

NORTH ISLAND RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

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

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Articles not credited are by the editor.
The club meets the second Tuesday
of the month, except July and
August, at the United Church on
Comox Ave., Comox 7:30 p.m.

4 March

Executive meeting at the home of
Dorothy & Don Law, 671
Crestview, Comox.

11 March

We are looking forward to a visit by
Clint Smith, who will tell us all
about his recent trip to Ireland (I
hope). Clint is an outstanding
speaker, and has many interesting
stories to tell about the garden trips
he has led to the UK in the past few
years. He may bring some rhodos for
sale.

11 Feb

First, **Bob Argall** gave an interesting
talk about the smaller bulbs that can
decorate our gardens early in the
year. He had many photos of
beautiful "little" bulbous plants as
well as of tulips and narcissus. Many

questions were asked and opinions
given on what the deer will (or will
not) eat. In general they eat anything
that looks like tasty fresh grass in
winter - tulip and muscari leaves are
favorites. In my garden they rarely
eat leaves of species tulips. Wayne
Steele commented he feeds the deer
carrots all winter, so they don't bother
with anything else in the garden. We
had a lovely discussion on gardening
with small bulbs - and deer.

Then, we enjoyed a visit from **Brent
Garstin**, who brought samples of the
kinds of compost he makes and sells,
also bone meal made from ground-up
fish bones. The compost he makes
is sold after 2 years sitting and the
screened bark mulch is bark from
trees that have not been sitting in salt
water. His establishment is on
Headquarters Rd., 6 Km from the
Shell Station at the bottom of
Mission Hill.

Art Knapp donated a lovely planted
pot of primroses and small bulbs -
narcissus and Iris reticulata, to be
used as a door prize. How kind of
him!

MEMBER NOTES

Help needed for the Rhodo Show and
Sale, May 4, 10a.m. to 3 p.m., and
for the garden tours (7 gardens) on
May 10.

Bonnie will be sending in another
book order in late March or early
April, so try to get a look at the
Whitecap catalogue. This catalogue
lists many very good books, not just
gardening books. Some of the
cookbooks listed are mouthwatering!

There are books on biography,
sports, reference, travel - but back to
gardening. Whitecap is now the agent
for Timber Press, as well as
themselves and several other
publishers. For instance, Botanica's
Pocket Series, an Encyclopedia,
Annuals & Perennials, Roses, Trees
& Shrubs, all pocket-sized with 1000
pages and 2000 photos, very
reasonably priced. Books for
renewing the garden, for first-time
gardeners, Irises, Herbs, alpine
plants, Gardeners' Guide series by
Timber Press, more and more, and a
new Rhodo book, The Illustrated
Rhododendron by Pat Halliday,
pricey but maybe we can buy it for
the library next time we have \$ in the
budget. Prices for many of these
books is very reasonable (for these
days) so- buy a book for yourself or
an "unbirthday present". You won't
regret it.

BOOK REVIEW

Talking of books, I found a
fascinating book in the Campbell
River library which is going to keep
me busy for several renewals.
The Gardener's Atlas, by Dr. John
Grimshaw, published by Firefly
Books 1998.

There are not only photos and
descriptions of many kinds of
gardens - the Medieval garden, a
garden of Islam, Japanese gardens
and many others, but historical
information about plant families. For
instance, the Heather family, which
includes Rhodos of course, has maps
of the parts of the world these plants
came from originally as well as
information on the plant hunters,
hybridizing, Wilson's "50" azalea

cultivars, and information on other members of this huge family, including heaths, heathers, and Arbutus.

Gentians and Campanulas - world maps showing where various members of these families came from, pictures of various beautiful gentians, and an article on Reginald Farrer, an alpine garden wizard.

Camellias and Magnolias, the Daisy family, the Rose family - comprehensive information, pictures and maps of these and many others. If you love books and plants, this book is a "must read".

EARLY BLOOMING RHODOS
Amateur Gardening, 14 Dec 02 had an article that would make us drool, for was on the subject of rhodos that bloom in the winter. Britain is in general one zone warmer than we are, Zone 8 for most of the country, Zone 9 around the west and south coasts, and Zone 7 for north-east Scotland. Of course they, like we, have severe winters once in a while.

For instance, the writer told of R. Polar Bear in his garden, still with a few flowers in December. Kennie Cox of Exbury says "flowering time of the winter-blooming rhodos depends on the weather. In a mild season we can depend on some groups to be in bloom for Christmas". The Nobleanum group is the earliest to bloom, Nobleanum a rich rosy pink, R.N. coccineum, bright red, R.N. Album, white, or R.N. Venustum, pale pink, hardy in nearly every part of Britain.

R. Christmas Cheer can be relied on in the depths of winter, seemingly frost resistant, with blush pink flowers. The rosy purple flowers of R. dauricum are small but long-blooming. R. dauricum "Midwinter" received an RHS AGM. R. Praecox is another early bird AGM plant,

totally hardy but the frost can damage buds and flowers.

More early rhodos include R. calophyllum, which becomes a giant, 10 ft. tall and wide, with white or pale pink flowers. Compact R. ptarmigan, to 3 ft., has snowy white flowers. R. Seta becomes 3-5 ft. tall and wide, with light pink flowers striped with dark pink. R. moupinense, slow-growing to 8 ft., has soft cinnamon-pink peeling bark and white or blush pink flowers. Sometimes R. mucronulatum opens in December. Rust coloured "Cornell Pink" AGM is a treasure. Purple-flowered R. rerei blooms early, followed by R. Our Kate, bred at Exbury 40 years ago, pale pink blossoms with a ruby throat. If you ever have the chance, go to Exbury in Jan-Feb., to be sure to see some of these beauties in bloom.

Ed. Note: They didn't mention R. Rosa Mundi, which often blooms sooner than R. Christmas Cheer in our area. There are some Rosa Mundi in bloom here now, and mine is showing colour. So also is R. cilpinense. But we really haven't had winter this year. My R. dauricum was in bloom early in January and is just finishing now - first time the flowers have not been ruined by snow.

A few Notes from "Fine Gardening" magazine, Feb. 2002.

Buy a waterproof field notebook at a survey supply store for making notes in the garden.

Old shower curtains make fine garden tarps, for covering piles of compost or leaves, and for gathering weeds.

For mixing small portions of fertilizer or pesticides, make use of your cookbook. There are 60 drops in a teaspoon and 180 drops in a tablespoon. So if instructions call for 1 tsp. per gal. of water, divide 60 by 16 to get about 4 drops. Use eyedroppers to measure the drops.

Use a correction fluid pen to mark the name of a plant on a pot, because tags are always disappearing. (Those darned Steller's Jays!) The name can be easily scoured off again with a scouring pad.

Here are some important dates for people planning to attend truss shows or garden tours put on by other clubs on the Island:

Mount Arrowsmith Rhodo Society - garden tour May 10 and 11, truss show April 18. Phone Doug Cockburn for further information. Their regular meeting is the 2nd Wed. of each month, at the Qualicum Beach Civic Centre. There has been a suggestion that some of our members might car-pool and attend a meeting this spring. Talk to Bonnie if you are interested.

Carmen Varcoe has kindly sent us information about various rhodo and other plant sales and shows in the Victoria area this spring:

April 13 UVic Finnerty Gardens Tour, free guided tours and refreshments. Chapel Entrance. April 19 Garden Open and Plant Sale. 10629 Derrick Rd. (West Saanich to Downey left off to Derrick).

April 26 Garden Open and Plant Sale. 5450 Old West Saanich Rd. (park next door at Gazebo B&B) April 26 Rhodo Society Show and Plant Sale at Cadboro Bay Church Hall, 2625 Arbutus Rd.

The gardens open at 10:00 a.m., and the Rhodo Show is from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

More information from other clubs as it is received. Meantime, remember our Show and Sale is on 4 May and the garden tour 10 May. Be prepared to help at these venues, and remember to pot up a few nice plants for our Rhodo Club table on 4 May.

Many of us have visited the Stone's lovely garden at Maple Bay. We are sorry to hear **Peter Stone** has died

recently.

Another loss to the gardening world, and the Rhodo world was the death of **Lord Aberconway** on Feb. 4, age 89. Many of us have visited his magical garden at Bodnant, in North Wales. He was chairman of the RHS from 1961 to 1984. The garden was given to the National Trust by his father Henry in 1949.

In the early part of the 20th century, **Henry Aberconway** actively searched for newly introduced varieties of rhodos, azaleas and magnolias from China, Japan and the Himalayas. Bodnant has some of the choicest specimens, which have grown into large trees. I will remember the hillsides covered with colourful rhodos, magnolias and camellias, the huge Laburnum Arch and the giant wisteria growing along a stone wall, absolutely loaded with huge trusses of mauve flowers.

NEW RHODOS

Peter & Kenneth Cox recently visited a previously unexplored area in northern India, and found 40 species of rhodos, some new to science. Samples were sent to the Royal Botanic Garden at Edinburgh for clarification. Two of these, never introduced to the West, are *R. arunchalense* and *R. kaoense*, the latter found in Tibet by **Kingdon-Ward** in 1931. This plant has October-flowering bright yellow flowers, and hope is that it has potential to produce a new range of autumn-flowering hybrids. This team of plant hunters tried to get to this region in 1965 but were not allowed, so the planned expedition was completed in October, 2002. Information from RHS "The Garden" Feb. 2003.

A recent newsletter from the B.C. Council of Garden Clubs includes information and addresses of various specialist nurseries, many of them on this island and the gulf islands. Give

yourself a treat one day, take the highway to Victoria or Duncan, or the ferry to Saltspring or Hornby, and see some wonderful new plants and unusual ways of displaying them. Bonnie has copies of this Bulletin.

Talking of nurseries, when small local specialist nurseries operated by members of our club were described, I completely forgot **Bernie Guyader** and his lovely little Alpine Garden. You can not only buy alpines there, but see them happily displayed among the rocks in this small but interesting garden which includes rhodos, roses, and many unusual trees and shrubs, as well as the alpines. 1965 - 6 St. E. 338 - 5267.

ATTRACTING BENEFICIAL INSECTS TO THE GARDEN

From "Gardening How-to" Magazine Dragonflies, Lacewings and Ladybugs are all valuable friends in the garden. In order to attract them, limit the use of pesticides. Because many beneficial insects eat pollen, planting a range of pollen-rich flowers helps. These include sunflowers, dill, sweet alyssum, daisies, yarrow and goldenrod.

In order to attract the beneficial insects, you must also have a range of pests, for when the beneficials completely eradicate their food source, they will leave the garden.

BENEFICIAL NEMATODES

Diana Scott provided information on these creatures, which have proved to be very effective in local gardens where they have been used. Harry Wright can tell you about their use in his garden.

Here are some quotes from the article originally published by **Dan Hickey**. "For gardeners, beneficial nematodes are attractive as biological pesticides because of their effectiveness and environmental safety. They contain no toxins and are harmless to humans

and all other warm-blooded animals. They won't harm fish or plants and are ideal for insect-infested areas around drinking wells... They are good for removing a number of beetles that live in the soil, for example carrot weevil, asparagus weevil, black vine weevil. However, effective use of beneficial nematodes requires knowledge of the nematodes and the insect you want to control. Simply spraying them like a traditional insecticide won't work.

Producers ship beneficial nematodes in the form of gels, dry granules, clay, and water-filled sponges. All of these dissolve in water and release the millions of nematodes... They should be sprayed on infested areas at a time when the targeted pest is in the soil. Timing is important. Northern gardeners should apply nematodes in the spring and fall, when the soil contains insect larvae. If you are in a warmer climate, they are more effective in the summer.

Beneficial nematodes move in water-filled spaces between particles of soil. If the soil is too dry or too tight, they may not be able to move and search out host insects. Watering the area before spraying is recommended, and an additional sprinkling after releasing the nematodes will help rinse them off plants and grass into the soil". You can look this up on the Internet: gardeners.com/gardening/nga198.asp

Harry Wright has provided this article on BLACK VINE WEEVILS, the reason we talk of beneficial nematodes.

"These slow-moving, dark beetles about 3/8" in length are active at night during the summer months. It is easy to ascertain their presence by torch light at night. They feed on leaf margins, chewing out notches, giving the leaf a very ragged appearance. They usually cause only cosmetic harm to the plant.

Adult weevils feed actively from sundown to sunrise. During the day they seek cool, moist and dark places to hide. On sunny days they will be found in the leaf litter underneath the plants, but they may remain on the plants all day in cloudy weather.

You go out after sunset and shake the branches over a white sheet spread on the ground. The beetles first appear in early June, and feed actively for about 4 weeks. They do not fly, but are capable of walking a long way to find suitable food plants. Then egg-laying begins. Remove foliage that is touching the soil around rhodos that are susceptible. Eggs are laid as long as the weevils are alive. They are dropped on the ground, or drop from plants onto the ground.

Larvae hatch from the eggs and immediately bore into the ground to feed on plant roots. Young larvae feed on the fine feeder roots of plants but move to larger roots and the crown of the plants as they grow. A soil drench with insecticide is effective at this time. Larvae are nearly full-grown by late Sept. and spend the winter in a quiet non-feeding state. They continue development in the spring and pupate in late-May. Development is dependent on temperature so these times may vary between location and years. The next generation of adults emerges from the pupae around the beginning of June".

So, it would seem that early June would be a good time to use nematodes. The soil would be warm and the beetles hatched out. Another good time would be July-August, when egg-laying is in full swing.

HOUSE PLANTS

After writing the article on how to care for Christmas gift plants, I had a query from a reader several thousand miles east of Vancouver Island, and

realized the information I often give applies to the "wet west coast of North America" but not necessarily to the east. For instance, Saskatoon can be the coldest brightest place on earth in January, and people have gloxinias in full bloom. Due to lack of sunshine, ours take a 3-4 month rest in winter.

Peter Seabrook, writing in *Amateur Gardening* 4 January 2003, talks of flagging cyclamen and yellow and falling-leaved poinsettias. "The first lesson to remember is: cyclamen for cool conditions, and poinsettias for warm. Indoor plants need every bit of daylight they can get these short, dark winter days. Each pane of glass reduces light transmission by 18%, so while double glazing retains warmth, you can see how it cuts light. Clean, sunny, south-facing windows are the ideal daytime place for indoor plants in winter. Care labels that advise us to keep plants out of direct sunlight should be disregarded. Imported plants, transported in dark semis, often have root tips killed before consumers ever get them home. If plants are ailing, root inspection is the first step in diagnosing likely causes. Look to see if soil is too wet or too dry and how healthy the roots look". Best advice is to buy plants that were produced locally, or as nearby as possible. Buy B.C. or Washington or Oregon, depending on where you live.

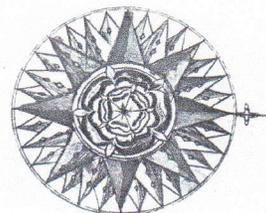
ARS CONVENTION - TREASURES OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

The annual convention will be held in Olympia, Wash, April 30 to May 4 this year. Money, and lack of it, is always a consideration, and this time there will be a special workshop on identifying funding sources. Every chapter is urged to have a member attend this session, and information additional to that in the Winter 2003 Journal has just been received (Feb

18). Please ask the Editor for more information if you plan to attend. By the way, if your copy of the journal did not include a copy of the insert regarding the convention, and you hope to attend, please speak to a member of the executive.

SNIPPETS FROM SAYWARD

Rose-Marie says" I have long been a fan of our native Oregon Grape, both *Mahonia Aquifolium* and *Mahonia nervosa*, the creeping or groundcover form. Long before I became interested in gardening with native plants, I experienced daily enjoyment of Oregon Grapes in a mass planting of *M. aquifolium* around the Sedgewick building on the UVic campus. Truly this plant offers all-season rewards: evergreen foliage that colours to red and purple tones in winter, pale red new foliage, yellow flowers in spring followed by dark purple berries, appealing to birds and jelly-makers (but wait for frost to flavour them). *Mahonia* needs little care - pruning and deadheading are unnecessary, and their soil requirements are spartan. Of course the native ones thrive here, but *Mahonia* is a fairly large genus, and species from other parts of the world are finding their way into B.C. gardens. *M. pinnata*, from California, has been crossed with *M. aquifolium* to create *M.x wagneri*. The Asian mahonias include *M. bailii* (Latherleaf *Mahonia*), *M. japonica* and *M. lomariifolia*, all handsome, tall shrubs with fragrant flowers. They are not as hardy as the Pacific Northwest natives (Zone 7). An excellent article on mahonias, by Denman Island's Carol Hall, appears in the current issue of the American magazine *Horticulture*."



COMPASS ROSE
From *Atlas Maritimus*, 1675