

North Island Rhododendron Society



PO Box 3183, Courtenay, BC, Canada V9N 5N4

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Revenue Table

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Newsletter

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The club meets the second Tuesday of the month (except May through August) at the United Church on Comox Avenue, Comox 7:30 p.m.

COMING EVENTS:

2 May 2006

Executive meeting will be held at the home of Paul and Lynne Wurz 4367 Gordon Road, Campbell River. Drive north past the pulp mill, turn onto Duncan Bay Road, then to Gordon Road. Paul's home and Hidden Acres nursery is just past the Mystic Woods Nursery. Watch for signs. Meeting to begin at 7:30 p.m. Early arrivals for a walk around the garden.

9 May 2006 — Annual General Meeting (and election of officers)

Venue: Once again will be held at the home of Pauline and Dick Bonney, 2393 Seabank Road. From Courtenay, go along Anderton (turns into Waveland), until you get to Seabank at the bottom of hill, turn left, they are the second house on the left. Watch for a high metal gate (to keep the deer out). Don't forget to bring lawn chairs.



MEMBER NOTES: (by Dave Godfrey)

"Knowing Your Rhodos"

Local experts, Harry Wright, Paul Wurz and Dave Crucq provided a very informative presentation at our regular meeting on April 11th. Harry discussed the varieties found in foliage, while Dave demonstrated the various parts of the blooms and trusses. Paul concluded by discussing the damages that may be found on some plants. Many members asked questions and joined the discussion regarding the care and planting of rhododendrons.

During the "Show and Tell" portion, some members explained how well their plants are performing in their gardens and proudly displayed some of the trusses already in bloom.

Following the meeting, draws were made for the raffle and door prize. Robert Argall was the lucky winner of "Rim Fire", while Dave Crucq took home the door prize of "Anna Rose Whitney".



Harry discusses 'Foliage'

Paul on 'Plant Ailments'





Dave on 'Blooms'



Mary's Show & Tell

PLANT SALE

Plans are well underway for the biggest fundraising event of the year. Our plant sale will once again be held at the First Nations Hall on Comox Road with many of the same vendors returning. Members willing and able to help are asked to arrive at the hall between 8:30 and 9 am on Sunday May 7th to begin the setup. Doors will be open to the public from 10 am until 2 pm, and a great deal of help is needed to make this year's event a success. Refreshments and lunch is provided to our members through the efforts of our social committee, who will gratefully accept any goodies donated.

In order to stock our NIRS companion plants table, we ask each member to consider a donation of plants and seedlings to help the cause. So in the next few weeks, while starting or splitting your plants, please consider potting up a few for the club.

GARDEN TOUR 2006



Evelyn Wright has once again lined up a fabulous assortment of gardens to tour this spring. There will be 6 gardens on the Comox Peninsula open for public tour from 10 am until 4 pm on Mother's Day, Sunday, May 14th.

As in the past, we will require two members to sit at the gates of the gardens to control admission. Sitting times will be from 10am until 1 pm, and from 1 pm until 4 pm. A list of garden locations and sign up board will be available at the May Annual General meeting.

In fairness to those who agree to work at the garden gates, complimentary tickets will be given to these members. All others will be expected to purchase and produce a ticket in order to enjoy the gardens. Tickets are available for purchase at the following Comox Valley retailers: Art Knapp Plantland, Francis Jewellers, Anderton Nursery, Home and Garden Gate, or call Harry Wright 338-8345. In Campbell River, call Paul Wurz at 287-4301 or stop by the Campbell River Garden Centre or Serendipity in the Garden.

RHODO GARDEN WORK BEE

Garden director, Harry Wright, has requested the assistance of members at a work party scheduled for Thursday May 4th at 9 AM. The



city work's crew has kindly cleaned up much of the garden, and will be delivering fresh bark mulch which will need to be spread throughout. In addition, there will be some early dead heading that will need to be done.

As this is the 10th anniversary of the garden, a special cake will be cut and served to commemorate the occasion. It is hoped that as many NIRS members as possible can attend to help with the work and the celebration.

Name The Newsletter Contest



- Glacier Press
- Rhodo Court
- Courtenay Jester
- Rhodo Reader
- Rhodophyllum
- Rhodo Record
- Printophyllum
- Rhodomentaries
- The Rhodoteller
- The Rhodofiles



- North Island Rhodo Files
- What's Up
- Chapter Chatter
- The North Islander



North Island Rhodo Society News and Views

Listed above are the entrants for the "Name The Newsletter" contest received to date. The final selection will be made at the NIRS Annual General Meeting on May 9th at Dick and Pauline Bonney's.

Annual George Fraser Day Coming...

On Saturday, May 27th, Ucluelet will be celebrating the sixth annual "George Fraser Day and Heritage Fair." This year the local committee is honouring Bill Dale for all his tireless efforts in researching George's life. Invitations have been extended to all ARS members to attend this event.

The committee would also appreciate any donations of plants or garden related items which may be auctioned or raffled for this annual fundraising event. The George Fraser Project provides a lasting legacy of this pioneer of rhododendron hybridization and is appreciative of any support that our members can provide to their committee.

GARDEN HINTS

Garden hints from *Fine Gardening*, with additions by *Mary Palmer*



Is there a pair of leaking fishing waders in your house? Cut the legs off close to the ankles and you have a pair of rubber gardening shoes.

Save soil from pots in a garbage bin, and use it the following year for filling the bottom half of pots, thus saving money, for you will need just half the regular amount of new potting soil for filling the pots. After a few years of use, put the soil on the compost pile.

A 5-gallon plastic bucket has many uses - here is one I had not thought of. Keep your gardening tools in it, to carry around the yard. Glue an old round cushion onto the lid. Now you are ready to work, and to have a little rest along the way. I'm sure I can find room in the bucket for my thermos of coffee too!

Deer often eat the flower buds off my lilies, especially new ones that I haven't yet seen. A lady in Michigan sprinkles black pepper on the leaves and buds (renew after rain) and the deer now leave the plants alone. I'll let you know.



Instead of digging up dahlias in the fall, plant them in pots in the spring. It is easy to lift the pots, trim off the stems, and store pots and all in a frost-free place for the winter.

Pour boiling water on weeds that are difficult to remove, like dandelions between paving stones. It kills the weed without damaging any other plants.

Another killer - if you have Morning Glory in the garden, strip the top leaves off a long branch, and place it in a jar with about an inch of weed killer in the bottom. Just drill a little hole in the lid and poke the stem through. The vine drinks up the weed killer.

You can use old wire coat hangers as "garden staples" by cutting off the top section and cutting the bottom part in two. These wire staples are handy for holding soaker hoses and plastic cloches in place.

More gardening tips and notes from *Amateur Gardening*, fine tuned by *Mary Palmer*

If you are lucky enough to have cornus or salix (Dogwood or Willow) plants with coloured stems in your garden (in other words, no deer around), it is time (actually, by the time you read this, past-time) to cut them back to 2-3" and give them a dose of fertilizer. This job should be done in late Feb. or early March, given better weather than we had at that time this year. Do not cut them back the first year they have been in the ground - give them a chance to grow a bit first.

As I write this, the hellebores are in full bloom, and I took a chance and dug a few up, because they are in quite a heavy soil in the woods. Peter Seabrook mentioned he dug up seedlings that were in bloom. In his garden, they are thriving in a north-facing bed in heavy clay soil. If possible, dig them with a good clump of soil and replant immediately. According to the books, they should be dug in June or in Sept.



when new roots are forming. They are very popular plants just now, and many new varieties are in the nurseries.

Scientists roaming the Indonesian jungle on New Guinea have found a rhodo with giant flowers (Oh for a picture of it!) and 5 new palms. The rhodo is probably a vireya so we can't grow it here, alas.

The RHS has hired a new Director of Gardens, name Jill Cherry, lately Director of Van Dusen Gardens in Vancouver.

A company in the UK is producing giant (metre-square) garden posters to brighten up a plain wall or fence. There is a range of woodland, floral and beach scenes. They can be cleaned with a sponge, and the price is about \$50 in our money.

POTTING SOILS

FINE GARDENING # 106 has a useful article by *Lee Reich*, who often writes about SOIL, which is the basis of most of our gardening. This article explains why a special mix of soil for containers will be better than just digging up a little garden soil. Garden soil doesn't offer enough air, water or nutrients to a container-grown plant.



"One of the most important things a potting soil needs to do is provide root access to air by letting water drain away from them. In the ground, the soil is usually deep enough to let excess water drain beyond root zones. In pots, however, water tends to accumulate at the bottom, despite drainage holes. The smaller the pore spaces of the soil in the pot, the higher that water layer will reach. Larger pores, formed by adding mineral aggregates to potting soils, readily admit water into the soil, carry it through and out the bottom".

Perlite, vermiculite, calcined clay (kitty litter) and sand are the mineral aggregates most commonly used in potting soils. A potting mix also needs ingredients that help it retain moisture, like peat moss, sphagnum or coir. The water and nutrients cling to these. Commercial mixes also contain sawdust or shredded bark, a bit of lime and fertilizer.

If you are mixing your own potting soil, a little garden soil, compost and/or leaf mold will be beneficial, adding bulk and nutrients.



Mr. Reich does not recommend sterilizing potting soil by baking it in the oven. Apart from the smell, sterilizing wipes out all living things, including "good" bacteria, and leaves a clean slate for possible invasion of pathogens and nutritional problems. Pasteurizing is much safer and his suggestion is to put the soil in a baking pan with a potato embedded in it. Bake for about 45 minutes in a 350F oven. When the spud is cooked, the soil is ready, and only some of the organisms will have been killed.



It is much better to rely on healthy practices such as timely watering, good air circulation and adequate light to avoid diseases. The beneficial micro-organisms in the compost and garden soil will also help to deter pests.

Lee's recipe for homemade potting soil:

2 gallons each of peat moss, perlite, compost, garden soil. Mix with 1/2 cup each of dolomite lime, soybean meal, greensand, rock phosphate and kelp powder.

He places a 1/2" screen over his garden cart and sifts the mixture to remove large particles. Adds the remaining ingredients and turn the material over repeatedly with a shovel. Adds water if it seems dry.

Soil less mix can be made of:

1 bushel peat moss, 1 bushel perlite or vermiculite, 1/2 pound dolomite lime, 1 pound 5-10-5 fertilizer and 1 1/2 oz. super phosphate fertilizer.



Mix ingredients thoroughly, add water as you stir it. This recipe came originally from scientists at Cornell University, and forms the basis for many commercial mixes on the market today.

FOR BEGINNERS IN THE RHODO WORLD



Here are some good hints to follow if you are buying a rhodo for the first time. I found them in a copy of "The Yak", Sept. 2001. These ten considerations are really useful and sensible and I wish I had had the information when I started buying rhodos.

1. Consider tolerance to sun, heat, cold, wind, drought and bugs.
2. Size - when you buy it and when it is fully grown.
3. Colour of flowers in bud and when fully opened, streaks or spots, ruffled edges. Leaf colour - when newly out and later in the season.
4. Is the plant a species or a hybrid, small or large?
5. Confirmation - a Yak is nice and rounded and full of pink flowers, whereas *lutescens* looks like a scraggly willow with individual flowers up and down the stalks.
6. Time of bloom, spread of blooms, nicely coloured new growth.
7. Leaves - may show indumentum, size may vary from very tiny to 24" in length and 6" in width.
8. Fragrance - most often in pale coloured flowers, may be delicate to quite strong, even foliage can be aromatic.
9. Bugs eat some leaves and never touch others.
10. Frequency and reliability of bloom - some bloom every year, others every other year, and many large-leaved plants don't bloom until they are 10-15 years of age.

Don't let this list give you a hopeless feeling. There are many ways to find out before you buy, and before you decide just what you want. Neighbouring gardens are good teachers, also books and magazines, or join a rhodo club. Tour gardens and garden shows are others. Read labels on plants



(the ones that say "Pink" or "Red" are not much help). Get the proper name of the plant so you can look it up in a book. Carefully observe the Zone number. Most nurseries do not sell plants they know will not survive in their area, but be more careful if you look at plants further down Island or in Seattle. They are probably one or two zones warmer.



TRIFLORA RHODOS



"Why does my *R. augustinii* look rather straggly?" asked a gardening friend. I wondered too, so looked up this group of plants in Peter Cox's Encyclopedia of Rhodo Species, and found his description of Subsection Triflora - low, mound forming spreading to upright or umbrella-shaped, sometimes straggly shrubs. Leaves sometimes semi-deciduous. They certainly have a unkempt, rather pathetic look by the end of winter.

They have been divided into 3 "Alliances", the Augustinii, the Yunnanense and the Oreotrephes, and you can identify most of them immediately because they have these same attributes. Except for rhodoholics who concentrate on acquiring most species rhodos, few people have many of these plants. Some people have *R. augustinii* (several have lost them for unknown reasons), *R. concinnum* and *R. keiskei* (I have seen only the prostrate and creeping type - and found it not hardy in my garden), and *R. lutescens*. Now there is a really scraggly bush. I finally cut off all the lower branches, and now it is tall, looking over other rhodos, and blooming nicely in early April.

Among the Yunnanense Alliance we can usually find *R. davidsonianum* and *R. yunnanense* in one of our gardens. My yunnanense has white flowers with green marked with olive whiskers, but all the ones I saw in Scotland were pink with red or brownish blotches - much prettier than mine, I thought.

The Oreotrephes Alliance has been reduced to the single species, *R. oreotrephes*, and to my mind, it will be moved to someplace else because, though it also has a straggly look, the leaves of mine are so glaucous, small and round, and the leaf-stems so purplish, that it doesn't look like any of the others in the Triflora group. Flower colour ranges from quite a bright pinky-mauve (from the Greig garden) to creamy white, a plant which seems to bloom heavily in almost full sun.

So - don't feel badly if your plant has a quite different look to the rest of your rhodos - it is different and is just as beautiful in its own way.

R. kiusianum



This is a darling little rhodo (commonly called an evergreen or semi-evergreen azalea) that usually retains its leaves in winter. Its original home is the Island of Kyushu, where it grows high on mountain slopes of Japan. Over the years it has gone through several name changes.

The plant has small, hairy leaves, and masses of small flowers which can vary in colour from purple to various shades of rose-purple, rose or pink, even occasionally

magenta, salmon or even white. It probably won't grow to much more than 3 ft. in height, which makes it an excellent choice for a pot.

Don't leave this plant in full sun in summer, and remember to water it regularly. Plants in pots need special treatment in winter, in our variable climate. For instance, this past non-winter, this potted rhodo could have been outside on a porch or patio until the middle of December. Then for the next 6 weeks, it could easily have drowned in the incessant rain. Then the weather was quite cool for most of February, so a sheltered corner or cold greenhouse was necessary. Now we are into March, with rain again - but watch for sudden chilly nights when flower buds could easily be blasted.



GARDEN TOURS



I had to laugh when I read this amusing tale from Norm Todd of the Victoria Rhodo club, and will now pick out the best bits so you can laugh too (in a kindly way, of course).

"I have never - not once - been able to get our place in shape for visitors. I always tell myself the people like coming here because they go home feeling their own garden is Eden compared to ours".

****Note by MP:** I must interrupt here because I always go home deciding to get a bulldozer in and start over again.

"As a consequence of the perpetual un-maintained look I try to sound superior about it and call it a `natural West Coast garden'. It doesn't really fool anyone but it eases my own sensibilities a little. Actually there are two lines - You should have been here last week" and "In two weeks' time this will be a blaze of colour".

Always have a few horror stories ready. Visitors will then think how lucky they are and don't ask so many embarrassing questions. I usually start by informing them I carry extra insurance because the place is so dangerous. Then I point out *R. aureum* with which Dr. Keolpin used to try to cure arthritis but killed his patients. I point out the poisonous berries on *Daphne laureola*, the dead Dogwood, cut down by mistake, and the noxious patch of brambles.



I find it helps to just keep on talking - don't give opportunities for questions or comments. The late Maggie Whitney has a tactic which was pretty drastic but worked well. When someone would say "It must be beautiful when everything is in bloom" she would reply "If you don't think it is beautiful now you are not a gardener, so OUT" and she pointed the way.

It is important to have juice or pop or coffee handy and some chairs - many visitors will stay close by and forget about going around the garden. And a toilet. This year we are going to build a toilet, accessible without going through the whole house.



If you really want to put on the dog, think about charging admission, which will bring you a lot of respect. People will talk in hushed tones while going around;

even more so if you say the money is for a charity. However, people will stay longer to get their money's worth. They will also bring bigger pockets if you have samples or cuttings on hand.

I think it is important to wear grubby clothes when taking people around the garden. It shows you are a worker. I always look at peoples' hands. If they are not as dirt ingrained as mine I write them off as being theoretical gardeners only...Remember that you can be a visitor in many more gardens than you can be the host so just check that you have something to drink and a convenient toilet, and if you have a lawn do the edges and leave the grass uncut, following Beverly Nichols' advice."

SNIPPETS FROM SAYWARD

(by Rose-Marie Silkens)



It seems that as I get older I do more complaining about weather. The violent winds and heavy rains combined with cold temperatures have made this rather a grumpy April in Sayward, at least so far. I have great hopes for the last week of the month.

Certainly, it is a very late spring. Most things are at least two weeks behind their time. Normally I prune roses when the forsythia blooms, which is just before St Patrick's Day in most years. This year, however, it was several days into April.

My beloved hellebores came through the late winter snowfall looking desperate. Leaves were black and flower stems had collapsed. Even plants that have been with me for decades looked as if they were gasping their last. Early in April I cut off all poor-looking foliage (which was most of it) and flower stems. Amazing plants that they are, they have all sprung back to their beautiful selves and are making me waste a great deal of time staring at them in admiration. I would normally have fed them with a good top dressing of compost and bone meal by now, but they haven't even had a square meal to explain such resilience.

Unfortunately, there is no turnaround possible for another winter victim. The weeping birch growing at the entrance to my driveway was just reaching an impressive size. When I looked outside the morning after 12" of wet snow, the birch was lying in the driveway. I won't be the only one to miss it. It was a nursery school tree for a resident sapsucker family that taught their young to forage from its soft wood. Walking about near the birch during summer meant a great many close encounters with ear-height sapsuckers of various ages. Many of my trees have sapsucker motifs on their trunks, but I can't say that any has ever been damaged by them. Certainly the birch broke off well below the first row of their holes. Perhaps I'm in denial because I like the birds so much and enjoy their active presence. In



any case, they have never shown an interest in any of the numerous magnolias in the yard, and I plan to replace the birch with a yellow-flowered magnolia. I don't have one of those yet, and am trying to decide between Yellowbird and Butterflies.

COMOX VALLEY RHODODENDRON GARDEN

(by Harry Wright)

It seems like a long time ago, and in fact 10 years has past since the agreement was signed for establishment of the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden on 11 April 1996. This was when the North Island Rhododendron Society joined with the City of Courtenay, in the "Partners in Parks" program, which allowed our club to commence work on the garden. The City agreed to supply materials, while the club would supply Rhodo's and labour. This agreement has continued to work well, and the City of Courtenay has been an excellent partner in the project.

At first, the city had offered several different sites, but the one chosen has turned out to be the best. There is a lot to be said for its location. The garden has ideal growing conditions, and certainly has good exposure to the public, since the popular Air Park walkway runs adjacent to it.

On April 16, 1996, the first work party of Bernie Guyader, Dick Bonney, Bob Lofthouse & Harry Wright began the job of spreading topsoil.

The garden consists of five beds, containing 126 varieties of species and hybrid Rhododendrons. Built in stages, the first bed was completed April 1996 and the second in September 1996. The third and fourth beds were completed the following year, again in April and September. Finally the last bed, adjacent to the Information Centre, was completed in September 1998.

Some of the plants have been purchased with club funds, but a lot were donated by NIRS members. Many, many hours have been spent, weeding, mulching and dead heading. Over the years, the number of members attending the work parties has increased. This has made these outings more of a social gathering, and much more enjoyable to attend.

At 4 pm, May 20, 1997, twenty people gathered to witness then Mayor Ron Webber of the City of Courtenay cut the ribbon to officially open the garden. In doing so, the Mayor informed the Society how pleased they were with our project; one which many citizens continue to enjoy each day.



RECIPE REQUESTS:

CHICKEN & BROCCOLI LEMON CRISP

- 1 lb boneless skinless chicken breasts
- 2 Tbsp butter
- 2 Tbsp Cornstarch.
- 2 Cups milk
- 2 Tbsp Dijon mustard
- ¼ Cup Mayonnaise
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice & 1 ½ tsp grated lemon peel
- 1 bunch Broccoli
- ¾ Cup fresh Breadcrumbs
- ¼ Cup Grated parmesan Cheese



-Preheat oven to 355 ° F

Cut chicken into 1" cubes. Fry in 1 Tbsp butter until lightly browned. Stir in cornstarch. Add milk, stir until mixture boils. Add mustard, mayo, sour cream, lemon juice, & peel. Cut Broccoli into florets, steam lightly and drain. Arrange broccoli in 2 qt Baking dish. Spoon chicken mixture over top. In fry pan, melt remaining butter and fry bread crumbs.

Sprinkle breadcrumbs over chicken. Top with parmesan cheese.

Bake 15 minutes or until mixture bubbles around the edge.

Delicious...enjoy

CHEDDAR SAUSAGE MUFFINS

- 2 Cups flour
- 2 Tbsp sugar
- 3 Tsp Baking Powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 egg
- 1 Cup milk
- ¼ Cup melted butter or margarine
- ½ Lb bulk pork sausage meat cooked & drained.
- ½ C shredded cheddar cheese.



In bowl, combine all dry ingredients. Combine egg, milk & melted butter. Stir into dry ingredients until just moistened. Fold in sausage meat and cheese.

Fill greased or paper lined muffin cups 2/3 full.

Bake 375° F 18 - 22 minutes.

Serve Warm



Brings more flowers...



North Island Rhododendron Society



Mother's Day Garden Tour

SUNDAY – 14th May 2006

10 a.m. until 4 p.m.

Enjoy a tour of six great gardens and
have a chance to win a Rhododendron!

Tickets only \$10 each.

Available in Comox Valley at:
Art Knapp's Plantland, Francis Jewellers, Anderton Nursery,
Home & Garden Gate, or call Harry Wright 338-8345

Available in Campbell River at:
Serendipity in the Garden, Campbell River Garden Centre
Sticks N Stones Nursery, or call Paul Wurz 287-4301

Don't miss your chance to see these beautiful gardens!

Print copies of this poster, Cut along dotted line and distribute in key locations....thank you!