

# North Island Rhododendron Society



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SANTA'S WORKSHOP

2005/2006  
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## Coming Events

### December 6th

Executive meeting will be held at the home of Dave and Noni Godfrey 4686 Montrose Drive. South through Royston, past the Kingfisher Inn, turn left onto Spindrift Road, then first right onto Kilmarnock, and another right onto Inverness to the end. Left onto Montrose, down a ways and they are on the left side...watch for lighted sign at the foot of drive



### December 15th — Christmas Party

The annual Christmas party will be held on our regular meeting night and at the usual time and place. Those attending are asked to please bring an hors d'oeuvre or a dessert (enough for approx 6-8 people). Also bring a wrapped gift around the \$10 mark for the gift exchange. An evening of fun and games is planned by Evelyn and Bernice so come on out and lets celebrate the holiday season in grand style!!!



## Member Notes ... by Dave Godfrey

Over 35 members and guests attending our regular meeting on Tuesday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, enjoyed Part 2 of guest speaker Glen Jamieson's presentation. Glen was a member of the Species Foundation expedition to the Salween River area of Yunnan, China, in May 2005.



Glen discussed the many differences found in both the plants and cultures of China. As he explained, given the varied altitudes and soil conditions (some growing on other trees) of the many rhododendrons they discovered, we realize now why we have problems with our own plants at sea-level, all growing in the same soil conditions.

His hour-long presentation of colourful slides and 4-minute video provided an enjoyable and entertaining evening. Those in attendance also enjoyed seeing a small Chinese bow and arrows, as well as a sample of Chinese cuisine (fried bamboo worms, beetles and dragonfly larvae) that Glen brought back from his trip.

Glen is also interested in forming a Vancouver Island group of individuals with an interest in vireya (tropical rhododendrons.) He has established what is likely Canada's largest collection of tropical rhododendrons. Any members interested in joining a vireya group can contact Glen through the MARS chapter or directly at [JamiesonG@pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:JamiesonG@pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca)





For the educational portion of the meeting, Harry Wright demonstrated the wonderful differences found in rhododendron foliage. As Harry explained, with blossoms only lasting a week or two, the foliage of many plants provides a much greater lasting beauty in the garden. With wonderful "Tomentums" and "Indumentums", the rhododendron foliage provides a great variety of colours, sizes, shapes and in some cases fragrances.

During the social gathering following the meeting, Gwen Wright presented Bernie and Gloria Guyader with a special cake to commemorate their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. The Guyaders cut the cake for all to enjoy. It was also mentioned that other members, Lily and John Vanderhorst celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> this past summer. Congratulations to both couples on reaching this milestone.

Congratulations also go out to Betty Clough winner of the raffle prize of "R. Senator Jackson", and to Fran Thornton winner of the evening's door prize "R. Goldflimmer" donated by Harry Wright.



## Name Our Newsletter



At the November meeting, NIRS newsletter publisher Noni Godfrey asks all members to put on their thinking caps and submit suggestions for a name for our newsletter. As she mentioned, "other chapters have colourful names such as Vancouver's 'Indumentum', Victoria's 'The Yak' and Mount Arrowsmith's 'Rhodovine'. Therefore, we feel that it is time to come up with our own name." A prize of a rhododendron will be awarded to the winning entry. A committee will be formed to decide the winner sometime next spring. So don't be shy, write, phone or email Noni with your suggests.



## Snippets From Sayward

... by Rose-Marie Silkens

As another pounding rain on the windows reminds me that this has been an inordinately wet fall, I'm thinking over which fall-performing garden plants managed to keep the show going in spite of the weather.



Fall colour has certainly been far less interesting this year. Many trees and shrubs didn't colour well, and those that did had their leaves blown to distant latitudes by constant windstorms. Even the normally-



showy liquidambar has only few faded green leaves. The colchicums and fall crocus were flattened repeatedly, even though I have planted early-to-late bloomers in hopes of ensuring a long display. As always during disappointing seasons, the diehard gardener finds more subtle sources of satisfaction.

A rapidly-growing silver maple is one such source in my garden. This is *Acer saccharinum* (aka *A. dasycarpum*), not the suckering silver poplar commonly referred to as silver maple. (Sugar maple is *A. saccharum*.) Silver maple grows rapidly, sometimes so rapidly that its branches are nearly pendent. It well suits its other common name, soft maple. Its leaves reveal lovely silver undersides in the wind, and its long, supple branches find choreography in the slightest breeze. My tree has never coloured very brightly in fall, and this fall it has no bright colour at all. What it does have is unique colour. Its leaves are now pale gold above and still silver beneath, all shot through with residual soft green. Luminescent and exquisite, it draws the eye and consoles the gardener for the lack of flaming reds and the rapid loss of cheerful orange among its neighbours.

Not at all subtle in spite of the daily deluge, the deciduous conifers blaze on. A large European larch, *Larix decidua*, is always late to colour, and its deep straw-gold defies November dreariness. Still small and new, the swamp cypress, *Taxodium distichum*, has kept its apricot-coloured needles on tiny branches for weeks.



Probably because of this year's wet spring, many of my berrying shrubs are not as generous as usual. Of course the English hollies are the exception, but the huge berry crop on one large specimen has to compete for ornamental interest this fall. A ruffed grouse has settled into my garden, and is under or in that big holly several times a day. My border collie seems to consider it just another chicken, and they completely ignore each other. The grouse feasts on the berries, and has given us a chance to reflect on how lovely our common (once-common) native species are.

Equally at home at close range is a winter wren that spends many hours on or around the covered porch. It's not in the least troubled by our comings and goings. Because the porch is an extension of the garden, and seems to exist more for the convenience of the plants than the human denizens of our home, the wren finds plenty of bugs to feed on. This morning it was so close to Diamond, our dog, that I thought it had spied insects

## Happy Holidays



in his tail hair. Happily, his only interest in the wren, and the song sparrows and towhees that hang around the same porch, is to chase away the neighbour's cat when it dares to come through the fence.





## You are Invited to The 2005 Annual Christmas Light Display



At



Gwen & Harry Wright's  
Kaia Gold Gardens

769 Chaster Rd. Courtenay  
Dec 20<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> 7 - 9 pm

Cash donations accepted for  
The Sunshine Lunch Club

## BOOK REVIEW ... by Mary Palmer

I have not yet read this book, but it sounds like one which we should procure for our library as soon as we can make new arrangements for Timber Press publications.

*Plants from the Edge of the World,  
Flanagan & Kirkham, Timber Press  
2005.*



"This book, authored by two stalwarts in the world of plants, is the culmination of four venturesome plant hunting expeditions to four separate regions of the Far East".

In October 1987, a very damaging hurricane struck parts of England, and vast numbers of trees and shrubs were destroyed in Kew Gardens and Wakehurst Place, as well as Wisley and many other areas of the south. The authors of this book decided to visit four separate areas - South Korea in 1989, Taiwan 1992, Sakalin Island and Vladivostok area 1993 and Hokkaido 1997, where they collected seed and herbarium specimens to replace some of those lost in the hurricane. The seeds have successfully produced plants in the years since. Many of these plants are rhododendrons.



"In South Korea" they report, " not even

in the richest parts of China or Japan have I seen such extensive displays of pure pink and white as on the Diamond Mountains, where *R. Schlippenbachii* dominates the undergrowth for miles and blooms to perfection". On Jade Mountain, in Taiwan, just under 13,000 ft., *R. pseudochrysanthum* forms extensive mats no more than 4" high".



Peter Kendall, writing in the Portland Rhodo News, says "with marvelous photographs and wonderful maps, I recommend this book to any and all plant lovers".



Garden Hints  
Is Roundup A  
Perfect Herbicide?



M.J. Marvey, writing in the Victoria Rhodo Newsletter, Sept. 2005, explains it may be - at least until someone does more research and comes up with a safer one.

He starts the article with an explanation of SAP, which means Shikimic Acid Pathway. I quote: "To give an explanation, the SAP is a long chain of reactions leading to the production of the 3 essential amino acids that possess an aromatic (benzene) ring. Block a single enzyme in this long chain and none of the 3 amino acids are produced, with fatal results to the plant.

So why is this particularly obscure bit of knowledge useful? Well, plants use SAP but animals don't. Why? They get their essential amino acids by eating either plants or other animals. So the speculation was that if we can block SAP in plants they will develop deficiencies of these amino acids, but animals will not be affected."

So the search was on for an enzyme blocker, and Monsanto produced one which they patented, naming it glyphosphate. Consider the claims made for it. Is it non-toxic to animals?



Yes, as safe as common salt (but don't try to eat a kilo of either). Because the formulation includes a detergent, it would not be pleasant to drink either.

Does Roundup persist in the environment? No, it really does decompose in a few days to carbon monoxide, water and a trace of nitrate.

However, you must be careful, spraying it around sensitive plants such as peonies and rhodos that have roots close to the surface can result in pale areas or streaks on the leaves.

# CHRISTMAS GREETINGS





## Watts In a Name ?

Lynn Watts, Western Vice Pres. of the ARS, explains how to read a Rhodo name, and I have reduced much of the material for this article, taken from the Fraser South Rhodo News, originally from the Eugene Chapter of the ARS.

**Genus** - Rhododendron.

**Species** - these names are Latinized and derived from names of persons, geographical names, words that describe plant habitat, colour, leaf shape, growth habit or other characteristics of the plant. For instance, names of persons are Latinized by adding ii, ium, iae etc. R. Wardii is named in honour of Frank Kingdon Ward.

**Words** that describe the plant include "macrophyllum"- large leaves, "oreotrepes" - mountain bred, "lutea or aurea" - yellow, "uni"- one flower, "tri" - 3 leaves or 3 flowers, "quinquefolium" 5 leaves.



Then of course, if the plant is a hybrid, then there might be additional Latinized or English words added, for instance the azaleodendron Carolina Rose, which is a cross between R. minus Carolinianum and prinophyllum roseum. (minus-small, phyllum-leaf, roseum-rosy or red. Sorry I cannot find the English translation of `prino' in my Botanical Latin dictionary, but you can see most Latin is simple and much English is derived from it.)

## Christmas Colour in The Border

We are fortunate, in our area, that we have so much colour in our gardens in winter. We rarely have snow for Christmas, sometimes it comes a week or so later, sometimes not at all. But colour - yes. First and foremost, the rhodos, whose leaves shine in the rain, and flower buds are sometimes bright reds or yellows. Next are berries on many shrubs, that the birds have not yet eaten, most of them red or orange, but also white or blue in protected spots.



Several herbaceous perennials give us colour for Christmas. The "Christmas Rose", Helleborus niger, which seldom blooms for Christmas (one

of mine has flowers now in early November), Iris unguicularis, with bright lilac-blue flowers (I still haven't tracked one of these down for my garden),



Iris foetidissima has rather dull flowers in summer, but the seed pods split, in fall, to offer brilliant shining fruits.

The birds never seem to want these. Mahonia japonica in various forms has lovely yellow flowers, opening in October and lasting all winter. And of course the Viburnums - many forms have winter flowers, pink or white, with wonderful perfume.



Why has my Amaryllis had leaves for several years but no flowers? You can force them into dormancy, and give the bulb a rest. Sometime in early fall, stop watering, and after 6 weeks, cut the foliage off regardless of the colour.

Keep the plant at room temperature for several months, then scrape off about 2" soil and replace it with new sterilized soil or compost. Water well, place in a sunny window or under lights, and when leaf or stem growth starts, water lightly and regularly. Fertilizer is not necessary - too much can inhibit blooming.

The plant should bloom 6-8 weeks after watering is started. Continue watering for at least 3 months, with the plant in a sunny position. The invigorated bulb can then be forced into dormancy again and the cycle is repeated.

Repot every 3-4 years, when the plant is dormant and the soil dry. Use a heavy clay pot, 2" wider than the bulb, to help balance the top-heavy Amaryllis in full bloom.

If you hope to have a flower for Christmas, adjust the time of planned dormancy. If you are given a new plant for Christmas, start the cycle when flowering is finished. I consider the peat/perlite mix that these bulbs are often sold in, in decorative pots, to be much too light for such a large, heavy bulb. Best to add some sterilized garden soil or repot in a different house plant mix. You can sterilize soil or compost by using a couple of tablespoons of formaldehyde in the mix. Place in a container with a tight cover and leave it for 3 weeks. Do not breathe in this material when mixing it.



## Different Ways to Overwinter Geraniums



**Method #1** At the end of the summer, gently pull your plants from the soil and brush away any dirt that clings to the roots. Hang the entire geranium, flowers, leaves and all, upside down in a cellar or other damp place where the temperature stays between 40 and 50 deg F all winter. If the location seems too damp, wrap the plants loosely in newspaper before you hang them to reduce the chance of molding and rotting. The plants will look dead, but don't water them. At planting time in the spring, strip off the flowers and leaves and repot them. Some people soak them for several hours before replanting, but if you water them well, it isn't necessary.



**Method # 2** If you lack the windowsill space necessary to keep your geraniums growing in pots indoors over winter, you can still dig up you garden plants and put the same ones back outdoors come spring—just pack those plants in a box! In fall, dig up the plants from the garden before frost hits and gently shake off most of the excess soil from the roots, leaving some around the root ball. If you want, you can prune (pinch) back the top of the plants, but I get equally good results with unpruned plants. Then wrap each plant individually in newspaper, set the wrapped plants inside a cardboard box and store the box(es) in a cool, dry place for the winter. In early spring, take the dormant geraniums out of the box, pot them up, place them in a cool bright window and water lightly. They'll start growing within a few weeks. (If you live in a cold climate, be sure to harden the plants off for a couple of weeks before you plant them outdoors).

**Method #3** Take up geraniums (pelargonium). Cut tops back to five to six inches. Pot each individual plant in a sandy soil mix in a 5inch pot, and keep them in a bright window over winter. Water sparingly in the "off-season", and do not fertilize at all so plants will stay small and bushy. If they grow too tall, just cut them back a bit. In spring when weather has warmed, plants will be double in size, return them to their summer homes . Fertilize with bone meal and water with balanced liquid fertilizer every two days or so until they are established.



## Rhododendron Rubiginosum

I am always looking for information on rhodos that will tolerate poor soil conditions and drought. Steve Hootman, writing in the Spring



2005 newsletter of the Species Foundation, is quite enthusiastic about this easily grown and vigorous species rhodo. It will tolerate anything from full sun to quite deep shade. It is hardy to 0F-+5F. Being a widespread and variable species, flower quality and hardiness can vary.

The plant resembles some of the Trifloras such as *R. augustinii*,  *davidsonianum*,  *yunnanense*, but the flowers are terminally on the stems only. The leaf undersides are densely scaly and it blooms quite early in the season. It will form a large upright shrub with leaves 2-3" in length, lower surfaces brownish in colour due to the dense coating of dark flaky scales. The flowers are an open funnel shape, ranging in colour from pale pink to mauve- or lavender pink, rose or purple, with reddish spots and/or a blotch.



This rhodo can be quite an impressive sight in it's homeland, Yunnan, Tibet, Burma, Sichuan province. "In many regions, this species forms the dominant understory layer in the coniferous forests that cover the steep mountain slopes. In spring, these dark forests are brightened with the flowers of this impressive species. An even better display can be observed if the conifers have been cut for timber. As the overstory trees are removed or thinned, a sea of pink and lavender bursts forth in the newfound light. I have observed this species many times in my travels and have seen it flourishing under a multitude of conditions, always impressed with its ability to withstand a variety of adverse soils and exposures."



## Nori and Sandra Dope

Does anyone remember them? They had an Old Rose nursery somewhere out in Headquarters Road area, some years ago. They were a few years ahead of their time, I guess, for the endeavor was not successful, and they moved to England.

Nori had degrees in Botany and Fine Arts, and Sandra was trained in infant education and nursing.

In England, they leased a run-down walled garden at Hadspen House, in Somerset, and have built up a nursery business over the past 20 years. They keep a connoisseur's collection of plants composed in a creative planting style, providing inspiration to visitors.

Nori has produced a book, "Colour by Design" (pub. Conran Octopus). "Their aspirations are to continue working with landscapers, developing gardens, and to assist in preserving the ancient woodland of the Pacific Coast of North America."



## Hellebores

This is the time of year we start to look for flowers on our H. niger, followed after Christmas by all the vari-coloured H. orientalis or H. hybridus. Thompson & Morgan has bought Elizabeth Strangman's

Hellebore collection and is now producing the fantastic "Washfield Doubles". You can buy 10 seeds for about 5 pounds (probably about \$7.50 here if you can find any) and the picture shows an amazing variety of colours.

In this same magazine, Peter Seabrook talks about potting mixtures. Many people in England are worried about the depletion of peat in the world, and beg people to use various substitutions. Unfortunately nothing seems to be as good as peat for a soil mix used for seedlings. Mixes which include plant food delay seed germination. Be sure to store bags of compost off the ground and protected from rain. Warm water added to peat will re-wet it rapidly.



Amateur Gardening 15 October recommends some fall-flowering shrubs that we might consider when buying plants. For instance, Caryopteris x clandonensis, with beautiful blue or purple-blue flowers, good for smaller gardens as they grow to around 3 ft. only. They enjoy a warm, sunny position in free-draining soil.

Ceratostigma plumbaginoides is a brilliant fall showpiece, with its dark leaves which turn bright red in fall and bright blue flowers. This plant grows to only 18" in height. Another Ceratostigma, willmottianum, is similar but grows to 3 ft. (Note by MP: I have to admit I lost mine, but whether to dry summers or cold in winter, I don't know.)

Other plants which give good autumn colour include fuchsias, hydrangeas, Salvia microphylla, Spiraeas, Hypericum x moserianum. Holly-like Osmanthus heterophyllus has dainty scented flowers in fall. If you have a sheltered spot, try a Magnolia grandiflora or a Fremontodendron.

Some of these plants may be barely hardy here, depending on the kind of winter we have, but if it is true the climate is gradually warming, then why not give one a try. Some plants do well in a pot., which can be moved to a slightly warm greenhouse or garage for a month or so when necessary. Or take some cuttings in August, which can be moved to a windowsill in the house for a few weeks when the temperature plunges.

There is another new Hosta, named "Sugar Daddy". It is a variegated form of "Big Daddy", one of the best large blues. This plant has a blue leaf with cream edging, will grow to 30" in height and a spread of 36", and leaves are "as



large as dinner plates". Wow! Every Autumn Show in England has giant vegetables on show, and this year a man brought in an onion weighing 16 1/2 lbs, beating the previous record by over a pound.



## RECIPE REQUESTS:

### Gingerbread



- |                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 C Honey            | 1 1/4 C Brown sugar    |
| 1 C Butter/Margarine | 2 Eggs slightly beaten |
| 6 C Flour            | 2 tsp Baking Powder    |
| 1 tsp Baking Soda    | 1 tsp Salt             |
| 2 tsp Ginger         | 2 tsp Cinnamon         |
| 1/2 tsp Cloves       | 1/2 tsp Nutmeg         |



In a small saucepan combine, honey, brown sugar and margarine. Stir over low heat until butter is melted and sugar granules dissolved.



Pour into large bowl and let cool. Once cool stir in the eggs



In another bowl, combine remaining dry ingredients. Add to honey/egg mixture - Will be dry.



Roll or knead into 2 flat balls and wrap in wax paper & refrigerate 1 hour (Allow to warm up if cooled longer than 1 hour)



Press into gingerbread mold and follow mold directions for baking or roll and use cookie cutters

Bake Cookies at 350 for 12 Mins



# HAPPY XMAS

