

NORTH ISLAND RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

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

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Dec 5

Executive meeting will be held at the home of **Pauline & Dick Bonney**, 2393 Seabank Rd. Turn left off Waveland, to the first house on the left.

Dec 12

The annual Christmas party. Do not bring items for the Revenue Table, but each should bring a small gift, value less than \$10. Also, if you plan to show slides, get them to **Dick Bonney** immediately you receive your newsletter. The executive will provide food.

Nov 14

Al and Liz Murray, from the Cowichan chapter, were our guests. Liz displayed many beautiful wreaths and floral arrangements made from magnolia leaves (skeletonized) and seed pods, as well as samples of leaves, seeds and seedpods from many varieties of magnolias. Alan showed beautiful slides of magnolia and rhodo plants and flowers in his

mountainside garden. Magnolias are wonderful companions for rhodos, providing flowers, many at different times of the year, and dappled shade for the rhodos. There are a great many deciduous as well as evergreen varieties, and all give a strikingly exotic feel to the garden. A very enjoyable evening!

We were also treated to packets of lilies on the Revenue table, and a brief description, by **Madeleine Simmons**, of how to grow them. The main point to remember is drainage. If your garden is soggy in winter, plant the lily bulbs on a bed of gravel. They also make wonderful companions for rhodos, and when planted among the rhodos, the lily flowers stand out for several months after most of the rhodos are finished flowering.

Jan 9

Bring your gardening questions to this session, at which time you will get the answers (quite often many opinions) from our "resident experts".

MEMBER NOTES

Two of our members, **Paul Chevrier** and **Ernie Exner**, have recently been spending time in hospital. Best of luck guys! You have several months in which to recuperate before next year's gardening bug attacks. We are sorry to report that member **Michael Dewdney** died. Our thoughts are with Ness at this time.

The editor will be happy to put notes on travel, illness etc. in the newsletter

if you will phone, write or speak to her.

Has anyone tried spreading red cedar sawdust around the rhodos to repel weevils? **Ken Gibson** thinks it works. If it works for you, let others in the club know about it.

SWAP 'N SHOP

Do you have a plant you would like to give away? Are you looking for a treasure not found in the local nurseries? This spot is for you! My first customer is **Paul Wurz** - he has looked for Rhodo 'Yellow Pages' for some time, to no avail. Can you help him out?

BOOK REVIEW

California Gardening, by Robert Smaus. Publisher Harry N. Abrams, 1983.

This is a big book, coffee-table size, filled with gardening advice which is just as applicable here as in California. In most of the state, they grow the same plants we do, and all the advice on soil preparation, mulch, fertilizer and watering the garden is very useful to us. There are many lovely photos as well as paintings of flowers.

The book is divided into sections such as the basic garden, the rock garden, bulbs, the shady garden - and apart from some trees and fruits that we cannot grow here, nearly everything else is relevant to the Pacific Northwest, especially the advice on growing plants that will survive our dry summers. I found

this book in the Campbell River library.

WINTER

This is the time of year (especially this year - just about the driest November on record, so far) that we wonder what kind of winter will we have? Mild, rainy, almost no snow or frost, as in the past two years - or several feet of snow that lasts for weeks, as we have had in the past? How to protect the rhodos "just in case"?

Peter Cox, writing in *Amateur Gardening* in Jan. 1992, explained winter reaction in rhodos. You have seen the leaves roll up like little cigars when we have 3-5 degrees of frost. Not to worry, this is a natural mechanism to save moisture in times of stress.

"Both hot sun and hard frosts create conditions where a plant is unable to take up enough moisture to keep the leaves fully turgid. A curled leaf has a much smaller surface area from which it can lose moisture. In prolonged hot or very cold weather the leaves may be curled up over a long period..."

Soil, frozen to some depth, can mean moisture becomes completely unavailable and as frost deep in the ground takes some time to thaw out, so will the plants look distressed for some days after the weather warms up. It so happens that many of the very hardiest rhodos curl their leaves the tightest.

Winter sun combined with frozen roots can do severe damage to some evergreens. In continental climates where temperature extremes are greater, sun hitting the frozen sap in the leaf cells can cause the cells to split, resulting in dead tissue and brown leaves. Where frost can penetrate deeply, it is well worth reducing this penetration by applying

a mulch, 4" deep, of pulverised bark, wood chips, chipped conifer branches or leafmould. This mulch also conserves moisture in summer and reduces weeds".

Do you remember the sudden severe frost in early Nov. 1985? **Harry Wright** wrote "The rhodos that suffered the most damage were situated in open areas with no protection from wind. During this period I recorded a low of -15F. This cold spell lasted for 10 sunny and windy days, an ideal situation for desiccation.

The following conditions cause damage - low humidity, frozen soil, exposure to wind. Of these, exposure to wind is the one we can do something about. Windbreaks consisting of fencing or more hardy plant material will prevent much damage.

On my property I have a plastic tunnel covered with two layers of plastic, inflated and unheated. The difference in temperature between the inside and outside is about 3 degrees. This area is usually filled with small rhodos with their pots set in bark, and during the Nov. 85 freeze there were no casualties.

This experience has shown me that rhodos are hardier than rated provided they are protected from cold winds, and trunk areas are protected from the sun, to prevent bark damage from sudden thawing after freezing nights."

COMPANION PLANTS - GOOD OR BAD?

Lynn Watts, writing in the *Seattle Rhododendronland Newsletter* (1992) said: "Cedars and large maple trees have very invasive root systems that rob rhodos of moisture and nutrients. Douglas firs generally have dense and umbrella-like canopies that prevent rain from moistening the

ground directly underneath.

Low ground covers that have invasive, nutrient-robbing root systems include St. John's wort (*Hypericum*), vinca major and - minor, ajuga, Creeping Charlie and ivies.

Plants used successfully include all forms of gaultheria, cornus canadensis, wild ginger, primulas, epimedium, mahonia, most ferns and all bulbs, including trilliums, lilies and cyclamen."

SNIPPETS FROM SAYWARD by Rose Marie Silken

Before the realities of the garden year have set in, it is difficult to resist the lure of new varieties in the seed catalogs. My solution is to restrict myself to just one experimental item each year. Last year it was tomatillos. My plan was to add them to the salsa I make every September. I started the tomatillo seeds in my unheated greenhouse, in peat pots, April 12. They germinated splendidly and grew rapidly. I wanted only 3 plants, and potted those on into sterile soil mix April 30, still keeping them in the greenhouse. A few weeks later, just as the tomato plants were really taking off, the tomatillo plants wilted and collapsed. Disgusted with my foolishness in trying them at all, I put them outside and ignored them.

The weather was cool and wet, but all three invalids perked up after a few weeks. I planted them in the garden, complete with lots of compost and a handful of wood ash dug into the soil. They grew very rapidly, and by early August I was phoning friends to ask who might want to share a bumper crop of tomatillos.

NORTH TO ALASKA by **Gloria and Bernie Guyader**

We left a disgusted Bernie in Skagway, a town choked with tourists, in the last episode.

"On the way to Whitehorse next day we stopped at Emerald Lake to take photos. The colours have to be seen to be believed. We climbed the hills opposite the lake for a better view and spotted some pretty little penstemons and Jacob's Ladders. After setting up in the campsite in Whitehorse we took in a Klondike show. It was excellent.

Next day we went to the Beringia exhibit where mastodons and other prehistoric mammals are shown. There have been many archaeological finds in the Yukon. We then went to Miler's Canyon on the Yukon River. It had a great assortment of flowers. Both pink and white pussytoes, penstemons, arnicas, mouse-eared chickweed and several varieties of sedums. An added bonus was spotting a wolf on the way out.

Next stop was a campsite on Kluane Lake. The weather was great and the scenery went on forever. I would have been content to stay there, but we had only just so much time. Next night we stayed in Tok Alaska.

The trip down to Valdez had some of the best scenery of the trip. We could see the Wrangell Mountains most of the way and there were several areas on the Thompson Pass with beautiful displays of flowers. Many varieties of mountain heathers, trailing azaleas and blue geraniums. A stop at Keystone Glacier for photos and a final stop for a picture of Bridal Veil Falls, a real beauty, then into Valdez.

Valdez has a great museum with many artifacts dealing with the 1964 earthquake and historical items from the early years. A definite "must see"

if you are in Valdez. We then carried on toward Anchorage, which meant retracing our steps partway. We stopped at a wilderness campsite where the Alaskan bird, the mosquito was ever present. In spite of the mosquitoes I wandered around taking photos. There were valerian, pyrola, lingen berries and labrador tea to name just a few of the plants in the area. Next day it was on to Anchorage. We saw many goats on the Nelchina Glacier. The fact that these glaciers are beside the road gives one a strange feeling. We camped at a municipal campground where we had black bears and moose for company. Downtown Anchorage is a nice area but I discovered that they have a Botanical Garden so that's where I went. It is only two years old but they are doing a great job. The Himalayan Poppies seemed to glow in the intense light up there. I found that the colour of most plants was very vibrant. I took several photos of the meconopsis and other plants in the garden beds.

WINTER WONDERLAND

Here we are, in the middle of "the driest November on record" (maybe) so it is time to look ahead to flowers that will bloom in January (maybe). The grape hyacinth leaves are already out of the ground, where the deer will soon find them. There are buds on the Helleborus niger, and they may or may not flower by Christmas. It is time to give them a little glass or plastic roof to keep the worst of the rain off them.

The fall-blooming crocuses are finished blooming, but many of the early blooming species crocuses will be out of the ground and blooming by the middle of January (maybe). Eranthus (winter aconites) always bloom the first sunny day in Feb. Helleborus orientalis (lenten rose) will very soon show flower buds and new leaf buds too. Naturally none of this will happen if we have a spell of

snowy weather. The plants simply sit and wait under the snow blanket, and rapidly pop out as soon as the weather relents a few degrees.

Anemones and irises of various kinds will soon be on the move after the first of Feb. The pulmonarias soon show flower buds also.

All of these bloom happily in my patch of "woods", protected by the trees from strong cold winds, so they might bloom sooner than in the open garden. Most of the above have never been attractive to deer. I haven't mentioned Bergénias, handsome plants that they are, because the deer ate them all.

There are shrubs that bloom in winter. The Viburnum bodnantense is covered with flowers, as is Mahonia "Winter Sun". Because of lack of strong winds and rain this fall, many trees and shrubs still have bright coloured leaves on them. There are also many shrubs with decorative red, black or white berries to be admired. The robins left many behind, but when they come back in the New Year there will be berry feasts for them.

The winter-blooming heathers are showing buds already, and snow doesn't bother them, so here are more flowers to look forward to by January.

Best wishes for a happy Christmas for you and your family, and good gardening for the New Year. A final hint - remember to throw an old curtain over flower buds of early-blooming Camellias and Rhodos if there is a chance of morning sun hitting them after a frosty night. This advice can be good until early April, depending on the kind of weather we have in the next three months, and how early your silly plants are determined to bloom!

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

There are thirty-four words in this puzzle. All of them, except for one, are the names of species rhodos, taken from Peter Cox's 'The Larger Rhododendron Species'. They are all horizontal or vertical and all start at the left or at the top, so it shouldn't be too hard. Have fun and to all a

MERRY CHRISTMAS

