



R. Courtenay Lady

The Rhodoteller

www.nirs.rhodos.ca

MERRY CHRISTMAS  **December** 

North Island Rhododendron Society
2008/2009 Executive

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Past President:
Harry Wright 338-8345

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Pauline Thompson 339-3423

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Director: Membership
Brian Staton 337-5228

Director: Publicity
Chris Aldred 331-0395

Director: Newsletter/Library
Noni Godfrey 335-0717
..... nonigod@shaw.ca

Social Committee:
Evelyn Wright 339-7493

Revenue Table Committee:
Louise Casson 334-2331

Sunshine Lady:
Pauline Bonney 339-7594

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



Coming Events

2nd December 2008 - Executive Meeting 2.00 pm

The executive meeting will be held at the home of Dave and Noni Godfrey, 4686 Montrose Drive. South end of Courtenay, turn left onto Sprindrift Road. Turn at first right, then first right again, go to end of Inverness and turn left onto Montrose. You'll recognize the house, hopefully with all the Christmas lights up.

9th December 2008 - Regular Monthly Meeting



Christmas Party.....



What is December without our NIRS Christmas Party?! Following tradition, we will be ending the year with a festive social get-together on December 9th. We will be starting at 5:30 to make it an earlier evening for the drive home in the December darkness.

To lighten the evening a bit, the club will be providing welcoming hot cider, as well as the usual refreshments available. A pot-luck "Festive Savories and Sweets" table will take the place of 'dinner'.



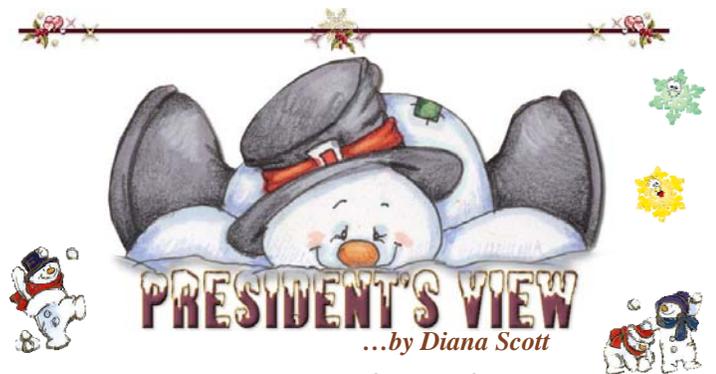
Louise Casson will be cooking a small ham again this year and the club will be providing mini buns.

All members are asked to bring appetizers or sweets to add to the table (remember – we won't have cutlery – so make sure to bring 'finger' food!).

In addition to an entertaining Christmas game or two, we'll be taking a PowerPoint tour of Members' Gardens to remind us of warmer and drier days!

To round out the evening, there will be a 'fun' gift exchange. Each member and guest is asked bring a wrapped garden-related present (around \$10). It doesn't have to be Christmas-y, but something that you might like to find under the tree! For those new to the club, these are 'exchanged' anonymously, usually with the help of Santa and his helpers.

This will be the last opportunity to bring in your hamper item. Christine will be taking the hamper to the Salvation Army after the party. If you are participating, you can bring your item on the evening of the party, or take it to the Wrights or the Aldreds beforehand. See you at the Party

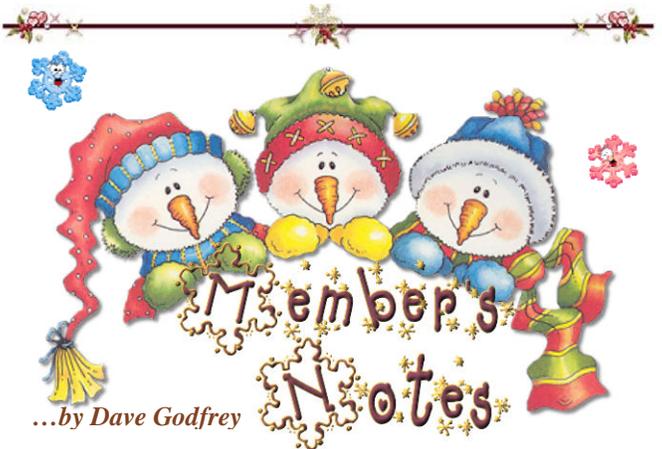


December usually brings a bit of respite from the usual garden chores. It's a time to make the Christmas wreaths, dress up outdoor pots with boughs and berries, and decorate the house for Christmas.

The beginning of winter brings its own beauty in the garden and this is when the bark of many trees and shrubs shows off its colours. Acer griseum continues to delight with its peeling cinnamon bark, and the white of the Betula jacquemontii just glows. The yellow and red twigged dogwoods are at their best outdoors in the cold; the yellow twigs turn greenish and the reds lose their brightness when brought indoors. Moisture makes the plums and rusts of Cryptomeria japonica 'Elegans' just sparkle and a tour of the garden on a December day – especially a sunny day – is sure to lift the spirits.

Our meeting in December is always entertaining and a great way to get to know each other a bit better. We have a pot luck 'finger food' supper, a few games, and an anonymous 'gift exchange'. This year we are looking forward to a presentation of Members' Gardens to add to the evening! I look forward to seeing you there!

.....See you at the party!.....Diana



At our meeting on November 11th, guest speakers Judy Walker and Brian Pearson explained their development of two acres of their 8.5 acre property, formerly known as Walter Gage's homestead on Nob Hill. Judy is one of the founding members of the North Island chapter, and both she and Brian are trained landscape architects who have lived and worked in the Comox Valley for many years.

Using a variety of slides, Brian and Judy explained the process of planting and growing grapes, as opposed to their many other fruit crops. Beginning in 2006, the fields were tilled and leveled, and then fencing was installed around the extent of their vineyard – a must for keeping deer out!

In addition to installing several hundred posts and row trellises, 1000 feet of irrigation pipe had to be trenched in. From this, 5000 ft. of black irrigation pipe was connected and suspended from wires strung on the metal posts. Metal posts were chosen over wood for its durability, and the fact that it is classified as 'organic'. Although their Greengage Farm is part of the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands 'Environment Farm Plan', which promotes good farming practices, they are not yet classified as an 'organic farm'. They hope to obtain that status in the near future.

On May 31st 2006, the first 500 small vines arrived and were planted between mid-June and mid-July. Protected by plastic tubes, the plants can grow as much as 7 feet in one year. However, as Brian explained, one

has to be ruthless each year and cut back to only three growth nodes. This then forces the plants to establish a strong root stock, as opposed to trying to grow fruit.

A second shipment of 500 vines was planted in 2007, to complete their two acre capacity. As Judy explained, "two acres is sufficient for two people to maintain. Any more than two acres would require hiring staff to help." As it is right now, some help may be needed for the January pruning. In addition, the two acres must be fully netted during the fruit's ripening period in order to keep the birds out – no easy task!

Establishing a vineyard has to be a labour of love, since it takes over 5 years before they will realize the fruits of their labour. From the first plantings in 2006, Judy and Brian will not have their first full harvest until 2011. Each acre will yield approximately 3 to 4 tons of grapes, which in turn will be turned into nearly 2500 bottles of wine.



For anyone interested in developing a vineyard, Judy and Brian recommend the Wine Island Growers Association (WIGA) where they've learned a lot of information and methods of producing grape crops. Their knowledge and information was well received by all those in attendance.

During the business portion of the meeting, Noni Godfrey gave a short 'educational' on her methods of preparing and storing dahlia tubers for the winter season. This presentation brought a few questions from members and guests, especially the propagation of new plants from old tubers.

Following the meeting and presentations, a draw was made for the raffle of R. 'Queen Alice' with the lucky winner being Dany Fortin. Three potted vines of 'Leon Millot' (a red grape) donated by Judy and Brian were given as door prizes with guests Robert Potdor, Chip Ross and member Pauline Bonney each taking one home. Could this be the start of competition for Greengage?

Plans are well underway for our annual Christmas party on December 9th. The fun will begin at 5:30 PM, and everyone attending is asked to bring a sweet or savory dish for the pot luck dinner. The club will once again be providing the buns and sliced ham with condiments, as well as liquid refreshments. Members and guests are asked to each bring a wrapped garden-related gift (around \$10 range) for a gift exchange. In support

of our annual Christmas hamper program you are also asked to please bring a non-perishable food item or a child's gift as a donation. Contact Christine Aldred at 331- 0395 for details of the hamper needs. Thank you and we look forward to seeing many of you at the party.

A 'Key' Member

Xvxn though my computxr's kxyboard 'typxwritxr' is an oldxr modxl, it works quitx wxll xxcept for onx kxy: thrx arx 101 normal computxr kxyboard kxys that function wxll nough, but just onx kxy not working makxs thx diffxrxncx.

Somxtimxs it sxxms to mx that our group is somxwhat likx my kxyboard typxwritxr; not all thx kxys arx working propxrlly. You may say "Wxll, I am only onx pxrson-it won't makx much diffxrxncx." But, you sxx, thx group, to bx xffctivx, nxxds thx activx participation of vxry pxrson. So thx nxxt timx you think your xfforts arx not nxxdd, rxmxbxr my kxyboard and say to yoursxlf – "I am a kxy pxrson and am nxxdd vxry much!"

The foregoing message is sent out to every member in our Chapter. You are all "Key Persons" and needed very much. It is the sincere hope of the executive and Christmas party committee that as many members as possible will attend this years function!



Poinsettias

...by Nadine Boudreau

As December arrives and the holiday season is upon us, we start to see the most popular Christmas plant - the Poinsettia. The botanical name is 'Euphorbia pulcherrima', meaning "very beautiful". As with many plants of the Euphorbiaceae family, it has a milky sap.



Poinsettias are native to Mexico; the Aztec people called them 'Cuetlaxochitl'. During the 14th to 16th centuries the sap was used to control fevers, while the bracts (colored modified leaves) were used to make a reddish dye.

In the 1820's, Joel Roberts Poinsett was the first United States Ambassador to Mexico. He had a keen interest in botany and wandered the countryside looking for new plant species. In 1828 he found a beautiful shrub with large red flowers growing next to the road. He took cuttings from the plant and brought them back to his greenhouse in South Carolina; thus introducing the Euphorbia to the USA.

As the Euphorbia pulcherrima became more popular, William Prescott a historian/horticulturist was asked to give the plant a new name, so he named it Poinsettia in honor of Joel Poinsett's discovery.

John Bartram is credited with being the first nurseryman to sell Poinsettias. The Ecke family from Southern California started growing Poinsettias in the early 1900's, at first as outdoor landscape plants and cut flowers. Later they started greenhouse production. Today, they are the largest producers of the plant and are credited with having 90% of the world's Poinsettias getting their start at the Ecke Family Ranch.

Now that we know some history of the plant, we come to the practical - **Selection and Care**. This year, I plan on really focusing on these aspects, as many years my plants barely make it to Christmas before dropping half their leaves! There are many types and colors available, from traditional reds to whites, pinks and corals. Large leaf, curly leaf and spotted leaf varieties, etc. Whichever one catches your interest, here's some pointers to look for:

- * A plant with dark green foliage down to the soil line.
- * Check the plants maturity, true flowers at the centre of the colored bracts. These should be green or red tipped tight little buttons and fresh looking. They will last longer than if yellow pollen is covering the flower.
- * Bracts (the modified coloured leaf) should be completely coloured- no green on the edges.
- * Plant should be full, good on all sides, balanced and approx. ½ times taller than container.
- * No wilting, drooping or yellowing of leaves
- * Check that soil is not soggy, as this could lead to root rot.
- * Do not purchase plants that are displayed in paper or plastic sleeves. These plants will deteriorate quickly.
- * Do not purchase plants displayed or crowded close together, this can cause premature bract loss.

- * Do not purchase plants displayed near entranceways where they are exposed to drafts.
- * Do have your plant sleeved, or even better placed in a large paper bag, to protect it from sudden temperature fluctuations or drafts when transporting it home.

Now that you have your Poinsettia home, treat it well. Here are some guidelines to remember:

- * Remove the plastic sleeve.
- * Pick a spot away from door drafts, vents, fireplace, or TV.
- * They would like about 6 hours of indirect sunlight a day, but don't let them touch cold windows.
- * Temperature should range from 20 to 22 degrees C during the day, and between 16 to 18 degrees C at night.
- * Allow your Poinsettia to dry out slightly between watering; soil feels dry to touch. Water just enough for water to come through the drainage holes. Don't overwater or let it sit in water. If in foil or decorative container make sure you remove plant when watering.
- * No fertilizer is needed when in bloom.

Following these guidelines, your Poinsettia can reward you with its beauty for many months, often from November until March. The milky sap can cause skin irritation, but there is a misunderstanding that they are poisonous. There have been many studies. However, the Ohio State University showed that a 50 pound child would have to eat more than 1¼ pounds of Poinsettia bracts (500-600 leaves) to exceed the doses that found toxicity. Of course, we all discourage the eating of ornamental plants!!

What to do at the season's end? I must admit that my Poinsettias have always ended in the compost soon after the holidays. With patience and time, you can however, have your Poinsettia for following years.

The leaves will fall in March or April, at which time cut your plant back to 8" in height. Continue watering as above, and fertilize with 20-20-20. By May, you should have vigorous new growth. Continue with the watering and fertilize every 2 to 3 weeks during the growing period. You can place your Poinsettia outdoors when the overnight lows are above 13 degrees C. You can pinch your plant to keep it bushy, but stop pruning by September. Now the hard part starts. **LIGHT CONTROL** - from October 1st, the plants needs to be in complete darkness for 14 hours at night. You have to cover it with a box, black bag, or place in a closet. Ensure no light is provided. During the day provide 6 to 8 hours of bright sunlight. Night temperatures need to be between 15 and 21 degrees C. Following this regime for eight to ten weeks should provide a flowering Poinsettia for the Christmas season!

Well, now I'm off to the local nurseries to look for a quality grown plant. I may choose a pink or coral plant in hopes that it will last past the holiday season and become my early spring plant!!



Vancouver Island Hybridizers

The Royston Nursery Hybrids

by Alan Campbell, Cowichan Valley Chapter

At the time of purchasing the Buchanan Simpson nursery stock, Ted and Mary Greig were primarily interested in alpine plants, especially those of the Primula family. Mary is known to have written in her journal: "I remember being quite unimpressed with the species rhododendron, never having seen any before . . ." Grudgingly, Ted and Mary agreed to include the rhododendrons as part of the sales agreement. Fascination with the genus *Rhododendron* quickly took hold of the Greigs, especially Mary. With this increasing fascination, so increased the rhododendron seed orders to the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh; Sunningdale Nurseries and Kew Gardens.

At one time, it was commonly thought that seed collected from the seed pods of species rhododendrons would quite naturally produce seedlings of that species. Two hybrids that are attributed to the Greigs are offspring of this wrongful thinking. 'Buchanan Simpson' is one. Though registered (1963) and propagated by the Greig nursery, the original plant came with the stock purchased from Buchanan and Suzanne Simpson. It is suspected that 'Buchanan Simpson' is a bumble bee hybrid, an off-chance, open-pollinated cross, the seed of which was among shipments from Britain to the Cowichan Lake nursery. This large-growing plant needs lots of space, but would quickly become a favorite with its heavy-textured leaves and pink flowers, which are openly funnel-shaped, wide enough to display the double blotch of maroon deep in the throat.

The next "Greig hybrid" I would like to mention is a choice little *R. campylogynum* cross. 'Canada' was named, registered (1977), and introduced by Jim Caperci of the Mount Rainier Alpine Gardens in Seattle, and he attributed the cross to the Greigs. In a letter dated June 9, 1985, Mary Greig explained the mix-up to Stuart Holland of Victoria: "Caperci's plant came from Sunningdale via us. I expect it was an accidental cross, I never made any *campylogynum* cross." In any event, this is a must-have plant, a good one for the rock garden. 'Canada' is a rounded compact dwarf with reddish stems contrasting with the green foliage and covered with tubular deep rose-pink flowers.

One dwarf plant that was hybridized and registered (1961) by the Greigs is 'Cutie' (*R. calostrotum* *R. racemosum*). This is a really fine plant for the rock garden that has a tendency to develop rust, but with good air circulation the risk is reduced. A rounded upright-growing plant, 'Cutie' may reach three feet in 10 years, and carries very small leaves and an abundance of small pink flowers tinted lilac. Adulation came quickly to this little gem. The Royal Horticultural Society gave its Preliminary Award to 'Cutie' two years before registration, and the American Rhododendron Society gave its Award of Excellence in 1962. With this praise you might think that any criticism would be difficult to find, but here is what Ken Cox has to say about 'Cutie' in his new book *Rhododendrons & Azaleas – A Colour Guide*: "The sickly name probably also accounts for its declining fortunes."

More familiar to us on Vancouver Island are three very different

Greig hybrids. First is 'Royston Red' (*R. forrestii* 'Repens' *R. thomsonii*), named by Alleyne Cook of Vancouver, but as yet not registered, a lower compact plant supporting dark green leaves and blood red flowers. The second on the list is 'George Watling' (2001). It is unsure whether this hybrid is a *wardii* or a *campylocarpum* cross. Both species were used extensively by Mary Greig in her hybridizing, though Alleyne Cook is of the opinion that this plant was another "bumble bee cross," which came out of Britain. Mary named the plant in 1965, and Leslie Drew has cleared up the puzzle of where the name came from, in researching the career of pioneer Victoria nurseryman Richard Layritz. George Watling was the senior staff member with whom Mary Greig always spoke in dealing with the Layritz nursery, and it appears that she respected his knowledge of rhododendrons. A larger growing plant with rounded, glossy leaves and pale primrose-yellow flowers, 'George Watling' makes a fine addition to the garden. 'Harry Carter' (*R. strigillosum* *R. sutchuenense*), not registered, is the largest of the three. With olive green, bristly leaves and pink flowers, Harold Greer calls it "a combination of the best of both parents."

When those in the rhododendron community speak of a "grex," they are speaking of a group of hybrids grown from seed collected from the same seed pod of a single cross. Perhaps the most notable grex would be the 'Loderi' group hybridized by Sir Edmund Loder of Leonardslee or the 'Naomi' grex from Lionel de Rothschild of Exbury. The Royston grex, a crossing of *R. auriculatum* and 'Fabia', has given us 'Royston Yellow', 'Royston Peach', 'Royston Reverie' (yellow with edges of bright brick red), 'Royston Orange' (more salmon colour), 'Royston Copper', and 'Royston Regency' (not known to exist any longer). The plants in this grex all seem to retain the long leaves of *R. auriculatum* and bloom in late July with flowers forming a lax truss (from both parents) and the varied calyx length of 'Fabia'. Not all of these hybrids are registered, but Alleyne Cook is working at getting them into the books.

More Greig hybrids with the Royston name that have been registered by Alleyne Cook exist mainly in the Ted and Mary Greig Garden in Stanley Park— 'Royston Festival' (*R. auriculatum* *R. kyawii*) 1981, 'Royston Frost' (*R. auriculatum* *R. hemsleyanum*) 2000, 'Royston Radiance' (*R. hemsleyanum* *R. auriculatum*) 2000, 'Royston Rose' ('Last Rose' *R. auriculatum*) 1981, 'Royston Summertime' (*R. auriculatum* 'Last Rose') 1981. I have not seen any of these in bloom as yet though the registrations give good descriptions of each of them, also mentioning that some hold some fragrance.

Not mentioned in the above paragraph is 'Royston Opaline', registered in 2000 by Alleyne Cook as *R. auriculatum* 'Last Rose'. A question arises over the cross registered. In *Rhododendrons on a Western Shore*, Stuart Holland wrote an article entitled "About Vancouver Island Hybridizers" in which he mentions the Greig hybrid 'Royston Opaline' (*R. auriculatum* *R. crassum*). In the same article is a copied listing from the Royston Nursery catalogue No. 18 (1965) in which a cross of *R.*

auriculatum and *R. crassum* is stated. This suggested crossing may raise some eyebrows. *R. auriculatum* is of the subgenus *hymenanthes* (lepidote) and *R. crassum* is from the subgenus *rhododendron* (lepidote) and “never the twain shall meet.” It’s understood that lepidotes and lepidotes are not inclined to cross breed. Of course, never say “never.” A good project would be to set about verifying this cross. I wonder if Dr. Ben Hall is busy?

A number of unrelated hybrids out of the Royston Nursery that should be propagated more are ‘Last Rose’ (*R. discolor* ‘Tally-Ho’, ‘Veronica Milner’ (*R. campylocarpum* -‘Little Ben’) 1962, of Milner garden fame, ‘Len Living’ (unregistered), a sister seedling of ‘Harry Carter’ (do we actually call two plants with men’s names sister seedlings?) and ‘Butter Ball’ (*R. xanthostephanum* *R. chrysodoron*) 1968. An unregistered, unnamed cross that is seen quite often in area gardens is a cross of *R. bureavii* and ‘Fabia’. I have seen this plant labelled ‘Fabia’ *R. bureavii* most often yet the only cross listed in the Greigs’ hybridizing stud books is *R. bureavii* ‘Fabia’. Perhaps I’m just being . . . well, there is an unpleasant name for that. Halfdan Lem of Washington State did the same cross (*R. bureavii* ‘Fabia’), giving us ‘Hansel’ and ‘Gretel’, but Ken Gibson states the Greig plant is far superior to either of Lem’s plants.

Many of the Greig hybrids are only in Stanley Park, and being in one location, in my mind, puts them in a precarious position. Many of these plants are hard to propagate, but Les Clay, Harry Wright, and I continue to try to get them established in more gardens. The hybrid ‘Edith Berkeley’ (*R. auriculatum* (*R. consanguineum* ‘Loderi King George’)) 1963 is rumoured to still be growing on the Island, but has yet to be found. Too many Greig hybrids have already disappeared. ‘Royston Regency’ (*R. auriculatum* ‘Fabia’ 2000 died out in Stanley Park five years ago without being propagated. ‘Ted Greig’ (*R. griersonianum* (*R. campylocarpum* *R. discolor*)) 1965, ‘Mary Greig’ (*R. neriflorum* *R. souliei*) 1962, ‘Cyril Berkeley’ (*R. forrestii* *R. sperabile*) 1965, ‘Royal Anne’ {‘Azor (unnamed *R. fortunei* hybrid *R. dichroanthum*)} 1962—these and a host of crosses listed in the Greig stud books are thought to no longer exist. A lifetime of love’s labours lost. The artistry of the hybridizer should be viewed as no less important than that of the playwright.

Schizostylis - Coccinea Major Kaffir Lily

...by Pauline Bonney



Not many plants start to bloom late in the year (mid-October to mid-November) but Schizostylis “Major” is one exception. Also

known as the ‘Kaffer Lily’, this rhizomatous perennial has sword-like leaves and red, star shaped flowers.

Borne in spikes eight to ten inches long, ‘Major’ has deep red flowers; while another variety, ‘Mrs. Higarty’, has pink flowers, and ‘Salmon Charm’ and ‘Sunrise’ both have salmon pink blooms. Plant these in March in moist, free draining soil in full sun. They can also be grown in containers and make an excellent, unusual, long lasting cut flower.

Member Profile Richard & Pauline Bonney



Dick and Pauline Bonney are founding members of the North Island Rhododendron Society. New to the Comox Valley in 1984, Pauline attended the first ‘rhodo’ meeting at the coaxing of her neighbour Jean Bossom as a way of meeting people in her new community. The

meeting was held in the basement of Harry and Gwen Wright’s former home on Nikolaisen Street, and despite only a basic knowledge of Rhodos, by the end of the meeting Pauline was a member of the Executive in the newly formed club! Drawn into the group by Pauline, Dick also became actively involved and over the years both have been on the Executive in a number of capacities, primarily helping out with Social, Membership, and the Revenue Table.

In addition to enjoying the visits to local gardens, the Bonneys have particularly enjoyed touring gardens in other areas, and are looking forward to the upcoming tour this spring. When looking back on club highlights, they remember hosting John Bond, the Queen’s head gardener when he was participating in a speaking tour across Canada and attending the transfer of the Greig Rhodos to Stanley Park. Mr. Bond even attended the Rhodo Pot Luck as did Veronica Milner at the time. The Bonneys hosted John for 3 days and remember ‘The Keeper of the Gardens in Windsor Great Park’ as a very nice, ‘down to earth’ man.

Both Pauline and Richard are originally from London, but Pauline came to Canada in 1949 with her family and was living in Vancouver when she met her future husband. Dick had joined the Merchant Marines in 1944 during the war, and was traveling the world as a Mate. As luck would have it, he had the task of showing a prospective London passenger around the ship during a stop in Vancouver, was quite taken with her and asked her out. That, as they say, was that! Pauline stayed in Vancouver, and after writing his exams and completing his ‘ticket’, Dick moved to Canada. After they married, Dick tried his hand at being a butcher and a floor layer before going back to the waterfront, working his way up and then finally retiring as Marine Superintendent for Seaboard Shipping. Pauline worked for the Vancouver School Board as a Secretary in various schools, and then as the Front Office woman at the Vocational Institute before starting their family.

The Bonneys have 4 children: Nolan, Colin, Brian and Lesley, the first and last of whom are adopted. Dick and

Pauline are happily blessed with 15 grandchildren and are fortunate to have their children and grandchildren living close at hand, in Comox, Nanaimo and Burnaby.

Upon retirement, Dick and Pauline moved to their present home in 1984, having purchased the property 7 years before. Seabank Road at that time had only one other house on their side of the street, and their property was heavily treed. House building can be an adventure, and after the original builder went bankrupt leaving the shell of their house open to the weather for a year, the Bonneys finally got a second builder to complete their "Alberta Log Home". Not to rush into things, their son Nolan and family lived in it for the first year before Dick and Pauline came over from Burnaby to set up residence.

Working on their beautiful garden has been a labour of love, hand clearing one area at a time until it has become the showpiece that it is today. Pauline is the garden designer, main weeder and planter, while Dick is the mower and in charge of the heavy work, having taken down many a tree and moved many a pile of rocks! Although they both enjoy the whole garden, Pauline is partial to the 'wilder' back area and Dick is fond of the areas that are tidy, established, and ready to tour. When asked for a favorite Rhodo, Pauline picked the orange Bergie Larson while Dick, true to form, likes 'the red one' (Etta Burrows). Favorite trees in the garden include the spectacular Liquidamber, the Katsura and the flowering Cherries.

In addition to gardening, the Bonneys have done extensive traveling, and have enjoyed cruises to Jamaica, Grand Cayman, Panama and Mexico. Due to his time at sea, Dick has seen most countries with the exception of Japan, China and Australia! When not working in the garden Pauline might be patiently doing needlework like Hardanger, embroidery and sewing, while Dick might be creating watercolours or working in his woodworking shop. Their love of books is evident, and they both acknowledge reading as a favorite pastime.

The Bonneys have been club members since the beginning 25 years ago, and have lots of stories to tell. If you are new to NIRS, please introduce yourselves to Dick and Pauline who are sure to welcome you to the club!

Garden Chatter, Natter and Notes

There are two types of gardeners when it comes to winter interest in the garden. As the old saying goes, some like it hot, some like it cold. In the garden, some love the dead tops of grasses; others are just itching to cut them back so the bare earth plots look neat and tidy all winter long. There are those who love the look of fresh snow on seed heads in the middle of January. Then there are those who think it looks like a horrible mess. Neither gardener is right nor wrong; it's all a matter of personal taste.



With most perennials, the tops die back to the ground in late fall, and new growth comes again in the spring. The plants themselves don't care one way or another whether you trim them in autumn or leave them alone. Again, it's entirely your choice!

Some perennial plants remain evergreen, and these should always be left alone in the fall. In spring, you can quickly tidy up any dead or damaged leaves. In late fall, if the leaves are still green, let them be - some common examples: Bergenia, Coral Bells, Dainthus, and Lavender.

In our area, with very little or no winter snow cover, evergreen perennials, shrubs and trees become even more important. Otherwise our gardens can look like barren wastelands for months on end. A good basic garden structure with trees, dwarf conifers and shrubs, ornamental grasses, or smaller trees with interesting berries or unusual bark provide presence and structure year round.

We all have those select few perennials that provide outstanding winter interest and they really need to take centre stage. Cut back any neighbouring plants that offer very little winter colour or effect. Don't leave the messy or half dead perennials as they will visually detract from the winter stars. Take a stroll on some winter morning and bring along a notepad or your camera. Take note and make lists on which plants to cut back and which ones to leave alone next fall for that maximum winter show. It's a subjective and personal decision that each gardener must make for themselves.



RECIPE REQUESTS

Turnip, Leek and Sweet Potato Pie

Filling

1lb turnip	1lb sweet potato
30g butter or marg	1tbsp olive oil
1lb leeks	30gr flour
300 gr tin of ham, chopped or flaked	
1/2 pint milk	1 tsp Dijon mustard
1tbsp chopped marjoram (optional)	
salt and pepper to taste	

(Chris Aldred)



Sufficient pastry of choice for a top and bottom crust.

Make pastry, wrap in plastic film and refrigerate for an hour. Peel turnip and cube into 1" pieces, simmer for 5 mins, then add the sweet potato (cubed the same) simmer until tender. Drain and mash lightly. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F

Cut leeks into 1" slices, pan fry in marg and olive oil until tender. Stir in the flour until smooth, add mustard and marjoram, and gradually add the milk. Bring to a boil, stirring and simmering to form a smooth sauce. Taste and add seasonings as desired. Remove from heat and gently stir in the ham.

Line the pie dish with half the pastry, put turnip/sweet potato mix in first, then add the ham/leek sauce on top, cover with a pastry lid, and bake for about 20 mins.

Note: if you wish to reduce the amount of pastry, omit the lid, and top the filling with breadcrumbs and a little grated cheese.

Snowman Cheeseball

4 slices bacon	1/2 C butter cubed
1 pkg cream cheese	1 tsp caraway seed
2 C finely shredded cheddar cheese	
2 C finely shredded swiss cheese	
1/2 tsp onion powder	Pinch of garlic powder



Decorating ingredients:

- 2 pretzel sticks (arms)
- 3 black peppercorns (buttons)
- 2 whole cloves (eyes)
- 1 ritz cracker (hat brim)
- 1 olive (top hat)
- Ribbon (scarf)
- End of a carrot (nose)



Cook bacon until brown and crisp, cool then crumble

Combine butter and cream cheese in bowl and microwave on medium low for 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 minutes until softened (stir once while heating). Put aside 1 cup of the swiss cheese Stir in remaining ingredients and mix well.

Make your snowman: Shape the mixture into 3 balls and roll them in the remaining swiss cheese. Stack the balls (you can use a skewer in the middle for extra support) and decorate your snowman with the decorating ingredients above.

Serve with crackers. This mixture makes a large snowman, so you can half the mixture or make two smaller ones.

Frothy Egg Nog (Noni Godfrey)



6 eggs, separated	4 Litres (3 quarts) COLD milk
1 1/2 C sugar	500 ml COLD Whipping Cream
2 tsp vanilla	nutmeg

In very large bowl....whisk egg yolks, add 1 Cup of the sugar, vanilla and then slowly start to add in the milk.

In a separate bowl, beat eggs whites until stiff, and then fold into the milk mixture.

In another separate bowl, beat the whipping cream until stiff, and then fold this into milk mixture.

Keep in the fridge and mix or shake before each use, sprinkle top with nutmeg when serving.

Note: I use two of the four litre plastic jugs to store the egg nog in the fridge, then just shake when serving.

Christmas Melting Moments Cookies

3/4 C Brown Sugar	1/2 C shortening
1/2 C butter (or all shortening)	1 large egg, beaten
1 1/4 C flour	1/2 tsp baking soda
1/2 tsp salt	1/2 tsp cream of tartar
1 tsp vanilla	

Cream butter and shortening until smooth; add sugar and eggs and beat well. Sift and mix in dry ingredients. Take a spoonful of this batter, roll in oatmeal and press with fork and bake 350° F oven for about 8-10 minutes. Makes about 5 dozen 2" cookies.

Christmas Morning Wife Saver

16 slices bread (remove crust)	1 tsp dry mustard
slices of back bacon (or ham)	1/4 C minced onion
slices of sharp cheddar cheese	6 eggs
1/4 C green pepper finely chopped	1/2 tsp salt
2 tsp Worcestershire sauce	1/2 tsp pepper
3 C milk with dash of Tabasco	1/4 lb butter
Special K or Corn Flakes	

In a 9" x 13" buttered, glass baking dish put 8 pieces of bread. Add pieces to cover dish entirely. Cover bread with thin slices of bacon or ham. Lay slices of cheddar cheese on top of bacon or ham. Then cover with slices of bread (to make like sandwich).

In a bowl, beat eggs, salt, pepper. To egg mixture add dry mustard, onion, green pepper, Worcestershire sauce, milk & Tabasco. Pour over sandwich. Cover and let stand in fridge over night.

In morning melt the 1/4 pound butter, pour over top and then cover with Special K or Corn Flakes. Bake uncovered for 1 hour at 350. Let stand for 10 min. before serving.

Serve with fresh fruit, if desired. I also leave out the green peppers, that's how we like it.

What do you call people who are afraid of Santa Claus?
.....Claustrophobic.

