



The RHODOTELLER

www.NIRS.RHODOS.CA

Coming Events

Important
DATE!

5 June 2007 — Executive Meeting

The meeting will be held at the Comox Valley Rhodo Garden
Meeting begins at 10:00 a.m.

16 June 2007 — "Saturday" - Wrap Up Picnic Pot Luck

Picnic Protocols! The season's finale beckons!

This year the gathering will be held at Paul and Lynne Wurz's garden, 4367 Gordon Road, Campbell River.

Drive north past the pulp mill, turn left onto Duncan Bay Road (main junction), then onto Gordon Road. Paul's home and his 'Hidden Acres' nursery is just past the "Mystic Woods Nursery". I think Mystic Woods is still open. Anyway, there are signs to 'Hidden Acres Nursery' so just follow the road around.

Attendees to this year's gala will qualify for a chance to play the famous "*Bean Bag Toss Game*". New members will be welcomed, old friends embraced - warmly, in both cases. Do wear your name badges. Festive dress would be highly desirable...but any old thing will do.

Members are requested to bring one or more dishes...each suitable for serving several people...of delicate appetizers, seductive savories, buttery breads, crunchy salads, virtuous fruits, and elegant desserts.

The annual phenomenon of a perfect balance of dishes for all tastes will again be manifest. But...do bring necessary eating cutlery, and also serving utensils. (Only a limited supply of clean gardening trowels is available!)

And, your best outside mugs and drinking vessels for the communal tea and coffee, (or your own harmless or otherwise punches).

The picnic committee has requested that members bring their own plates...whether Royal Doulton, Value Village, or chipped crockery...whatever may be available. To avoid sullying your dress garments with grass stains, please bring lawn chairs from home.

4:00 P.M.
See You There!



NORTH ISLAND RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

2006/2007 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 View

(by Harry Wright)

June already and our society's workload is going to take a couple of months off. The key word being "workload" as the summer brings relaxation and visitation. Remember, during July and August no meetings, but we are still free to visit members' gardens and do some socializing. Drop into the Rhodo garden and do some deadheading if withdrawal sets in and you must do a bit of work. Actually we will be having a deadheading get-together in late June, watch your e-boxes for notice on the actual date.

We have had a very busy year with membership and attendance up, which is a good indicator that we are doing things right. Another successful plant sale and Mother's Day garden tour are now completed and in the record books. A great big thanks to all who helped out in the two events and in the organizational end of things.

Let's not forget that, as we reduce our workload for two months, we do not neglect our rhodo's. Now we should be finding the time to complete the dead heading jobs and get serious about watering. Summer is the time of year that Rhodos are developing their bud set for next spring. Light fertilization and adequate moisture will ensure the set for glorious blooms as we have seen this past spring in most gardens.

Hope to see you at the June 16th POT LUCK..... Harry



Member Notes

(by Dave Godfrey)

May was Rhododendron Month.... and a busy month it was! Busier than most in recent years, as it started with a visit by 16 members from the Whidbey Island Rhododendron Society (WIRS meets NIRS.)



The group arrived in the afternoon of May 1st, and gathered for a tour and BBQ supper at Haida Gold Gardens hosted by Harry and Gwen

Wright. Following the BBQ, members of WIRS were billeted by members of NIRS, and many took time to tour our CV Rhodo Garden. On Wednesday morning, the WIRS group travelled to Campbell River for a tour and luncheon at the home of Paul & Lynn Wurz. Following the luncheon, the group toured several other gardens as they made their way back to the Comox Valley. Barb & Brian Staton and Lois & Jim Clyde opened their gardens for the visitors along with Dave & Marlene Crucq and Bernie & Gloria Guyader. Lots of pictures were taken, and by all reports the visitors were suitably impressed with all the gardens they saw.

By 5 pm most had arrived at the home of Bob and Adela Smith for a tour and pot-luck dinner provided by NIRS members. Close to 50 members and guests enjoyed the wonderful hospitality of the Smith's. Whidbey Island spokesperson, Bill Stipe, announced that they were "challenged" to match the hospitality next April when members of NIRS are invited back for a visit of gardens on Whidbey Island.

Friday, May 4th, NIRS members and the public were invited to the official opening of the BOVI bed at the CV Rhododendron Garden. Courtenay Mayor Starr Winchester was on hand to help President Harry Wright cut the ribbon at the garden bed.



Sunday May 6th started early, as members gathered at the Native Band Hall on Comox Road for the clubs' annual Sale & Show. All vendors were ready and the doors opened at 10 AM sharp with a flood of buyers.

Although the numbers seemed down from previous years, most vendors were satisfied with the sales again this year. The raffle had 128 entries with the winner being Amber Van Den Biggelaar, of Back Road in Courtenay. Thanks to Les Clay for donating the prize, R. "Girard's Fuchsia".



The Truss show was a great success; the People's Choice Award was "Kiwi Magic", "Delmare" a close second, and "Misty Moonlight" third.

At the Annual General Meeting held at the home of Robert Argall on Tuesday, May 8th, members re-elected Diana Scott as secretary, Don Law as Treasurer, Dave Godfrey as Ways & Means Director and Noni Godfrey as Librarian/Newsletter. Those in attendance had an opportunity to tour Robert's beautiful gardens and enjoy his hospitality. Thanks to Robert for being such a gracious host.

The following Sunday, May 13th, brought sunny skies for our 12th annual Mother's Day Garden Tour. This year's gardens were featured in the Royston/Union Bay/Fanny Bay areas, and by all reports they all had wonderful showings. Approximately 100 members of the public enjoyed the beauty of each garden, along with 20+ stopping to enjoy the unique "parterre" garden at the historic Union Bay Gaol (Jail).



Another successful tour, thanks to all members who helped as gate sitters. Special thanks to Diana Scott and Harry Wright for scouting out the gardens this year.



On Saturday, May 26th, Lt. Governor Iona Campagnolo was the guest of honour at the 7th annual George Fraser Day celebration in Ucluelet. NIRS members Harry & Gwen Wright, Bernie & Gloria Guyader, Dick & Pauline Bonney, Dave & Noni Godfrey and Ron & Julia Moe of Holberg, attended the event and enjoyed the opportunity to visit the west coast and the rhododendron gardens which still decorate the town.

Rhododendrons, which members of the NIRS donated to the project back in 2001, are well-established along the roadway leading into town. They help provide a lasting legacy to honour the life's work of pioneer hybridizer George Fraser (1854-1944). Fraser moved to Ucluelet in 1894 and spent the last 50 years of his life hybridizing, growing and documenting rhododendrons and other plants. In 1991, Mr. Fraser was posthumously awarded the ARS Pioneer Award, the only one awarded outside the USA.

This was a very special and memorable weekend for Harry Wright as one of his hybrids, a cross of Haida Gold x Golden Star was named

and registered by Bill Dale of Victoria, "Iona Cee", in honor of the Lt. Governor.



Happy gardening throughout the summer months, and remember.... *When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant!*



BUSINESSES OFFERING DISCOUNTS

Just a reminder that NIRS membership brings discounts at many garden retailers. Those providing discounts for 2007/08 include:

- Art Knapp Plantland, Courtenay
- Black Creek Farm & Feed Supply
- Campbell River Garden Center (not seeds or bulbs)
- CV Ornamental Concrete on Knight Rd. Comox
- Growing Concern in Black Creek (seasonal opening)
- Just 'n Tyme Greenhouse Supplies, Courtenay
- Arrowsmith Nursery in Qualicum
- Paradise Plants, Courtenay (both locations)
- River Meadows Farms, Courtenay
- Serendipity, Campbell River (garden ornaments only)
- Shar-Kare - both Courtenay and Campbell River
- The Plant Collector Nursery on Waveland Rd. North Courtenay
- Bees & Blooms Nursery - Lanyon Rd. (off Marsden) Courtenay

pH TESTER PEN

If you're experiencing trouble growing some plants, it might be the condition of your soil. Don't forget for a small rental fee you can use the NIRS' pH tester to check the conditions of your soil. The pen is available for one week at a price of \$10 (\$5 is refunded upon return) and can be picked up from and returned to Harry Wright.



The Weather

There is nothing more interesting to people living here - or anywhere - than the weather. Discussing the weather can make or break a conversation. For instance, we not only had winter a month or two early this past winter, but we had snow for an April Fools' joke. We looked forward to some warmer drier weather in May - but not so far. However, grass, early spring flowers, and of course slugs, have not been at all discouraged.

How many times this past month have we said "We had better cut the grass today", but no, it rained, again. However, I feel sure I have never had such blooms as the rhodos have offered so far this spring. I remember moaning in the dry days last summer that there wasn't enough moisture in July and August to form the rhodo flower buds. So how come most plants are simply loaded with blooms now? Of course, on the other hand, several are almost dead.

Remember the R. Virginia Richards that I cast aside some years ago because it was infested with powdery mildew? I stuck it in a bed where it had many hours of sunlight and only two drinks of water all last summer? Now, for the first time since it was moved, it is loaded with flowers. Go figure!

Garden Chatter, Natter and Notes

(by Mary Palmer)

People often ask what shrubs are safe to plant along the salt chuck. Here are some - you probably have found many others by now. Lavender, cotton lavender and cistus will be happy. Cistus is a short-lived shrub here, but is very easy to start from seed. Escallonia 'Donard Seedling' with pink and white flowers is a dainty plant - unfortunately the deer found mine to be tasty last year. The dwarf red varieties are not hardy in my garden, and a plant outside the Campbell River Library was lovely for years - but was badly nipped by last winter's frost.

These next suggestions may or may not be safe in your garden. They seem to be happy in Zone 8(maybe) or 9. Ask our members who live in the Union Bay area. These are all lovely plants but not for me in Zone 7. Olearia x haastii with masses of daisies, Griselina, New Zealand Flax, and Hebes of all kinds.

Have you tried Scilla peruviana? A lovely little plant with large blue flowers, which blooms in early summer. I note though the plant has fresh new leaves in fall which remain green all winter. I would like to add to this - don't let the deer see those leaves. They love Dutch Iris and grape hyacinth leaves in winter, so these scillas would be a tasty dish for them. The plants like to be baked in summer (we can provide that) but prefer to have protection against frost in winter. Sounds like a pot plant to me.



Heathers

Some of the best companion plants for rhodos are heaths and heathers of all kinds. They belong to the same plant family, after all. Nearly all of these plants insist on a lime-free soil, and enjoy almost pure peat-moss or fine bark chips. Many of these plants will become straggly in rich soil. They enjoy full sunshine and moisture, but object to being waterlogged. That is why they make a fine edging for rhodo plants.

Heathers vary so much in height, colour and time of flowering that it is possible to have flowers on one or more year-round. Erica arborea, tallest of the tree heaths, can reach up to 20 ft. If cut to the ground in a severe winter, they can come back from the roots. No recent winter here has been severe enough to bother my plant, and I am constantly cutting it back to a more manageable size. It has white flowers in April-May, and the scent draws bees from all around. However, the pink flowered plant did not survive one winter here.

By careful selection it is possible to have colours ranging from white through pinks and mauves to deep purple heaths and heathers. There are many varieties of Calluna vulgaris, the true heather. Heaths include Erica and Daboecia. The foliage also can range through various shades of green plus many change to red or yellow for the winter.

These plants are extremely adaptable and have many uses. Three or more of each variety in groups give a good effect. They can be planted in the front of a mixed or shrub border or a ground cover among taller shrubs. A rock garden or other exposed position can be ideal if you have a windy site. They can make an excellent low hedge or to cover a bank that is difficult to mow.

You can plant heathers almost any time between Sept. and April, when the weather is damp and not too cold. Water them in if necessary, and a handful of peat moss around each plant will be appreciated. Here I must add a little personal advice. I have given up planting out heathers from 4" pots - either the dry summer or cold winter weather finishes them off. It is best to either buy larger pots - 1 gal. size, or transplant the 4" plants into larger pots and leave them in a protected spot to grow on for six or 12 months. I have often found the little plants to be very root-bound, and always make sure the roots are teased out, or even cut off the bottom 1" of solid root before planting.

Blame our very dry summers recently - the roots often don't get a chance to move out of that solid mass.

How about taking cuttings from a favorite plant? Some time in July or August, mix up a box of damp peat and sand or peat and perlite, and take cuttings about 1" in length (3" for tree heathers), pull off the lower leaves, dip in rooting hormone, and poke little holes in the peat/sand mix for the little stems. Leave them in a protected spot for 8-12 months, and remember to water them if the weather remains dry. Put the box in a covered cold frame or even in the garage in severe winter weather.



SNIPPETS FROM SAYWARD

(by Rose-Marie Silkens)

My surroundings in the Salmon River Valley have changed dramatically since I last wrote to the newsletter. The most tenacious winter in living memory finally let go and spring has swept in with its long-awaited glories. In the record books it won't look so bad – the last killing frost in my own frosty hollow was in early April – last year it was May 6.



The rhododendrons are blooming with what seems better-than-ever splendour. The bud set in last year's long, hot summer was great, and even the smallest ones are covered in glory. I just removed an old, overgrown and leggy 'Cream Crest,' and now have a much better view of a small 'Hachmann's Polaris' from the house – it's an amazing mound of colour. The 'Cream Crest' blooms too early for my garden, so most years its charming flowers were spoiled by frost. That didn't happen this year so it did have a last hurrah.

Deciding what to plant in its place is a pleasant chore. The rhodos nearby are all growing up so it has to be a slow-growing, compact companion. At the moment I'm looking at a dwarf kalmia, *K. latifolia* 'Tiddlywinks,' a pink mountain laurel that has very small leaves and a tidy habit. Kalmia grows very slowly here, so when the references say 'three feet in ten years' I expect that to be at least fifteen. Two other nice dwarf kalmias I carry in my retail nursery are 'Little Linda' (very red) and 'Elf,' also pink but with a larger leaf that might look better with all the yak hybrids in that bed. Decisions.

A new plant to my garden this year is a golden smoke bush, *Cotinus coggygria* 'Golden Spirit.' The foliage is beautifully bright, so I've dug up some more grass and started a new planting consisting of *Robinia pseudoacacia* 'Frisia,' the tried-and-true 'Royal Purple' smokebush, this new one, and the golden-leaved Himalayan honeysuckle, *Leycesteria formosa* 'Golden Lanterns'. I have far too much lawn anyway.

The fatality list from the 06/07 winter continues to grow. I've lost all three of my tamarisks, which were actually getting large enough to look like something when they bloomed. I'll try them again, but perhaps plant them on Hardwicke, which is significantly milder. I've lost yet another oak-leaved hydrangea (I think that makes 10), but I'm so fond of this plant that I have to keep trying.

The May 6 club show and sale was a treat for me, as it gave me a chance to catch up with everyone. I thought all the members' vendor tables were very good indeed, and as usual we were each other's best customers. I was thrilled to get some double bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis flore pleno*) from Bernie, not to mention many other treasures.

The Sayward Garden Club is holding a garden tour again this year, on Saturday, June 30. Darlene Huber's spectacular garden is part of the tour, as are numerous small gardens that have not been included before. Tickets are \$8 and are available at Campbell River garden centres and most Sayward businesses. They can be bought on the day, or if someone would like to get tickets in advance, just email me (rsilkens@oberon.ark.com) and the club will send them to you.

GOOD BUGS, BAD BUGS

Sweet Basil is not only good to eat, but it repels aphids, mosquitoes and mites. Tansy, invasive in the garden but so attractive along the roadsides, repels cucumber and Japanese beetles, ants and squash bugs. Keep it away from cabbages though - it attracts cabbage worms. Plant thyme near cabbages for it controls flea beetles, cabbage maggots, cabbage white butterflies and cabbage worms.

Nasturtiums attract aphids so they leave other plants alone. All you need then is a good supply of lady bugs.

These hints are from the Garden Path Nursery in West Saanich. I quote "Some years my tree lupins, *Lupinus arboreus*, act as perfect lures for beneficial insects. By allowing the wooly grey aphids, specific to the lupin, to colonize on them, I attracted large numbers of parasitic wasps and predators as well. Having this strong presence of beneficials in the garden meant that any aphids trying to establish on nearby plants were taken care of before problems arose.

Beneficial insects will only stay in the garden when there are plants which provide food and shelter for them. They need a series of blossoms to sustain them from spring to early fall. Herbs which are members of the carrot family, such as fennel, dill anise, coriander and parsley have broad clusters of flowers which are easy for beneficials to feed from. Caraway, catnip, hyssop, lemon balm, lovage, rosemary and thyme are all herbs that will also attract beneficial insects. Members of the Compositae family, such as sunflowers, zinnias and asters, have a longer season of bloom and will attract beneficials over a longer period of time."

Here are a few more suggestions to lure the "good guys" into your garden.

Fern-leaved yarrow, Angelica, Candytuft, Cosmos, Ivy and Evening Primrose, Nemophila, Goldenrod. It is wonderful to know that there are plants which will help to keep your garden healthy. By including them in your planting plan you can assist nature in keeping a balance of bugs in your garden.

I'd like to add to this - in this area we are fortunate to have many wild flowers to add to these lists. Wild carrots in the ditches, also mauve fall asters and goldenrod. White oxeye daisies in the fields, cow-parsnip in the woods, sweet cicily in the garden - Some of these can become rampant in the garden, and one of the Heracleums called giant cow-parsnip can give severe skin rashes - best to not touch them! But they are all beautiful in their proper place, and attract many beneficial insects.

I note that this nursery sells various mixtures of organic fertilizers, including one for rhodos, liquid seaweed concentrate, and aged horse manure, very reasonably priced.



REMEMBER FATHER'S DAY

JUNE 17TH



Shrubs to Consider for a Small Garden

That is, if you have room after organizing your rhodos.

Peter Seabrook, writing in the magazine Amateur Gardening, April 2007 has some sage advice.

"Providing a year-round colour in a small garden takes some careful thought and planning. It's not that we are short of things to plant for decoration every month of the year, just a matter of finding space for them all. We need to keep in mind two things. First, select plants that provide colour through more than one season. Second, think in layers; for example, low ground-cover bulbs for winter/early spring, then early summer hardy border flowers backed by autumn-flowering shrubs.

For instance, Forsythia, this is a good two-season choice, with bright yellow blooms in March and April followed by yellow to deep purple autumn leaf colour. It is also a good candidate for layer planting if you grow a quarter standard on a 2-3 ft. trunk. Forsythia is very easy to propagate. A container-grown standard was made from a tall, straight stem of one summer's growth was pruned off just below a leaf bud. Pushed into sandy soil to a depth of 6" or so, it rooted, and by leaf fall was producing side growth. All buds from below ground and up the stem for 18" were cut cleanly away to produce the trunk.

This one-year old rooted cutting was potted up and had a few flowers in the 2nd spring. By the 3d spring it put on a tremendous show. His plant will stay in the container to restrict the roots and overall size." It could be planted out in the border, or leave it in the pot indefinitely. Other shrubs that can be treated the same way include Viburnum tinus, Hollies, Hibiscus syriacus, even lavender and rosemary.

WESTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE

The 2007 Western Regional Conference is scheduled for September 21st to 23rd in Newport, Oregon. Details can be found on the ARS website (www.rhododendron.org).

From the desk of...



EDITORS NOTE

This is the last issue of The North Island Rhododendron Society's Newsletter, The RhodoTeller, until September. I'd like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a pleasant and fruitful summer! A little rest from the computer is in order, however there is still time to enjoy and work in the garden, and of course the odd golf game. So I leave you with this last verse or garden proverb:

The kiss of the sun for pardon

The song of the birds for mirth

One is nearer God's heart in a garden

Than anywhere else on earth.



RECIPE REQUESTS

POPPY SEED SPICE BUNDTCAKE

(Lynn Wurz)

1/4 C Poppy Seeds	1/4 C Milk
1 Lemon Supreme Cake mix	
1 – 3 oz pkg instant lemon pudding mix	
4 eggs	1/2 C Salad oil
1 C Warm Water	



SPICE MIXTURE

1 Tbsp Cocoa	
1 Tbsp White Sugar	
1 Tbsp Cinnamon	



GLAZE

3 Tbsp Lemon Juice	
6 Tbsp White sugar	

Soak poppy seeds in milk overnight. Mix together cake mix, pudding, eggs, oil and water. Add poppy seed mixture. Grease and flour bundt pan. Pour in a layer of the cake mixture, sprinkle with the spice mixture, repeating until all is used. Bake 350 for 1 hour (Lynn does 50 mins), turn cake out and while still warm, drizzle the top with the lemon juice and sugar glaze.



ICE BOX COOKIES

(Marleen Crucq)

1 1/4 cups brown sugar	1 cup shortening (I use butter)
2 eggs beaten	3 cups flour
1 cup chopped walnuts	3 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon vanilla or almond extract	
1/3 teaspoon salt	
1/2 cup mini chocolate chips – optional	



Cream shortening and add brown sugar, mix well, add beaten eggs and vanilla then mix well again. Mix flour, salt and baking powder, then add 2 cups to shortening mixture. Add nuts (and choco chips if adding) to the mix before adding the last cup of flour. Mix thoroughly and shape into long roll. Wrap in wax paper or saran, put in freezer overnight.

To bake, set oven at 350°F. Take roll out of freezer for 5-10 minutes, then slice (I like my slices quite thick so the cookies don't get too hard). You can put the slices quite close together on the cookies sheet as they don't spread much at all. I also under bake mine as I like them soft & more chewy, so about 8-10 minutes in the oven.

