



# The RHODOTELLER

## COMING EVENTS:

**3 October 2006**

Executive meeting will be held at the home of Dick and Pauline Bonney, 2393 Seabank Road, Courtenay, beginning at 7:30 p.m.

**10 October 2006 — Regular Monthly Meeting**

**Guest Speaker: Les Clay**

**Topic: Propagation**

Many members have met Les as recently as last May at our plant sale. Les and Bev Clay have a "working garden" in Langley and are long time members of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society. Come to our meeting this month to learn propagation tips and tricks from Les.

## PRESIDENTS VIEW.

Fall is here and this is the time of year that I seem to be enjoying more every year. It's the time of year to slow down and think of the busy season past, all that weeding and watering is history.

Since this past summer was the second driest on record, lets be happy being second as I don't have any fatalities, only burnt leaves.

The fall brings different tasks in our garden. Now is the time to bring the babies inside so they can enjoy a frost free winter. One of the most enjoyable jobs of the fall is plant propagation. I haven't done any cuttings for several years and my propagating tank has been used as a storage area. The tank has been rejuvenated and has been cleaned out, so things are back to normal and cuttings are being processed. The tank holds close to 1000 cuttings, so I still have room for a few more.

If you have never tried doing cuttings this would be a good year to start, a great way to increase your inventory and any extras can be brought for the club's "revenue table".

Our guest speaker this month, Les Clay will be giving us all some handy hints and tips on plant propagation. So be sure to try and attend.

Speaking of attendance, I would like to thank those that came out to the work party at the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden on September 14<sup>th</sup>. The gardens now look great and the goodies were delicious as always.

See you at the meeting.....Harry Wright



## North Island Rhododendron Society

**2005/2006 Executive:**

### President

Harry Wright .... 338-8345

### Vice-President

Dave Crucq ..... 339-7845

### Secretary

Diana Scott ..... 338-0208

### Treasurer

Don Law ..... 339-2735

### Director: Ways & Means

Dave Godfrey ... 335-0717

### Director: Membership

Brian Staton..... 337-5228

### Director: Publicity

Chris Aldred ..... 335-3231

### Director: Newsletter/Library

Noni Godfrey ... 335-0717

..... Nonigod@shaw.ca

### Social Committee:

Evelyn Wright .. 339-7493

Bernice Morrison 339-0932

### Revenue Table Committee:

Joan Walsh ..... 335-1349

Tiffany Wyles... 336-8188

### Historian:

Lois Clyde ..... 337-5754

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

**PRESIDENT'S TIPS FOR OCTOBER:****Window-Sill Propagation**

Cuttings can be taken when the new growth is semi-ripe (Sep-Oct). They should be 3-4 inches in length & pencil diameter. Any flower buds should be removed, as well as all leaves except 3-4 at the tip. These leaves can be trimmed down by 2/3 of each leaf ( see Drawing #1).

Wound the bottom end of the cutting on two sides approx, 1" in length by just grazing the hardwood and exposing the cambium. (see drawing # 2).

Dip the cutting into a rooting hormone powder or jelly prepared for semi-hardwood.

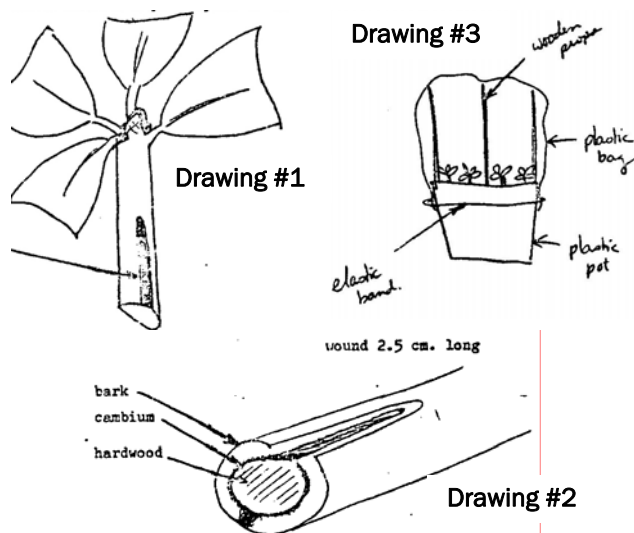
A good rooting soil mixture is 50% peat, 50% coarse sand or perlite.

Insert cuttings into a 1 gallon container and cover with a clear plastic bag, supported with 3 small wooden stakes. Use an elastic band to hold the plastic bag on the pot. (see drawing # 3)

Place cuttings on a north facing window sill and ensure that the temperature is about 70 deg F.

Water every week or two and give them some fresh air by removing the plastic for 30 min, at a time, weekly. Cuttings should root in about 4 months.

Small or scaly leafed rhododendrons are good ones for the beginner as they root easily.



*"Anyone who says sunshine  
brings happiness  
has never danced in the rain"*

**MEMBER NOTES:** (by Dave Godfrey)

Another season of meetings commenced on Tuesday, Sept.12<sup>th</sup>, with 34 members and guests in attendance. President Harry Wright began the evening by welcoming everyone back for another year.



New to the executive this year are Brian Staton as Membership Director, Pauline Bonney as Sunshine Lady, Joan Walsh in charge of the Revenue Table, and Christine Aldred as Publicity Director.

Ways & Means Director, Dave Godfrey, reminded members that NIRS membership provides discounts at many garden center retailers. Although Buckerfield's and Courtenay Nursery have gone out of business, Shar-Kare on Puntledge Road and Mt. Arrowsmith Nursery in Coombs have agreed to provide discounts to our members.

Also, Dave brought to everyone's attention that the club has recently purchased a pH pen for soil testing. The pen will be kept by President Harry and may be borrowed for up to a week by members for a fee of \$10.00 (\$5.00 will be reimbursed if returned with the 7 days.) Contact Harry at 338-8345 to check the availability of the pen.

The raffle prize of a rhododendron "Cupcake" was won by Marlene Crucq, while our newest member, Nadine Boudreau, was the lucky winner of the door prize plant "Mrs. G. W. Leak". Brian Staton won the surprise door prize of bulbs donated by Diana Scott.

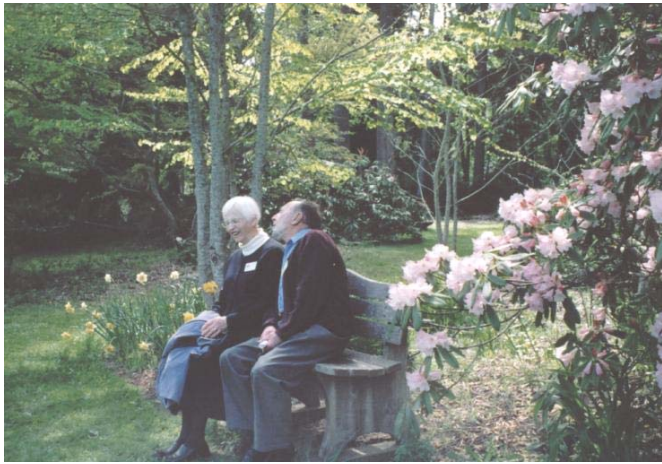
Following the meeting, President Harry presented a short educational slide presentation on various rhododendrons. Harry then introduced guest speaker, Robert Argall, who gave his presentation on "Colours in the Spring Garden."

Robert discussed the many differences and varieties of early, mid, and late spring bulbs, which, when used in combination with various rhodos, can present a marvelous display of colours. Robert has 67 different varieties of narcissus in his garden on Wireless Road, and as he explained, narcissus are much more deer resistant compared to tulips and other spring flowers.

Many daphnies put on a great show in February through March, and violets and snow drops can be grown in lawns for added effect. Lawns normally do not require cutting until these plants have died back in late April. As Robert also explained, although most spring bulbs are planted in September and October, in order to have some blooming later in the spring, try planting some as late as November.

Robert's power point presentation of beautiful tulips, narcissus, trilliums, fritillaria, shrubs, rhododendrons and trees provided for an educational and entertaining evening.





Spring of 2006 at Meerkerk Gardens  
"Love was in the air"

## GARDEN CHATTER, NATTER AND NOTES

(by Mary Palmer)

### SOME NOTES FROM FINE GARDENING - SEPT-OCT 2006

To discourage yellow-jackets, a sheet of scented fabric softener into a glass on the table and that seems to keep them away.

Kitchen scraps can be dug right into holes in flower beds and within 6 weeks the worms will have disposed of them.

To keep deer from nibbling your special plants, make protective cages by putting in three stakes, tie at top so it looks like a teepee, and wind flexible branches (willow for instance) around, and tie them on. These could be made in spring, ready to pop over a shrub when necessary.

A flat-sided plastic spray bottle makes a fine 'holster' for your pruners - just put it in a jacket or shirt pocket upside down, after cutting the bottom couple of inches off it.

Here is a lovely viburnum - *V.x burkwoodii* 'Conoy', one of several new selections named after Native American tribes. Remains evergreen to Zones 7-8, semi-evergreen below those temperatures. The leaves can turn to dark maroon in late fall. Clusters in pink buds open to showy white flowers, slightly scented, in flat-topped clusters. Fruit shiny red darkening to black in late fall, grows 4-5 ft. in height. Plant near other viburnums to ensure good cross-pollination.

Full sun or part shade, drought resistant, won a Gold Medal from Pennsylvania Hort Society.

### INFO FROM 'THE GARDEN', AUG. 2006.



Buddleja (common name Buddleia)

If you love butterflies, and are looking for a super-hardy, drought resistant shrub for late summer, BUY MORE BUDDLEIAS.

There are over 100 species, and the most hardy are *B. globosa*, early flowering, *B. alternifolia*, early summer

flowering, and *B. davidii*, commonly known as Butterfly Bush.

They thrive best in a free-draining, light soil in full sun, but will accept a broad range of conditions, acid and alkaline soils. Seeding freely, quick to colonize, in fact invade, waste spaces such as building sites, railway tracks, beaches. Rock on the highway leading out of Horsehoe Bay in West Vancouver.

If you want a dwarf, look for one developed from *B. nanhoensis*. All fully hardy and long-lived. Flowers of *B. davidii* in huge tapering panicles, coloured from white to pinks and mauves to black-purple. And the perfume! A very attractive specimen I have seen pictured is *B. davidii* 'Harlequin', which has yellow-margined leaves and dark magenta flowers.

To maximize size and quality of flowers, prune hard in late winter or early spring. These plants bloom on the current season's wood. If you prune later, in May, flowering will be delayed, giving insects a chance to gorge on the high energy nectar later in the season.

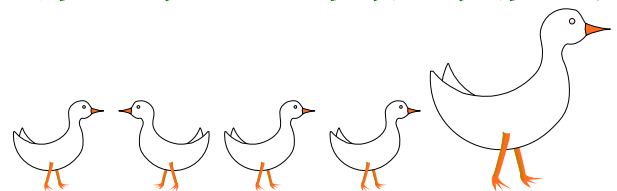
Note by MP: I found that when I pruned in late winter and we have severe weather in Feb. or March, I lost several plants. Pruning later, in April or May is a better idea in my garden.

### FALL CHORES:

Don't forget to prune off suckers around grafted plants such as *Hamamelis* and *Corylus avellana* 'Contorta' (Harry Lauder's Walking Stick). A thick layer of compost will help protect plants that you consider 'not quite hardy'. Check variegated shrubs and cut off branches that have reverted to plain green.

When to cut down ornamental grasses? Wait until you see signs of new growth (Jan. or Feb. in our area). This is the right time to divide or move the plants. Use an old kitchen knife for cutting, or for large plants, two garden forks back to back.

## FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN:



Membership renewals are required as soon as possible!

All individual memberships, (which can include husband and wives) are \$35.00 Canadian.

All Associate memberships are \$10.00 Canadian.

All cheques should be made out to N.I.R.S. and either brought to the next meeting or mailed to Brian Staton at:

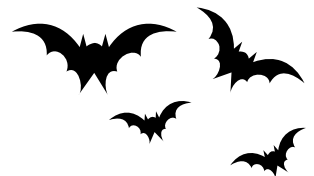
N.I.R.S.

Attn: Brian Staton

P.O. Box 3183

Courtenay, B.C.

V9N 5N4





## DROUGHT

How does drought affect our trees and shrubs? Woody plants can feel the effect of drought for many years, whereas perennials can die back but grow again the next year. Short-term damage (1 dry spell) includes wilting, leaf scorch, some defoliation, Long-term damage from drought happens over a period of years, includes stunted growth, branch die-back, and possible death of the plant.

\*\* Many woody plants will take up to 3 years after a drought to display negative long-term effects.

As soils become dry in the hottest summer months, fine roots in the upper soil surface may be stimulated to increase in number to get available water, but if the soil continues to be dry, they start to die, putting the root system out of balance with the amount of foliage aboveground. When the rains return, the plant can't take advantage of much-needed water because of reduced root mass. The result is branch dieback. If the drought persists into the next growing season, the plant may die.

Pest problems are another result of prolonged drought. Many pests cannot survive in a healthy tree. As the tree becomes weakened by drought, pests invade rapidly. For instance, bronze birch borer, black turpentine beetle and many species of conifer bark beetles can suddenly appear.

Some pests like spider mites, lace bugs and aphids can be more detrimental to their hosts, because the plant can't grow faster than the rate of damage as a result of lack of water. Many beneficial insects also slow or cease foraging activity during these conditions.

Also, drought-stressed trees exhibit decreased ability to isolate small wounds, allowing pathogens to invade. It is common to see more incidence of stem canker disease in years following a drought. These show up as sunken greyish cankers on branches.



No one can predict with certainty how long a particular drought will last, but they do appear periodically over time. Choosing the right plants for your location and caring for them properly are the best ways to lessen a drought's long-term impact. Incorporate organic matter, weed regularly, water infrequently but deeply with soaker hoses or drip irrigation, and apply mulch around your plants, are the best ways to weather a drought.

## HERONSWOOD NURSERY

Disappointing to gardeners in the west. Burpee bought the company six years ago, and has moved everything to Pennsylvania. Dan Hinkley, his partner Robert Jones, and all the rest of the staff were let go. They had set up the nursery about 20 years ago.

Dan and his team have traveled the world to find plants that would thrive in the Pacific Northwest, including many shade-loving perennials and woodland shrubs from Chile, Tasmania, Australia, South Africa and the Himalayas.

Dan has no immediate plans to start another nursery, but will continue to travel and write books.

Burpee had intended to continue selling plants, retaining the name Heronswood and the catalogue, and offer a similar variety of plants, but found it was uneconomic - they tried for 6 years, but it just wasn't profitable. What next? Who knows? I am sure many people on our West Coast will be feeling very sorry. I am sure many B.C. gardeners, after reading Dan's book and catalogue, were looking forward to finding some of the plants in our nurseries.

Speaking of nurseries, it seems we missed mentioning a couple of our local nurseries in last months write up by Mary Palmer. We have two other members of the NIRS that run nurseries.

One is Rose-Marie Silkens from Sayward with 'Salmon River Gardens'. She has a wonderful selection of Rhododendrons and companion plants. Rose-Marie also sets up a table at our clubs annual plant sale in the spring. Some of you are probably very familiar with her top quality products. Rose-Marie also writes a very interesting and informative article for our newsletter on a monthly basis.



The other nursery, 'Oyster Bay Plant Works', just south of Campbell River, is run by member Linda Easton. Linda has a fine assortment of Rhododendrons, some that are not available in other nurseries on Vancouver Island.

## BOOK REVIEW

(by Mary Palmer)

Hydrangeas, a Gardener's Guide  
Lawson-Hall & Rothera  
Pub: Timber Press 1995.



This book is chock-full of all kinds of useful advice about growing hydrangeas. For instance, a combination of sun and humidity are more important than just watering. Drooping leaves, on a hot day, may not mean the plant is dry, just overexposed to the hot sun. The leaves will recover when the sun is off them. But if the plant is in a shady spot and the leaves droop, pour on the water. A good soaking once a week is better than a daily sprinkle, and young plants need to be watered more often.

Most hydrangeas are woodland plants, so like rhodos, they really appreciate high dappled shade.

The hardiest hydrangeas. temperature-wise, are H. arborescens and H. paniculata. Flowers are borne on the new season's wood, so escape most late frosts in spring. H.periolaris, a climber, and H. quericolia, are hardy to -20F but don't flower well in cool summers.

These are long-term plants, so start them off with good soil, and feed and mulch regularly. The roots hate to be dried out, so be generous with garden compost and leaf-mold.



Cuttings are easy, any time between April and October. Use a mix of peat and sharp sand or perlite. Treat them the same as rhodo cuttings, cover the pot with a plastic bag and place on a windowsill with light from the north. Hardwood cuttings can be taken later in fall.

This is a book to have on hand when you are considering the purchase of one of these plants. Most of them flower after the rhodos finish, and the flowers look handsome over various colour changes in the fall. Look for *H. macrophylla* 'Selma', a compact plant which flowers abundantly at a very young age, height to 3.5 ft, flower colour pink and white.

## SNIPPETS FROM SAYWARD

(by Rose-Marie Silkens)

At a family reunion in August, Bruce's visiting Norwegian relatives talked about a favourite berry traditionally used in preserves, the



Cloudberry (*Rubus chamaemorus*). I was embarrassed to know nothing about this plant, and even more embarrassed when a check in my trusty Pojar and MacKinnon (*Plants of Coastal British Columbia*) lists it as a BC native. Apparently it appears here in "low-elevation bogs," but was named "cloudberry" because it grew on the highest mountaintops in England. According to our visitors, the best berries in Norway are produced at high elevations.

This berry is first a reddish colour and turns yellow-orange with ripeness. It is not ever to be picked until it is very ripe, apparently. The preserves we tasted were indeed delicious, and now I have to find a source for cloudberry plants to add to the Hardwicke Island Norwegian-Canadian garden.



My own ethnic heritage being Dutch, I am of course overspending on bulbs at this time of year. I always stock my little garden centre with far too many, so then I have to plant them myself. Pity.

The uncle who used to send me new Dutch varieties to try has retired from his horticultural business and is quite infirm, so I have to do a lot more sleuthing to find what I'm looking for. Fortunately, some of the big wholesalers who handle Dutch-grown bulbs actually will provide more unusual items along with their mass-market offerings, if one asks. They are, after all, in the business because they too like bulbs.

I used to get narcissus bulbs from a wonderful small operation in Richmond called McMath's Daffodils. It isn't there anymore, but they had several hundred varieties, many from Ireland. 'Empress of Ireland' is not often seen in commerce here, but it has been around since the 1920's, and is a glorious, huge white trumpet that makes 'Mount Hood' look like an afterthought. Fortunately, both the bulbs I got from Uncle Theo years ago and those that came from McMath's are doing well and multiplying.

The last order I received from McMath's is a special one. I had been reading about hybridizing attempts to produce a garden worthy daffodil with a yellow perianth and pink cup (the pinks used to have a white perianth only). The first European release was called 'Wigeon,' but it was not yet available in North America. I wrote to the McMath's about it, and with that year's order they sent a gift, a single unnamed bulb in a brown bag, with a cryptic question mark on it. Wow. This flower is exquisite – a soft lemon-yellow perianth with a salmon-pink cup, a nice strong stem, good substance to the flower. I phoned the following spring to thank them and ask for more information about the bulb, but the number was out of service. The next time we were on the mainland I went to the address but they were no longer there.

Among my favourite spring-flowering bulbs are our native camass species. Not wanting to dig up my own, I buy them for the store for those customers who are smitten when they see mine in bloom. When I found a supplier I was careful to learn where and how the bulbs were acquired, and should not have been surprised that they are now grown commercially, and extensively, in Holland.



## GARDEN LANTERNS

Take various sized cans – soup, tomato, veggie, etc., wash and dry. Fill the empty cans with sand and water and put in the freezer until frozen solid. To prepare some designs for the outside of the cans sketch out some leaf patterns on paper. Remember the paper must wrap around the can so don't make them too big. Use simple leaves at first, like ginkgo, as they will be easier to work with. Wrap the paper with the design around the frozen can and use tape to hold it in place. Next, hammer holes along the leaf pattern using nails as punches. Have several nails on hand as they can get dull fast. Also make several holes at the top of the can so wire handles can be attached. When design is complete, take off the paper, let the contents thaw out, then wash and dry the can. The inside of the can be painted white to diffuse the candle light, and paint the outside with any color you have on hand, or to fit your garden colour scheme. If you use small candles on beds of sand, the wax will be easier to clean out when the candle needs replacing.



## NAME THE HYBRID: (A fun little game from one of our members)

- |                           |                                  |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. He's feeling sad       | 9. She's finished                |
| 2. Rhododendron sage      | 10. Repair our road              |
| 3. She's coquettish       | 11. He's an extinguisher         |
| 4. The Sprinkler Man      | 12. She's gone but not forgotten |
| 5. She digs               | 13. We're making cakes           |
| 6. Toy with no clothes on | 14. A little fishy               |
| 7. That awful weed        | 15. Keep talking                 |
| 8. Gambler's delight      | <i>Answers on last page</i>      |

## GARDEN TOOL KNOW-HOW

**Turn away rust.** Help your wheelbarrow stand up to rust. Turn it on its side when you're not using it. That way, water won't collect in it and cause rust.

**Chalk up a plan for tidy tools.** Install a pegboard in your garage or tool shed. It comes in handy for hanging small tools neatly. Once you arrange the tools the way you want them, trace around each tool with chalk. Then you can tell at a glance which tool goes where.

**Make use of a broken rake.** Don't throw out your rake just because the handle broke. Attach the rake head to the wall of your tool shed and hang hand tools from the teeth. You can even use the handle as a stake for tall plants.

**Spray away sticky grass.** Here's a simple way to keep grass from sticking to your lawn mower blades. Just coat the blades with nonstick cooking spray before you mow. In fact, cooking spray comes in handy for cleaning the rest of your lawn mower, too.

**Hone your sharpening skills.** Follow this easy tip for sharpening your tools. Shade the area that needs sharpening with a felt-tip pen. With a whetstone, sharpen the blade evenly until you can no longer see the ink.

**Zap sap from shears.** Don't let sticky sap gum up your pruning shears. Before you start pruning, give your shears a spritz of vegetable oil spray. Plant sap will wipe right off when you're finished.

**Help for a leaky hose.** You can plug it up temporarily with some chewed gum. For a more permanent repair, heat up the tip of an ice pick with a flame. Then gently touch the hot tip to a bit of the rubber around the hole. It will melt and seal it.

**Iron out hose cracks.** If your plastic hose has a small hole or crack, try this cool trick. Take a hot soldering iron and lightly touch it to the area. It should seal the leak.

## ANSWERS TO 'NAME THE HYBRID'

- |                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Bob's Blue     | 9. Margaret Dunn    |
| 2. Percy Wiserman | 10. Taurus (tar us) |
| 3. Dora Amateis   | 11. Fireman Jeff    |
| 4. Gomer Waterer  | 12. Mist Maiden     |
| 5. Etta Burows    | 13. Patty Bee       |
| 6. Teddy Bear     | 14. Elsie Frye      |
| 7. Doc            | 15. Babylon         |
| 8. Winsome        |                     |

## SPECIAL NOTICE TO RHODODENDRON MEMBERS:

MARS members Vic and Susan Vickers of Qualicum Beach have recently sold their home and moved to the Okanagan. The new owners, Charmaine and David Hambly from Calgary, are renovating the house inside and out, and plan to sell off many rhododendrons from the gardens. Ron McMaster of MARS advises that they have over 400 rhodos, many of which are Yaks, and are selling about two thirds of them. Any members interested in purchasing some rhododendrons for their garden are advised to call the Hambly's at 250-752-5825.

## RECIPE REQUESTS:

### ALMOND PEAR CREAM CHEESE TORTE

(Two Kraft Kitchens specialties for Thanksgiving)

#### Ingredients

- ½ C butter or margarine, softened
- 1 C sugar, divided
- 1 C flour
- 1 pkg (250 gr) Cream Cheese
- 1 egg
- ½ tsp vanilla
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- 4 C sliced peeled pears (approx 4 medium)
- ¼ C sliced almonds



#### Directions:

**Preheat** oven to 425° F. Beat butter and 1/3 C of the sugar in small bowl with electric mixer on medium until light and fluffy. Add flour, mix well. Spread firmly onto bottom and 1 inch up side of a 9 inch spring form pan.

**Beat** cream cheese and 1/3 C of the remaining sugar in same bowl with electric mixer on med speed until well blended. Add egg and vanilla; mix well. Spread evenly over crust. **Combine** remaining 1/3 C sugar and the cinnamon. Add to pears in large bowl; toss to coat. Arrange over cream cheese layer; sprinkle with almonds.

**Bake** 10 minutes. Reduce temperature to 375° F; continue baking 25 min. or until centre is set. Cool on wire rack. Loosen torte from rim of pan. Cover and refrigerate 3 hours before serving. Store leftover torte in refrigerator.

### LUSCIOUS FOUR-LAYER PUMPKIN CAKE

#### Ingredients

- 1 pkg (2 layer size) yellow cake mix
- 1 (14 oz) pumpkin, divided
- ½ C milk
- 1/3 C oil
- 4 large eggs
- 1-1/2 tsp pumpkin pie spice, divided
- 1 pkg (250 gr) Cream Cheese, softened
- 1 C icing sugar
- 3 cups thawed COOL Whip topping
- ½ C caramel topping
- ½ C chopped toasted pecans



#### Directions:

**Preheat** oven to 350° F. Grease and flour two 9 inch round cake pans. Beat cake mix, 1 C of the pumpkin, the milk, oil, eggs and 1 tsp of the pumpkin pie spice in large bowl on medium speed until well blended. Pour into prepared pans.

**Bake** 28 - 30 min. toothpick comes out clean. Cool in pans 10 mins. Then remove and cool on racks completely. Beat cream cheese in small bowl with mixer on medium until creamy. Add sugar, remaining spice and pumpkin, mix well. Stir in the whipped topping.

**Cut** each cake layer horizontally in half with a serrated knife. Spread the cream cheese filling between layers. (Do not frost top of cake) Drizzle with caramel topping just before serving; sprinkle with the pecans. Store leftovers in refrigerator.