valley garden tour on May 3.

The newspapers and magazines are full of lists of garden events for the next few months. **May 16** is "Rhodo Day" at the Hort. Centre of the Pacific, with Norm Todd as speaker.

In Dec. 1994, a "new" species of tree was discovered near Sydney, Australia. It is related to Araucaria araucana, the Monkey Puzzle Tree, and will be known as Wollemia nobilis. It has needles rather like a fir, and comes readily from seed. It would not be hardy out of doors here.

Did you try the new super-petunias last year? I was very impressed, especially as the wet summer didn't faze them a bit. This year look for more, including a beautiful double purple named Traveller.

In England, gardeners can now buy potting composts containing an insecticide to combat vine weevil grubs. Levington Plant Protection Composts contain "Intercept" (imidacloprid) which kills soil pests such as vine weevil by contact action for up to a year. The chemical is taken up by the plant systemically. This also controls pests such as aphids for about 3 months. **Imidacloprid** is not an organophosphorus compound and it controls certain pests that are resistant to conventional treatment.

Three formulations are available in garden centres; for outdoor containers, ericaceous plants and houseplants. Above information from "The Garden" the Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society, April 1998.

This journal had a lovely picture of **Veronica Milner's** garden at Qualicum, and mentioned that **Mrs. Milner** has recently donated the estate to Malaspina College for the training of horticulture students.

TOP PLANTS FOR HEAVY CLAY OR WATERLOGGED SOILS



Not many of us have a problem with these kinds of soil, but I noticed in the article written by Chris Margrave in Amateur Gardening, that many of these plants do well in light soils also. They appreciate a deep soaking every week in summer, and shade part of the day in my garden.

Astilbe - feathery flowers in many shades of pink as well as white and dark red. An easy-going plant, untouched by deer.

Cornus alba - red stemmed dogwoods light up the winter. They are often eaten by deer, however.

Lythrum - is listed, and possibly some varieties do not spread as badly as those which are condemned in this country. Best to avoid this plant.

Hosta - this is a wonderful plant, and there are many new varieties on the market every year. They look lovely combined with rhodos and azaleas. However, they are also well loved by slugs.

Houttuynia cordata 'Chameleon' - its leaves, splotched green yellow and red, add a bright touch to the pool area, though it does well in a dry spot too.

It is rather rampant however, once it gets going. It is slow to appear every spring, but stays bright and cheerful until cut down by frost in fall.

Osmunda regalis - and many other ferns - happy almost anywhere in the garden, but prefer a cool shady position. Osmunda grows to 3 ft.

Primula - there are so many kinds and colours it would be easy to have a garden of primulas only. However, deer often nibble the leaves, and if a plant wilts and dies suddenly, you are sure to find weevil grubs around the roots.

Salix - willows of many kinds look lovely in the garden. Some have bright yellow or orange stems in winter. It is not safe to grow them anywhere near your water pipes or septic system, and of course, the deer nibble them too.

Sambucus - elderberries - love a damp spot. The native plants with red berries are among the first shrubs to leaf out in spring. Look for golden-leaved forms such as "Sutherland Gold" or "Plumosa Aurea" for a striking yellow accent point in the garden.

Viburnum opulus - has white flowers in June followed by bright red berries.

Most of these plants will do well in any garden, and astilbes, hostas and ferns are great companion plants for your rhodos.

TED VAN VEEN wrote a book "**Rhododendrons in America**" (Binford & Mort Publishing 1969) which has since gone through several editions and printings (including a Japanese edition). This book is full of very useful information for rhodoholics, and many beautiful rhodo photos. Everyone should have a copy. There are chapters on how to landscape with rhodos, how to buy, fertilizers, prevention of problems - all kinds of useful basic information. Today I am copying information on landscaping with rhodos, not from the book, but from a "hand-out" that I got at a rhodo conference.

WOODED AREAS

"The selecting of woodland varieties must be done carefully since too little light means fewer flower buds with less spring colour. The graceful structure of branches and whorls of leaves are a complement to other trees and shrubs. Rhododendrons adapt readily to practically any native wooded situation because of air coolness, higher humidity and rotted leaf humus".

Ed. Note: How true! When I bought a lot of rhodos in 1968,

I put them in the mixed woods on our property, as I was unable to water them. The plants were all unnamed, so I had no idea of how they would grow or what colours to expect. Now, 30 years later, I have woods full of 20 ft. rhodos. None bloomed until they were about 10 years old, and many have turned out to be (I presume) ponticums. Some have stems which lay on the ground, then rooted, so the woods look quite different to what we started with.

Now, I would follow Mr. Van Veen's expert advice, and choose rhodos that would do well in the woods, and prune them properly. Apart from legginess, though, they are doing very well - no water execpt what nature provides, no fertilizer (lots of decaying leaves in the woods) and coolness on hot summer days.

HEDGES

"Rhodos fulfill all the requirements of a barrier or living screen. Their density of foliage, good rate of growth and compact branching make them an asset to any yard. England discovered rhodo screen value many years ago by planting them as property dividers along the miles of road leading to and from palatial estates. Some varieties of rhodos grow loosely upright allowing open screening which filters light yet keeps out

intruders."

Ed. Note: At this time, 150 years later, there are bulldozers frantically pulling at the *R. ponticum* which have spread, seeded, layered along the ground - until there are miles and miles of thick impenetrable *ponticum* brush in England and Scotland.

SPECIMEN PLANTS

"A quickly established landscaped area can be gained, whether in a wooded lot, a hedge or for a specific garden highlight, by planting specimens. These oversized rhodos can be moved if properly handled. The bloom and growth of boxed, tubbed or root pruned plants may decrease slightly for two years until they have made contact with their new location's soil.

ROCK GARDENS

A rockery's good drainage is ideal for dwarf specimens and hybrids. These species originate from the heights of Chinese, Burmese and Japanese mountains. If the growing conditions of these plants can be duplicated; the rocky ledges, the correct exposure and the proper amount of moisture, then the gardener will have happy plants.

BORDER GROUPINGS

Grouping dwarf and semi-dwarf rhodos near a border creates a pleasing effect. With sufficient background material

and companion plants, low-growing rhodos are most attractive in mass plantings. Their growth habit gives them priority to a front row feature and they grow well in partially exposed landscape areas.

COLOUR HARMONY

The colour range is extended yearly by new rhodo hybrids. Close harmony of colour is accomplished by planting all varieties so as to complement neighbouring plants. Going from light shades to darker ones in the same colour helps to blend a colour theme. The greatest amount of effort is being extended to provide a definite yellow and blue to complete the colour spectrum in the rhodo varieties. In a few years these colours will be available to all gardeners.

ACCENT

This versatile plant has many ways of providing the right accent in the right place in one's garden. The accent may be provided during a specific time of the year. Many species bloom as early as February before spring's mass colour has arrived. A few varieties bloom in early summer just before the perennials and annuals dominate the yard colour. Bright colours, colour combinations and new colours give contrast to more subdued shades.

Landscapers are recognizing

the unusual foliage varieties. Leaves of the species show more range in green colours, shape, size and insulation found on leaf undersides (called indumentum). The new growths can be more attractive than the flowers. Wooly white, shiny silver and deep rusty red are a few of the colours that appear on these unique species leaves. Leaf shape varies: small round green circles to long needle-like shafts, dusty green pointed petals to huge hairy leaves from tropical types; and blue greens to grey scaly greens. An added feature that many species have is that their leaves have a very spicy odor when crushed.

FRAGRANCE

Our insect world first discovered the attraction of odoriferous plants. Many hybrids and species have a delicate fragrance that enhances their beauty. Most lighter toned varieties have this elegant asset. Since a bright colour is lacking, these plants rely on "smell" to attract the bees and the rhodo collector."

