

# NORTH ISLAND RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

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

Vol. 16 No. 1 September, 2000



President Paul Wurz 287 4301  
Secretary Phyllis Stapley 287 2845  
Treasurer Ernie Exner 339 6845  
Ways & Means  
Dave Crucq 339 7845

#### Publicity

Kirsten Emmott 339 7159

Librarian Marleen Crucq and  
Bonnie Steele

Social Isobel Bergey and  
Edna Foresman

#### Membership Pauline &

Richard Bonney 339 7594

Editor Mary Palmer 287 6629

Articles not credited are by the editor.

#### Sept 5

Executive meeting will be held at the home of **Paul Wurz**, 4367 Gordon Rd. Drive right through Campbell River, north past the Pulp Mill, and turn left on Duncan Bay Rd. Follow the signs for the Mystic Woods Nursery and drive a few hundred feet past it on Gordon Road. Remember all "old" and "new" members of the executive are invited.

#### Sept. 12

Our speaker will be **Gerry Gibbens**, a member of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society and gardener in charge of the Sino-Himalayan Garden at Van Dusen (where many of the Greig rhodos now live). His topic for the evening will be "Associations in the Woodland Garden".

#### 17 June

Many members of our club and members from the Cowichan society shared an entertaining evening at **Brian Zimmerman's** beautiful acres of rhodos. **Bill Rozel** confounded most of us as usual with his complicated rhodo game, but we walked for miles it seemed and enjoyed all the plant treasures on the property. The food, as is usual, was delicious, and the rain held off until we were packing up. What more could we ask?

#### 10 Oct

**Ken Gibson** will be on hand to tell us about the trip to Scotland in May of this year and some of the wonderful rhodos (and people) that he met.

#### A FEW REMINDERS FOR MEMBERS

Bring your list of the 5 best rhodos in your garden this year. Bring back all library books borrowed in the spring. And - bring along ideas for making money! Bring plants for the \$ table, bring plants for the raffle, bring gardening friends who want to learn more about rhodos. Bring suggestions for speakers, perhaps someone invited previously, perhaps a totally new person. What subjects would you like discussed? Please give your

ideas to someone on the executive.

My best "good-doers" by the way are R. Wigeon, Paprika Spiced, Grace Seabrook, Etta Burrows, Loderi King George and auriculatum, which altogether gave colour from April to the end of July. Not counting all the wonderful floriferous "yaks". By the way, you do have to wait a long time for flowers on species such as auriculatum. I waited 20 years for one, 10 years for the other, but once they decide to bloom, they have masses of huge perfumed flowers every year.

THANK YOU to all the generous people who have donated plants to the raffles in recent months - **Ernie Exner, Paul Wurz, Harry Wright and Bernie Guyader** and likely others I have forgotten to mention. There are others who always give so much of their time when volunteers are needed to help at plant sales and garden tours. Your hard work and dedication are really appreciated.

I always appreciate help with the newsletter in the form of articles from members, so don't be shy - tell us about your boat trip on the Uchuck or tour of England or summer spent with the grand children on the beach at Kye Bay.

Meantime, here are articles sent in by our Presidents - "old" and "new".

**Harry Wright** on SUMMER CHORES: Here it is, early summer, and the main job in the garden is "dead heading", and for some unknown reason it isn't really on the top of my list of fun things to do. Of course I do admit that after the job is complete a plant looks 300% better.

In order to lessen the pain from sticky fingers and dead heading I have incorporated two jobs that I do enjoy along with the one that I don't and things seem to be progressing much better.

I love to prune and I love my chipper; is the picture starting to take shape? When approaching a plant to dead head I take a good look from all directions. I like my plants to have an open centre and lower branches removed so that nothing touches the ground. I also like to be able to walk around them when it is possible.

So once these three situations have been taken care of you would be amazed at how many fewer branches there are on the plant, and this means less dead heading.

With the removal of the branches the growing conditions are greatly improved by increasing air circulation. An added bonus is that visibility is enhanced and we can enjoy the wild life to a greater extent, which improves the line of sight. Can this be taken two ways?

So when the dead heading is completed, and I must admit it takes a little longer, my garden is then more enjoyable and I have added many piles of mulch to the landscape. This is beneficial to the plants, and the birds like it because it is easy to scratch through.

By the time dead heading is completed, usually in late July, I have also potted up several plants that have rooted, due to a branch being in contact with the soil. Just what I need - more plants!

**Paul Wurz:** Welcome back after a very short summer break, though it does seem like a long time since our last regular meeting.

I would like to extend a welcome to new members to our executive: **Marleen Crucq and Bonnie Steele** as Librarians, and **Isobel Bergey and Edna Foresman** as our Social organizers.

**Kirsten Emmott**, who did such an excellent job as Librarian and Publicity, has turned part of the job over to **Marleen and Bonnie**.

Without these valuable volunteers it would be very difficult to operate our Rhodo club.

I also wish to thank those individuals who are taking a break from former positions, namely **Hilda Fawcett and Harry Wright**. I am sure these individuals will continue to be very active in our club.

Thanks to **Brian Zimmerman** and his wife for hosting our year-end BBQ, and to all the other people who made the party such a

wonderful success. Our guests from the Cowichan Rhodo Society added greatly to an excellent evening. We were delighted that our old friends **Dot and Ken Gibson** made the trip across Island to join the group for the day.

Thirty members of our chapter were guests of the Powell River Garden Club on July 30, and spent a relaxing and interesting day touring several excellent gardens, partaking of a very tasty luncheon provided by our hosts, and spending a relaxing afternoon in a lovely beachfront garden. Thank you Powell River.

September should be an exciting month for rhodo enthusiasts as the Cowichan Chapter is hosting the Western Regional Rhodo Conference from Sept. 14-17. All the necessary information, and registration package are available in the Summer 2000 ARS Journal. Hopefully, NIRS members will take advantage of this excellent opportunity and participate in the conference. If you are available to assist at the conference I am sure that opportunity will become available. We will keep you informed.

Harry and I will be representing NIRS in the District 1 Chapter Presidents meeting in Richmond on August 13. I expect this will be a very worthwhile and interesting day.

Hopefully, the remainder of the summer will continue to be conducive to excellent rhodo growing - not too hot, too cold, too wet or too dry!

## SEEDS

Our club was requested to bring seeds (rhodos or other) to the conference in Duncan. Many seeds may not be well enough dried by that time. Please bring to the Sept. meeting a list of the seeds you plan to donate, and sometime during Oct. we will process them. Several members of the club have a supply of tiny (3x3" or 3x4") paper envelopes on hand which will be perfect for seed containers. Don't buy any more! There will be more information at the Sept. meeting. Those who have these small envelopes, please bring them to the meeting.

## POWELL RIVER TRIP

30 members attended and had a great day. The weather was hot but the ferry trip was cool and the scenery lovely.

Highlights of **Kim Jackson's** garden included a "bunny barn" - yes, a cool, light building full of beautiful (cute?) bunnies, all carefully named, just like the rhodos, with parentage listed. Wire floors with sawdust under made the bunny's homes very clean, and the sawdust mix is used for mulch among the flowering plants. There was also a huge pond full of lively goldfish.

**Bea Venables's** garden is a masterpiece of bright colour in every carefully tended border. A weed wouldn't DARE go near that garden. Yes, there were rhodos too.

**Honey D'Angelo** has a lovely

older garden, running right down to a sandy beach. There are big old trees and everyone appreciated the shade on a hot afternoon. Lunch was a tasty mix of cool "Oriental" salads and hot dishes, with scrumptious desserts and lots of cold drinks. Everyone appreciated the time to just sit and talk gardening while watching children on the beach and sailboats in the bay.

The afternoon was crowned, by many of us, by a trip to a local nursery where we picked up unusual hostas and other rhodo companions "on sale". We were restricted only by the fact that we had to carry our booty onto and off the ferry.

Thanks to the many **Powell River Garden Club** members who gave up their day to provide transportation for the North Island horde. A most satisfying gardening day!

## A FURTHER NOTE ON DEAD HEADING

Anyone who has a few dozen hardy geraniums will no longer complain about dead heading their rhodos. The geraniums bloom and bloom, and every flower has a seed head. As long as these are picked off, the plant continues to bloom. My method, now, is to give a thorough dead heading three times between May and July, then cut the plant to the ground. Within a week there are new leaves, and many plants also provide more flowers within a few weeks.

## GARDEN TOURS

I hope everyone was able to take in at least one garden tour, for this

is the best way to see what will grow well in our area.

Outstanding gardens in the Campbell River area include the hundreds of rhodos at **Paul and Lynn Wurz'** acreage, growing in ideal conditions with rich acid soil and big trees for shade, and **Donna Hunter's** garden, with huge old rhodos, huge hostas, a sunny bed of lovely roses, and many other treasured plants. I am not surprised she is no longer able to attend our club meetings - between garden work and garden visitors she must be busy 18 hours a day.

An added feature of these tours was to have artists painting in each garden. Unfortunately the weather didn't co operate too well.

I also went on the Denman Island tour, and as usual saw many interesting plants and gardens, as well as displays of **Bentley LeBaron's** pottery, unusual garden touches (carved woodpeckers beside holes in trees for instance) and a home being built of COB construction, which is an ancient method using a mix of clay, sand and straw. **Des Kennedy's** garden was an absolute mass of plants in full bloom, an English cottage garden to the Nth degree. I came away bursting with ideas for improving the garden.

## TO DEAD HEAD OR NOT TO DEAD HEAD, THAT IS THE QUESTION.

Seattle Rhododendronland newsletter of Feb. 2000 has the final say on dead heading. I quote:  
"The question is "Do I really have to remove all the dead flowers on

my rhodos?" The answer is a simple YES and NO.

Most people will gladly tell you that no one hikes into the mountains just to dead head all the rhodos in the wild. Most people remove the dead flowers for vanity - the garden looks cleaner. It also allows you to view the new foliage as it emerges.

Some rhodos bloom every year whether or not you dead head. There are others that won't bloom at all the next year if you don't. These are the plants that usually won't produce new growth, which is where the flower is produced, on a terminal with an old truss (seed pods) on it. So how can you tell which kind of rhodos you have?

Experimentation and living with your plants, see how they react to "dead heading or not". Some rhodos produce so many tiny flowers, such as R. Ginny Gee, Night Editor or R. racemosum that it seems impossible to clean them all off. Luckily they don't have to be, unless you have all the time in the world and some very small scissors. They will bloom just as heavily year after year without any cleaning.

The time for dead heading can be critical for many rhodos. The flowers for the next year are formed on the new foliage very early on the new growth (even though you don't see them). The plant uses a lot of energy to produce the new foliage and flowers. Having old trusses on the plant still trying to produce seed can be very hard on the

plant. If you can get the plants cleaned off before the new growth gets too far along you will be rewarded the next year."

We have received a "thank you" note and an invitation from Jim Cadwalader at Milner Woodland Gardens. We are invited to an Open House, a behind the scenes look at the garden, 23 Sept. from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Our club is among the founding donors of the garden.

#### SUMMER READING

I found a lovely little book in the local library - "Clematis and the Ranunculaceae" by Deborah Kellaway, published by Pavilion Books Ltd. 1994.

Many plants in this family are arranged by season - for Winter, for instance, there are chapters on the Winter Aconite, the Adonis, and Hellebores. There are lovely photos of each plant described, and the writing is so classy and easy to read that it is a real pleasure to delve into information on your favorite companion to rhodos in the garden.

Speaking of the Adonis, I cannot imagine why I haven't seen one for sale or in a garden in this country. To quote Ms. Kellaway "Everyone agrees that the perennial varieties are robust, easy to grow, long-lived, useful. They enjoy lime but perform well on acid soil too. Yet if you walk into a plant centre in the first two or three months of the year,...you are unlikely to see one. The reason may be in the relative difficulty of propagation...Most species do not

enjoy division, and take time to re-establish themselves."

Adonis looks like a larger Winter Aconite, and blooms a little later. Brilliant double yellow flower with a ruff of dainty serrated leaves describes Adonis amurensis, whereas Adonis vernalis looks more like a mound of short-stemmed yellow daisies.

For spring, early-flowering Anemones, Caltha (Marsh Marigold) and buttercups are described; summer-blooming members of the family include Trollius, Aquilegia, Thalictrum, Delphiniums, Larkspur, Nigella and Monkshood.

Fall flowers include Japanese Anemones, Cimicifuga and Actaea. Clematis is listed separately as an "all season" flower.

There are lists of UK and US plant suppliers, and a "further reading" list that includes many useful and interesting books.

I will quote to show what I mean by "classy" writing:... "The garden is never without flowers. Usually there are several genera in bloom at once. In March, for example, when Clematis armandii is smothered in its sprays of starry flowers and Anemone blanda is opening beneath the trees, the hellebores are still in flower, their stamens have fallen but the sepals look like fixtures, shapely as ever, though tending now towards the green rather than the white or pink."

This book would be a good one to buy, not only for useful information but for browsing, but in any case be sure to look for it in the library.