

NORTH ISLAND RHODODENDRON SOCIETY *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.

April 6

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

April 13

Ron Knight, President of the
Vancouver Rhodo Society will be our
guest. Since retiring from teaching he
and his wife have created Caron
Gardens on Hotel Lake at Pender
Harbour. As well as growing
hundreds of rhodos, they teach a
variety of gardening courses. He will
be telling us all about it.

March 9

Trev and Doreen Badminton
brought a large contingent of Yak
cross rhodos, showed many beautiful
slides and gave descriptions of many
of these and other Yaks. Many

members went home happily with
large heavily budded plants which
will enhance their gardens. An
interesting evening! Many thanks to
the Badmintons for bringing so many
large plants quite a distance up the
Island.

MEMBER NOTES

We are approaching the busiest
season of the year, garden-wise, so be
prepared - help as much as possible
with local plans and programs, and
try to get away to see other gardens of
members and other clubs.

Here is a list of "must do" projects for
the next month or so, apart from
regular meetings:

April 18 **Ken Gibson** will
demonstrate grafting. 2 P.M. at
Gwen's Garden, 769 Chaster,
Courtenay.

May 2

Our spring plant sale, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Please note the new location at the
Indian Halls, 3320 Comox Rd
(locally known as Dyke Rd). The
show will be in the hall furthest from
the road. As usual, about 6 nurseries
will be selling interesting plants and
there will also be a table of members'
plants for sale. Bring a few treasures
to help enhance our bank balance!

May 8

Tours of 7 lovely gardens for \$6.00 -
a bargain! Needed are 24 helpers -
each to "gate-sit" at one garden for
about 4 hours, to welcome visitors,
mark tickets and answer questions.

May 11 is our regular Annual
Meeting. For this event we still need
people to volunteer for jobs such as
Social, Revenue Table, Vice-
President and Program Chairman.
We also need a member's garden in
which to hold the meeting.

June 12 will be the regular annual
BBQ and for this we need a member's
garden as well as pot-luck items such
as salads and cookies.

The rhodo fertilizer is on hand at
Black Creek Farm & Feed.
The price is the same as last year,
including a discount to Rhodo Club
members.

There was consideration of having the
District 1 Presidents' meeting here in
August, but this has been changed.
The meeting will be somewhere on
the Lower Mainland.

Remember the Revenue Table. April
is the last chance to bring plants until
the Sept. meeting.

Our Rhodo garden will be in bloom
over the next two months - make a
visit any time, and check with **Dick
Bonney** about helping with little jobs
such as deadheading and weeding.

HARDINESS ZONES

The new Canadian Zone map lists our
area as Zone 7A and 7B, presuming
our lowest winter temperature to
usually be no colder than -10C. This
is probably more or less correct. Just
remember details like wind, frost
pockets, distance from the salt water,
which all have an affect on the Zone #
in your garden. Several gardens in

the Union Bay area must be almost in Zone 9, judging by the kinds of plants they grow. And that brings me to -

JOAN WALSH, one of the above members, 201 Spindrift Road, has given me a list of some of the exotic plants in her garden. A tour of this garden last summer gave me an education in Australian plants, which I have seen only in books. *Embothium coccineum*, which every May puts on a spectacular display of scarlet flowers, retains some leaves in winter. It prefers some shade and company of other trees. This plant at 7 years of age is 7 ft. tall with a spread of 4 ft.

As you know, the West Coast of Scotland is washed by the Gulf Stream, which means people can grow plants such as this one, that no one except **Ken Gibson** can boast of. I saw many *Embothriums* on various little islands off the coast of Scotland and was amazed at the brilliant colour. They made lovely companions for the rhodos there.

JOAN has *Eriobotrya* (Loquat) with its striking dark green leaves (there were some for sale at the Nanaimo Garden Show in March). *Dipelta floribunda* with flowers like *Kolkwitzia* but with seed pods like pink bougainvillea, a small, very hardy tree. (How hardy is "very", Joan?), *Hoheria*, small trees with masses of white flowers, *Olearia macrodonta* (Daisy Bush), masses of white daisies - another plant that grows well in Scotland. *Desfontainia spinosa* - a small shrub with dark evergreen spiny leaves and yellow-tipped red flowers in fall. I think Ken Gibson grows this one too.

I have mentioned just a few of the plants in this garden. I saw some of the most beautiful peonies there, and many other treasures. This is a "must see" garden. Phone at 335-1349 to

arrange a day

HARRY WRIGHT has sent in a reminder to keep in mind for next year.

"The ARS Annual Convention is going to be in Victoria next spring, and I would like to do another copy of my book on *Rhododendron* Varieties in B.C. For those who don't know, about 15 years ago I became interested in this project, and requested gardeners to send me a list of *Rhodo* species, hybrids and known crosses that grow successfully in their gardens.

So far I have had 113 gardeners send me their inventory and the total plants stands at 3901. To those people who have sent me their list, I would appreciate an up-date, as I have heard that gardeners never stop buying plants. To those who have never reported, I would appreciate a list of your rhodos.

If this material could be sent to me by next fall, it would give me time over the winter to prepare it for the conference.

Harry Wright, 769 Chaster Rd., Courtenay, B.C., V9N 5P2. Phone 250-338-8345. email - haidau@mars.ark.com

SNIPPETS FROM SAYRARD

Here is the latest snippet from **Rose-Marie**, and it is not good news this time:

"This winter is proving to be a frightening time for the proliferation of powerful diseases in agricultural industries, and now it appears that commercial horticulture is having a similar crisis. I have been receiving urgent e-mail warnings this month from the Native Plant Society and the B.C. Landscape and Nursery Association advising of the dissemination of commercial plants inflicted with sudden oak death disease.

Apparently some *Camelias* grown at one of the world's largest nurseries, Monrovia Growers in California, are infested with spores from the tree-killing disease known as sudden oak death. These plants have been shipped to states which have highly susceptible oak forests, such as in the southeastern US. California has been battling this virulent disease for several years. Tens of thousands of the state's established oaks have been lost, but the US Forest Service had felt that control measures were beginning to have some effect.

Occurrences of sudden oak death microbes in other nurseries on the US West Coast have been traced to plants obtained from Monrovia, and until now it was possible to isolate infected material. It now appears that infested plants may have been sent all over the US and indeed the world (including Canada) for the last six months. English and Dutch agencies are highly concerned for vulnerable oak and beech forests, already threatened by a similar disease. The spectre of this related type uniting with the California form to create yet another is certainly enough to chill the blood.

The directives I have received as a retailer tell me to quarantine any *Camellia* until its origin can be determined, and that a Canadian Food Agency inspector will come to check those that may have originated with Monrovia. Happily, I don't sell *camellias* because this is Sayward, and I don't acquire plants from very large commercial production facilities. Being somewhat absurdly conservative, I prefer both agricultural and horticultural endeavours that are on a small scale. Factory farms, factory production methods, are de-humanizing by virtue of scale alone. If you don't see it, it doesn't bother you - such as the thousands of chickens, or pigs, or cattle, crammed together in factory

farms. Clean and hygienic, yes, but these are living creatures that need to move freely in sunlight, at the very least. Our modern credo has been "more and faster is better". We're asking for trouble, and we're getting it.

Anyone wanting to know more about sudden oak death disease can check out the excellent website, www.suddenoakdeath.org."

Now, if that is not upsetting enough, look what I found in the 21 Feb.04 issue of Amateur Gardening!

NEW STRAIN OF KILLER PLANT DISEASE STRIKES

"While gardeners have been urged to keep calm about the spread of sudden oak death, a new strain of the disease has started to cause alarm.

The Dept. for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) confirmed earlier this month that sudden oak death (also called ramoram dieback) has been confirmed on 9 trees in Cornwall.

Worryingly, at one Cornish site, a second species of the disease has been found. It is causing dieback on rhododendrons, and has also struck a nearby beech tree.

Plant health and forestry minister **Ben Bradshaw** said 'DEFRA and the Forestry Commission continue to monitor the situation very closely. Identification of the new disease is a matter of concern and we are working to establish the extent of the problem that either this, or the original disease, might cause to our tree population' he said.

There have now been around 300 outbreaks of sudden oak death in the UK. Despite its name, the disease is mainly confined to rhododendrons."

Ed. Note: I have read many articles about this dreaded disease, but

nowhere have I found any advice about what to do about it, or even how to recognize it. If anyone has this information, please tell me so I can add it to the newsletter.

NEWS FROM BRITAIN

Here are a couple of news items from The March 2004 "The Garden", journal of the RHS.

Many years ago a beautiful rhodo, *R. uvarifolium* was added to the collection in the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. Now, in China, this rhodo has been almost wiped out by young girls picking the flowers to decorate their hair, thus never allowing the plants to set seeds.

100 cuttings have been taken from the Edinburgh plant, and the resulting plants will be repatriated to the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain in China, later this year. Plans are being made to educate local people regarding the importance of sustainability of the plants in their area.

Another item in that same magazine caused me to feel very impressed with the work of the Rotary clubs. Our local club in Campbell River has done a tremendous job, building the Seawalk, and now setting up the Maritime Museum. Now I read this year is the Centenary of Rotary International and clubs in Great Britain and Ireland, as well as other groups around the world, are setting up a glade of Maple trees at Westonbirt Arboretum. I just wish we could all go to England to see it. 4 January issue of Amateur Gardening informs us that heavy horses are clearing trees at Westonbirt to make room for the 100 maple trees, sourced from around the world. Plans are to make this the foremost collection of maples in the world. Now I wonder if any Rotary clubs on Vancouver Island have sent plants or seeds from our native

maples?

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS?

Amateur Gardening, 21 Feb.04 has an amusing (to me) article, on gnomes of all things. Real Estate and Mortgage companies have warned people that a garden with gnomes will devalue your property when you come to sell your house. They also list a few other turn-offs, such as nicotine-stained interior of the house, smelly animals, dated fireplace, but how could they list gnomes with these horrors?

Amateur Gardening 6 March has an article describing how to prune ornamental grasses.

"Grasses have become increasingly popular over the past few years, but many gardeners are still confused about when or how to cut them back.

Aim to tackle them just before they start their annual spring growth spurt. Small evergreen specimens such as festucas and carexes should be lightly trimmed to remove the dead leaf tips. Larger evergreens such as pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*) and deschampsias benefit from being pruned back to a few inches from the ground, taking care not to damage new growth.

Deciduous species that start growing in early spring should be cut back to ground level now to avoid damage to new shoots. Grasses from warmer climates like miscanthus, pennisetum and panicum don't start into growth until late in the year. Delay cutting these back until early spring so the old stems can continue to protect the crown".

That reminds me of my beautiful pampas grass. Someone told me the easiest way to trim off the old growth (it has such sharp-edged leaves) is to burn it in January. This I did - not realizing it had already started to grow. This treatment killed it.

GARDENING SHOWS

This time of year, we look forward to visiting other gardens, nurseries, and displays of gardening material and plants. **Diana Scott** was first to get to a large display in Seattle, and kindly sent me a report:

"What an adventure! The **2004 Northwest Flower and Garden Show** took place in Seattle Feb. 4-8 at the Washington State Convention Centre. As a 'winter treat', my husband John and I trekked off with friends from Victoria to take it all in!

The most impressive aspects of the event are the fabulous lot sized gardens designed by top regional landscape designers and nurseries. There were 27 display gardens this year and they were all wonderful, each with its own stamp of creativity. I got a kick out of Linda Plato's 'Urban Fortress', which nestled a cosy cottage-like folly for the technically oppressed into a corner of the yard. It was defended by a topiary moat monster and had a perimeter of spiny barrier plants (mainly Solanaceae) littered with bits of laptop computers, printers and cell phones.

Falling Water Designs, Finding your Inner Child, a Playground for Adults created a grownup play space with an outdoor chess set, a putting green, a spa and fanciful shower, an outdoor structure with comfortable furniture and a built-in BBQ. A treehouse above it all provided a retreat from the stress of the day with a vista over the garden.

The Garden of Eaten utilized every space for food production; Minter Garden's 'Out on a Whim' created whimsical play spaces; clean-lined Sculpture Gardens were artful and restful to the eye. There were ponds with koi and cold streams with swimming trout; gardens with native plantings; tropical gardens with bamboo, palms, and bog plants; and

cottage gardens, with a myriad of flowers, shrubs and trees. There was a 'Rambler Revisited' that had no lawn, but terraces of herbs and drought tolerant plants, and an Urban Garden that used creative bits of sculpture to harvest rainwater. It was such fun to wander around each of the displays!

If one needed a change from the stimulation of the Display Gardens, there were more than 300 vendors selling plants, bulbs, trees, furniture, artwork, garden-related crafts and much more. Happy Canadian shoppers could even bring back approved plant material. The show provided representatives from the Dept. of Agriculture to inspect and approve plants for transport to Canada. The process was simple, and John and I brought back a small **Oleo europa**. We can hardly wait to begin picking our own olives!

The show took place on two floors of the Convention Centre, and each of them was packed with things to do and see. The art of Ikebana was demonstrated and examples were on display; there were over 20,000 exotic orchids on view and for sale; entry halls were lined with a phenomenal floral arrangement competition; a container garden exhibit filled either side of the skywalk; local Garden Clubs contributed to a 6,000 sq. ft. horticultural show; displays of small-scale gardens were created by area school children, and a funky junk container competition was held for local high-school students. If that was not enough, there were places to sit and eat, garden-related poetry readings and live music. Continued next month.....

9th ANNUAL FLOWER AND GARDEN SHOW in Nanaimo, March 12, 13,14.

I felt quite overwhelmed, reading about the show in Seattle. A person

would need 3 days to take it all in, I am sure. In contrast, the Nanaimo show was miniscule, but very enjoyable just the same. There were displays by many nurseries in the area as well as from Hornby, Denman and Port Alberni. I picked up a beautiful Hellebore with pink petals and a central ruff of pink frills. Community groups included the Central Island Garden Society, Milner Gardens and Malaspina College, Vancouver Island Master Gardeners and the V.I. Heather Chapter (no Rhodo club though).

We enjoyed two speakers: **David Tarrant** brought buckets of tree branches and bulbous flowers from the University of B.C., in order to make a giant flower arrangement. As he added each magnolia, camellia, rhododendron, etc. etc., he told something of the history of the plant he had cut it from, how to grow it, how it would fit in with other plants in your garden. The result was spectacular!

Des Kennedy gave us the "Ten Commandments of Gardening" - actually 11. He fitted "Love thy Neighbour as thyself" and all the others into gardening scenes and altogether gave a hilarious



Rosy Bell