

# NORTH ISLAND RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

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

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1 Sept 331-8318

Executive meeting will be held at the home of Harry & Gwen Wright, 769 Chaster Rd., Courtenay, at 7:30 p.m. Remember, "new" and "old" executive are welcome, indeed expected to attend.

## 8 Sept.

Guest speaker will be Everett Jefferson, an old friend from Qualicum, member of Mount Arrowsmith Rhodo Society, and District Director, District I of the ARS. He will be bringing up-to-date news from our parent organization as well as information on the doings of other rhodo people on the Island.

## 20 June

A wonderful BBQ was held in the fabulous garden belonging to Dick & Pauline Bonney. The weather was perfect, the food fantastic and the treasure hunt as entertaining as usual, thanks to Bill Rozel. Prizes were donated by the following kind and generous merchants:

**Buckerfields**, Courtenay

25 Kg bag of rhodo food

**Courtenay Nursery**

'Fame' Floribunda rose

**The Garden Gate**, a lovely gift package

**Island Sun Greenhouses**, a fibre pot of flowers

**Little River Nursery**

'Olin Dobbs' rhodo

**Oyster River Garden Society**  
4 memberships  
**Stone Tree Nursery**  
Alchemilla erythropoda

Don't forget, when you are out purchasing garden material, that The Garden Gate and Little River Nursery give a 10% discount on purchases to rhodo club members.

## NOTICES

**ALPINE AND RHODO SALE** at Haida Gold Gardens, 769 Chaster Rd., Courtenay, on Sept. 19, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

## COMOX VALLEY RHODO GARDEN

Plans are underway to install Bed #5, hopefully on 12 Sept.

The new path through the garden is under construction.

If you have any rhodos to donate or sell for the project, please give Harry Wright a call, and if we don't have those varieties already in the garden, we will be pleased to give them a permanent home. Bed #5 is located in the sun, so sun-tolerant varieties are needed. More information at the meeting on 8 Sept.

## IMPORTANT

First, the executive is still short a Vice-President and a Social Convenor. Neither job is difficult - please offer your help! Meantime, members of the executive will bring cookies and look after the coffee for the Sept. meeting, and if no Social Convenor is found, members will be expected to bring food; starting with "A"s and "B"s on the membership list, four names will be printed in each newsletter. This will be discussed further at the meeting.

## MEMBER NOTES

As is usual, on the Pacific Coast, we can count on "the hottest/driest/wettest/snowiest/windy ist" etc. etc., so it was no surprise to have, after a wet spring, the hottest, driest month for many years, from the middle of July to the middle of August. All plants had made fantastic growth in the spring - then just stopped and tried to stay alive during the summer. Lucky the people on water lines who were allowed to water gardens every second day. Those of us on shallow wells had to be very, very careful for a few weeks.

Some rhodos were sunburned. I cleaned the local Nifty Thrifty out of glass curtains and used these to drape over the suffering plants. My husband thought everything had blown off the clothesline but the plants were saved.

If you had exciting adventures with your plants this summer, please share them with other members. Write a paragraph or two for the next newsletter!

Now we have had a little rain, it is time to consider taking cuttings or layering plants. Do some plants need to be moved? Do you have room for some new tulips or daffodils? It has been too hot for gardening lately, but a good time to think of improvements that can be made. Late Sept. and early Oct. are usually suitable times for transplanting perennials and shrubs.

## HARDY LATE-BLOOMING AZALEAS

A kind nephew has sent articles from "The Philadelphia Inquirer" which makes us realize rhodoholics abound in many parts of the country. They all have the same enthusiasm, problems, and determination to spread the word about these beautiful plants.

**Jim Gears**, of West Chester, started growing a few plants from seed, joined the local Rhodo Society, built a little greenhouse, and soon had so many plants he had to start a nursery and sell some of them. He says if you want azaleas that bloom in July and August, look for *R. serrulatum* or *R. prunifolium*.

I will quote his advice on planting. "The hardest part of growing rhodos and azaleas is during the establishment phase, especially if the plants have been started in containers in an artificial soil mix. The plants love the mix, and inside the containers they develop dense rootballs. After being moved into a small hole in the ground, the plants languish. The soil environment may be harsh and the roots never take off". He advises, "dig a generous hole, at least twice as wide as the rootball. Remove the plant from the pot and use a 3-prong cultivator to break up the roots, which is the secret of success. Add organic matter such as leaf mold or mini bark chips to the hole, and plant the shrub no deeper than in the container, preferably 1-2" higher".

Another grower, **J. Albert Reid**, from Linwood N.J., has hybridized the Linwood hardy azaleas, by crossing hardy with not hardy plants which bloom later in the summer. One of them 'Opal', blooms in Sept. and in May. These plants are not easy to find in nurseries, but can be found at local ARS chapter sales.

No matter where we live in North America, we have the same love for rhodos and azaleas!

## HELLO --- FROM THE PRESIDENT, HARRY WRIGHT.

I have almost finished dead-heading, which shows summer must be almost over. The rhodos are looking good, with lots of new growth and a nice bud set forming. But I must admit there are more signs of sunburn around than normal, caused by the super heat wave we had during July and early August. There was moisture in the soil but the leaves couldn't replenish it fast enough.

During the bloom period this spring, some of the plants that are borderline hardy in my garden, really put on a nice display. Once again my thanks must go to "El Nino".

I would like to thank those on the executive whose term has just finished, for a job well done, and also welcome those staying on, as well as newly elected members.

Why not bring a friend to the meeting, to introduce him/her to the



world of rhododendrons. See you there.

## A "NEW" Rhodo - *R. groenlandicum*

This plant, a well known native of bogs and muskegs, has until recently been known as 'Ledum groenlandicum', or Labrador Tea. It has now been classified as a rhodo.

The main difference between Ledums and Rhododendrons is that Ledums open their seed pods differently from other rhodos.

Ledum seed pods open on the back end where the pod is connected to the pedicel or stalk. Rhodo seed pods open where the style protrudes. *R. groenlandicum* is evergreen, aromatic, and grows 2' to 3' tall. Its leaves are narrow oblong, the edges rolled under, with rust indumentum on mature leaves. Tiny white flowers are held in trusses of about 30.

*R. groenlandicum* grows in many places in B.C., from sea level to 5000', in boggy areas in full sun or shade. Plants are growing among the *R. macrophyllum* at Rhodo Lake near Qualicum.

There are possibly two crosses between Ledum and Rhodo species. *R. 'Arctic Tern'* (one of Peter Cox's birds), a hybrid between *R. trichostomum* var. ledoides, and Ledum, and *R. 'Brilliant'*, said to be a hybrid of *R. 'Elizabeth'* and a ledum.

Above material taken from Fraser Valley Rhodo Society newsletter, May 1998.

Would you like to know a bit more about these two plants? **Peter Cox**, in his book *Encyclopedia of Rhodo Hybrids* (Timber Press, 1988), says of 'Arctic Tern' "obtained by us from the USA as

trichostomum, we consider that it is almost certainly a *Ledum* hybrid, although it has not been botanically verified. This really is a superb and unusual plant... hardy and vigorous, and needs full sun to keep it compact".

Ed. Note: I have some complaints about my plant - though small it is straggly and often blooms in fall, just before a sharp frost ruins the flowers. I have planted geraniums around it and a smaller rhodo in front, to try to hide the skinny branches.

'Brilliant', a *Ledodendron*, is a cross between 'Elizabeth' and *Ledum glandulosum*, it is thought, done by Halldan Lem (probably) and R. Brooks. Peter Cox says "a very strange, bi-generic hybrid which could become popular. Bright red, bell-shaped flowers on a low, fairly open plant of rather untidy irregular habit. Very attractive bronzy-red foliage through most of the season if grown in sun. Free-flowering and easily rooted, unfortunately seems to lack vigour, needs a little shade and special encouragement."

#### RHODO COMPANIONS

Here is yet another list of plants that enjoy the same growing conditions as rhodos. Look for them when you wander through the nurseries this fall.

*Pieris Hahaha*, variegated, and *Pieris Valley Fire*.

*Andromeda Polifolia* 'Blue Ice'.

*Enkianthus campanulatus* - dainty bell flowers like *Gaultheria shallon* ('Sala'), and brilliant fall colour.

*Fothergilla* - bottle brush flowers, bright fall colour.

*Magnolia seiboldii* - beautiful white flowers all summer.

*Pinus strobus nana* - dwarf Eastern white pine, makes a wide mound, good colour and texture for contrast.

*Japanese Pine* - a natural bonsai with blue needles.

*Cedrus deodara* - look for a low mounding form.

*Katsura Tree* - *Cercidiphyllum*. A dainty tree with bronze new growth, lovely fall colour, and burnt sugar smell as the leaves fall. This can be tall and upright, or you might prefer the weeping form.

This list, and plants to go with it, was presented at a meeting of the Fraser Valley Rhodo Society last spring by Colleen Forster.

Material taken from their May 1998 newsletter.

#### MEMBER NOTES

Here are some more Latin names to help you when you read name tags on plants in the nurseries. I have noticed many tags have very complete information on them these days, which includes hardiness zone, height, soil, sun or shade. Maybe they have been demanded by customers who constantly ask more questions than the clerks can answer. Good for us!

Affinis	related or similar to
Aggregata	clustered
Alpinum	really high
Coronaria	forming a crown
Gypsophila	loves a limy soil
Venenosus	poisonous
Vulgaris	common

related or similar to
clustered
really high
forming a crown
loves a limy soil
poisonous
common

And of course many plants are identified from their home:

Canadensis	from Canada
Japonica	from Japan
Californica	from California
Groenlandica	from Greenland

Stretch your mind! Learn a few botanical names each month and you will soon begin to reap the benefits.

#### REMEMBER THE DOLLAR TABLE?

It seemed like a good idea at the time, but very few members brought plants. Does anyone have a better idea for trading plants or making a little extra money for the club?

#### DEAD-HEADING OF RHODOS

Material taken from an article by Raymond Oliver, Head Gardener, Isel Park, Nelson, N.Z. in the May



1998 newsletter of the Peace Arch Rhodo Society.

"Rhodos growing in their natural state tend to flower well only every second year, the intervening season being given over to the production of enormous quantities of seed, necessary to ensure the survival of the species. Those who have seen the regeneration of rhodos on burnt over or cleared ground can testify to the prodigious amount of viable seed produced.

However, we wish to have a good annual display of blooms and removal of the fading flowers allows the plant's energy to be channelled into bud production for the coming season.

The ideal time to dead-head is as the flowers wilt and fall and with most rhodos this is a very simple operation. If the base of the flower stalk is gripped between thumb and forefinger and bent sharply to one side, it will snap off cleanly. Try not to break off the new growth visible around the base of the flower-stalk.

I have found *R. griersonianum* and its many offspring seem to suffer more than most if not dead-headed. Flowering becomes sporadic and bushes become straggly and untidy looking. Some rhodos are difficult if not impossible to dead-head. These include the dwarf hybrids and alpine species with a myriad of small flowers with no definite stalk. Pinch them off with your fingernails if you can.

You will find rhodos with *R.*

*griffithianum* blood in them, for example the Loderi group, have incredibly sticky flower shoots, so dead-heading is a rather stuck-up affair". (That's where the Skin-so-soft comes in, in our country-Ed.)

"Over the last three years we have endeavoured to keep up with dead-heading our nearly 900 rhodos, quite an undertaking, but the results have been very gratifying. The amount of flowers produced and general vigour of the plants has increased considerably. This has been especially true of the large-leaved species, though dead-heading becomes a little daunting over the 15 ft. mark.

Dead-head your rhodos if you

that the best time to prune is when you have time. But if you want flowers, you have to follow a schedule dictated by the individual plant. The key is whether the plant forms flower buds in the fall or the spring.

Shrubs that form buds in late summer and fall are said to bloom on old wood; if buds form in spring on fresh new shoots, the plant blooms on new wood. Shrubs that flower in spring do so because their buds were formed the previous fall. If you prune such a shrub in fall or winter, you probably cut off most of the flower buds. The best time to prune these shrubs is right after they finish flowering.



possibly can, you will find the time and effort well worth while.

#### WHY PRUNE?

Sydney Eddison, contributing editor of the magazine *Fine Gardening*, says "Don't be shy about pruning. Gardeners have a saying

However, if drastic pruning is needed, it is best to do it in early spring, and give the shrub a full season to recover. Leggy, overgrown rhodos, azaleas and Kalmias can be pruned in late winter, just before they begin their spring growth.