

North Island Rhododendron Society

PO Box 3183 Courtenay BC Canada V9N 5N4

Vol.18 No.3 November 2003



R. macrophyllum

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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.

Nov 4

Executive meeting will be held at
the home of Ann Chevrier, 417
King Rd., Comox.

11 Nov

Garth Widemire of Maple Ridge
will "show and tell" some of the
beautiful gardens in the Fraser
Valley. This presentation should
give us inspiration for another bus
tour.

14 Oct

Ken Gibson brought many pictures
of wonderful Irish gardens.
The western side of that island has
an almost tropical climate, thanks to
the Gulf Stream flowing by, so we
saw many plants such as palms and
tree ferns which are at best marginal
in our area. 60 ft. rhodos seem to be
common. Everyone enjoyed the
October evening of spring flowers.
Ken and Dot are always so
enthusiastic about rhodos - slides of

their own garden are proof of that.
Thanks so much for coming - we
are always happy to see you. And
talking of bus tours, we should try
to plan a couple of days over on the
west side of the Island - Ucluelet
for the George Fraser Day and
Tofino for viewing Ken's garden
and visiting the island garden he
described, next May.

Judy Walker brought several boxes
of her favorite garden tools, some
well-worn after many years of use.
She often explained why this one or
that was the best one for the job.
Her advice was "Don't buy cheap
tools; they won't hold up to years of
the hard use she gives them. Buy
the best you can afford; they will
repay you many times". She
recommended Lee Valley Tools,
and I for one, agree with her. Mind
you, not everything in their
catalogues is expensive. My
favorite small ratchet clippers cost
only \$9.95 and I can't do without
them with my achy thumb joints.
Thanks Judy, you gave us some
really useful advice.

There was a large display of plants
on the Revenue Table, some rooted
cuttings of unusual shrubs. Bernie
brought a lovely little Bonsai rhodo.
for display. Remember to bring
material for the Revenue Table, and
don't forget to buy something too!

MEMBER NOTES

Amateur Gardening magazine is
always full of good advice; here are
some hints for fall cleanup:
Dahlias: cut the stems down to 4"
on a dry day (after tagging with
name or colour), dig up the tubers,
brush off loose soil and leave in a
dry place for a few days if some soil
clings. (Some people wash them

first). Cut off damaged or diseased
areas, and treat wounds with
powdered fungicide (sulfur is good).
Stand the tubers upside down until
the stems have dried out
completely, then pack in boxes of
dry peat and store in a cool, frost-
free place until spring. Do the same
with Chocolate Cosmos, *Cosmos*
atro sanguineus, for rot, slugs or
frost will get them if they are left in
the garden.

If dahlias or gladiolas have been
planted where they can stay dry all
winter (close to a building away
from rain) they will likely survive
unless we have a very severe winter.
In fact, I read advice re gladiolas -
they are very inexpensive as well as
beautiful, so plant them among
shrubs so they won't have to be
staked, and don't bother digging
them up in fall. Most will survive,
and if they don't, buy a few more
next year.

Leaf Mold: Rake leaves into a
corner, cover with plastic or put in
plastic bags, and leave for a couple
of years. They make great compost.
Rake rotting leaves out of the pond,
off the lawn and particularly off the
rockery. If left they rot and leave an
unsightly mess.

Perennials: There is all kinds of
conflicting advice on this but you
can cut them back by 1/3, leave the
rest to help protect plants from
snow and ice, and finish cleaning up
in spring. Some plants with stiff
stems and nice dried flower-heads
look handsome in winter as well as
providing birds with seeds to eat. It
helps to prevent frost heaves around
newly planted material if you
sprinkle a mix of compost, manure
and leaves around them. Keep it

away from rhodo stems.

Burning: It is wasteful to burn leaves and debris that will break down to make soil in a year or two, but wise to burn all foliage and roots of onions, potatoes and tomatoes, to help eliminate fungus diseases.

Tools: A bucket of mixed sand and used motor oil is great for cleaning shovels and other tools.

Ties and Labels: Check these on trees and shrubs - between wind and Steller's Jays, the labels may be gone by spring.

Check climbing plants such as roses and clematis - renew ties and cut back when necessary.

Tender plants in pots: Bring them in for the winter, to a cold or slightly heated greenhouse, a garage, or close to the house. Cut back if necessary, wrap in bubble plastic, and do not water oftener than once a month until growth starts in spring. If a few slugs came in with the plants, use slug bait, but be sure no cat, dog or small child has access to them.

Clint Smith recommends, for chlorosis (yellow leaves): 2 tbsp Epsom salts, 1 tbsp iron chelate in 1 gal. water. Wet the rootball or spray the leaves every 2 weeks, 3 times.

DROUGHT

There are many articles on this subject in many magazines, and I have found advice from people living in much more severely drought-stricken areas than ours. In the American Southwest, they have really suffered. Their average rainfall per year is 12", and this past year they had 1/2 that. How can they possibly garden? They grow lots of native plants for one thing. They save every bit of rain or snow in barrels or cisterns. But there are some "don'ts" to remember. They

apply greywater from bath, kitchen sink or washtubs directly to the soil, not through a hose, and alternate with clean water to avoid buildup of salts. Greywater is alkaline, so don't use around acid-loving plants. Don't use washing machine water if it contains fabric softeners. Don't eat root crops that have been watered with greywater. Sodium, bleach and borax can also harm plants.

We might not have to go to such lengths in our gardens, but "the experts" keep warning us about global warming and we should start to think about what plants to grow. This past summer, for instance, native plants such as Oregon Grapes on my property were never watered except by rain, and they look as healthy as ever.

PLANTING UP POTS FOR WINTER DECORATION

The Oct. 2003 issue of Gardens West has some lovely ideas and pictures of very attractive big pots of plants, which might inspire us to try these ideas ourselves.

Look for slow-growing conifers such as *Abies balsamea* "Hudsonia" or *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* "Gnome" or *Pinus nigra* "Pygmaea", add a few winter-blooming heathers or winter pansies. Note the deer in my garden always eat pansies but never touch the smaller violas. A tall evergreen grass, *Carex* or *Dracaena* in the centre will look good. There are many attractive trailing variegated ivies.

Depending on location and the kind of winter we get, it might be necessary to tuck the pot into shelter for a few weeks. Be sure to leave a drainage hole, and put the pot up on a couple of bricks or sticks for drainage.

Bernie Guyader found this article in the Times Colonist, written by

Elizabeth Radmore, CanWest News Service.

"Little did I know, when I plunged by hands into the soft cool earth, that I was flirting with disaster. As an avid gardener I liked nothing better than the feel of loamy turf on my hands in spring. I never wore gardening gloves because they would have deprived me of this immense pleasure.

That is, until an exotic bacteria called *Nocardia brasiliensis* introduced itself. It lives in soil and rotting leaves. It is primarily found in the tropics and enters the body through a wound, creating a painful swelling filled with pus. In my case, I had a hangnail on the middle finger of my right hand.

The last weekend of April 1995 was warm and sunny. I got to turning over the old soil and adding new. I thrust my hands deep into the warm dirt, spreading and mixing, rubbing my hands together to break up lumps.

That night, my finger was sore and looked a little puffy. I dabbed it with hydrogen peroxide and put a bandage on it. The next morning, it was throbbing and had swollen to the size of my big toe.

Fortunately I worked in laboratory medicine at the Ottawa hospital where the Emergency Dept. doctor promptly removed the nail and called a plastic surgeon. He took a swab and put a bandage on it, also prescribed an antibiotic and a heavy duty pain killer.

The results of the swab were sent to the medical microbiologist. He told me I had contacted a rare exotic disease called *Nocardia brasiliensis*. He took my right hand in his and drew a line just above the knuckle of my bandaged middle finger. I really thought he was joking when he said that half my finger might

have to be removed.

I took the antibiotic 4 times a day for a month. My stomach was upset every day and the inside of my mouth had cankers and felt burnt and sensitive. Fortunately, the infection left and my finger was saved.

That experience taught me a valuable lesson: never let bare hands or feet touch soil without protection. You never know what lurks beneath."

Ed. Note: I know of 3 local people who had similar experiences this summer. The swelling, the pain, the long course of antibiotics. It is wise to always wear gloves in the garden.

PROVEN RHODO PERFORMERS

Several years ago this list was made up from recommendations by various members of our club. I wonder if we still agree, after suffering several VERY dry summers, as well as powdery mildew.

Cosmopolitan	Crimson Pippin
Etta Burrows	
Gomer Waterer	Hallelujah
Hotei Ken Janek	
Lackamas Spice	Lady Bird
Loderi King George	
Mrs. E.C. Stirling	Lord Roberts
Mrs. Tom H. Lowinsky	
Peeping Tom	Nepal
Pink Pearl	Point Defiance
Red Walloper	Red Wood
Scintillation	Snow Lady
Susan	Taurus
The Hon. Jean Marie de Montague	
Virginia Richards	Vulcan
Yaku Sunrise	Yellow Pages

and the species
Rhodo auriculatum

SNIPPETS FROM SAYWARD

It is probably not surprising that someone who chooses to live and garden in as remote an area as Sayward should be fond of native

plants. However, town and city gardeners are demonstrating an increasing interest, and the number and selection of native plant offerings in the retail trade is growing in consequence. One of my own favorites which does not seem to have found much public favour yet is hardhack, our native spirea, (*Spiraea douglasii*, formerly known as *S. menziesii*). Hardhack displays its bright pink blooms in August, in long flower clusters. It likes moisture and a bit of shade, though will take full sun quite happily. Hardhack can be leggy and spread into thickets, but if kept trimmed back, and given reasonably fertile soil, it forms an entirely respectable clump. I prefer the plant's habits to the ubiquitous buddleia, and find its flowers every bit as attractive. On an August visit to the Kitty Coleman Woodland Gardens, I was delighted to see a great deal of hardhack in full bloom.

Sayward's annual garden tour has been admirably directed by **Monique Fear** for the last 6 years, but alas, Monique has moved to Campbell River. Those wanting to ensure the continuation of the tour began organizing local gardening enthusiasts, and in consequence Sayward now has a Garden Club. **Janet Muszik** presided over a well-attended inaugural meeting in October. One of the agenda items: the possibility of holding a spring garden tour, to show off how well rhodos perform in the Sayward Valley.

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NEWS FROM THE RSF

Gardeners will be interested to know that the Rhodo Species Foundation has inaugurated a new plant distribution system for Canadian RSF members living in southwest B.C. Until now,

members had to go to the RSF Botanical Garden in Federal Way, WA, at a certain time on a certain day each spring to pick up the plants they had ordered. This often involved considerable inconvenience in time, expense and energy spent making the trip; and the hassle at the border.

Beginning with the spring distribution in 2004, all plants ordered by RSF members living in B.C. will be delivered together, to the Botanical Garden at UBC, which will act as a distribution centre, on a date to be announced. Customs will have already been cleared, and one Phytosanitary Certificate will be shared. A flat \$10 US charge will be added to each order to cover, or at least contribute to these costs and that of the delivery. Members will then have one week in which to pick up their plants at UBC.

This may not be especially convenient for some members, Vancouver Island residents, for instance, but it will certainly be considerably more convenient than going down to Federal Way. And arrangements can be made for one person to pick up several orders. Further details will be available closer to the time of plant distribution.

It is hoped that the new policy will be more 'user friendly' to Canadians, and as a result that more Canadians will become members of the RSF. One benefit of the new system will be to those people who place small orders, where it was not worth their while going down to Federal Way to pick up, say, 2 or 3 plants.

Other 'user friendly' policies, both involving Canadians specifically and the RSF membership generally, are being discussed for inauguration in the near future. The RSF has a mandate of interest to anyone with

an enthusiasm for rhodos, and is of special interest because of its making available to gardeners species rhodos not easily found elsewhere. Moreover, the RSF is probably the most reliable source of species rhodos that can be depended upon to be true to name.

Later this fall, the RSF will be sending spring catalogues and membership forms to each of the ARS District 1 chapters, with the hope that the Canadian presence will increase in this international organization. And **Steve Hootman**, Co-Director of the RSF Garden, will give a talk on the RSF to the Vancouver chapter on the evening of 18 March 2004 (7:30, Floral Hall, VanDusen Gardens). All District 1 members are welcome. Finally, special thanks to **Quentin Cronk**, Director, to **Douglas Justice**, and to the UBC Botanic Garden for its co operation in making this new system possible. There is a long history of collaboration between UBC and the RSF, actually going back to the RSF's very beginnings, and it is good to see the relationship between these two important botanical organizations revived and strengthened, to the benefit of both.

Any questions about the RSF or the plant distribution can be addressed to **Joe Ronsley** at 604-921-9444 or jronsley@telus.net. Or call up the RSF website, <http://www.rhodygarden.org>. This material sent to **Harry Wright** by **Joe Ronsley**, Vancouver chapter.

MORE ABOUT IRELAND

Phyllis Stapley sent in this report. "I was fortunate to be able to attend a lecture at UBC by the great

plantswoman from Dublin, Ireland, **Helen Dillon**. This talk was presented by the UBC Botanical Garden, and the Vancouver Hardy Plant Group and Plant Research. Helen was introduced by **Thomas Hobbs**.

She divided her talk and slide show into 4 categories; people, places, gardens and plants. With trips to Spain, Chile, Argentina, Nepal, South Africa, China, New Zealand and the USA, she had a great deal of background experience.

She said every plant is available now in some way, and nearly every plant dies in the end. Something to think of when you are struggling with your prized possessions. Some points she thinks worth considering when you are planting your tulips in fall - she takes hers up every year and throws them away. She planted 1300 tulips this year. She spoke on gravel gardening, using landscape fabric. She has just finished landscaping with water, taking out her lawn. The water can also be tinted.

She offered a wealth of information in a light and interesting approach. David Tarrant thanked her for coming such a long distance, and offered a question period, following which her book on gardening was on sale. She summed it all up when she said "gardening is an art, not just a craft". A list of people, gardens and plants on the slides was given out".

SNOWDROPS AND SNOWFLAKES

Gardenwise Magazine, Early Spring 2003:

Long before the crocus, daffs and tulips show their colours, tiny snowdrops ring in the new season. Depending on the kind of winter we have in this area, they can poke little spikes out of the ground as

early as Christmas, and will even show themselves through a couple of inches of soft snow.

There are hundreds of varieties of these plants (*Galanthus*, members of the Amaryllis family), and they are deer-resistant. There are 3 groups, based on leaf types. *Nivales*, thin, grey-green leaves with flower stalk in the centre. *Plicati*, pleated V-shaped grey-green leaves, and *Latifolii*, broad, grey green or grey-blue leaves partially embracing the flower stalk.

The most popular snowdrop is *Galanthus nivalis*, but there are many others, including a double. It is best to acquire snowdrops "in the green", in other words, just after flowering, while leaves are green and healthy. Bulbs bought in the stores might be dried out, so it is best to beg or borrow from a friend. Over time, a few bulbs become a large patch which needs to be split up, so you will be doing your friend a favor.

Related to the snowdrops are spring snowflakes (*leucojum vernum*), summer snowflakes (*L. aestivum*) and fall snowflakes (*L. autumnale*). Differences include time of flowering (April to Nov), height of flower stems, and shape of the flowers. Deer, mice and squirrels do not bother with these plants.

OUR FRAGILE ECOSYSTEM

Flower Gardening magazine Spring 1996

The Western prairie fringed orchid is becoming extremely rare. The problem isn't necessarily lack of a prairie, but a lack of sphinx moths, which pollinate the orchids. Gardeners contribute to the problem by using chemical and organic methods to kill sphinx moths in larval form - tomato hornworm