



The RHODOTELLER

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COMING EVENTS

6th May 2008 - Executive Meeting 2:00 pm

The executive meeting will be held at the home of Daryl and Evelyn Wright, 1672 Beaufort Avenue, Comox.

13 May 2008 - Annual General Meeting

Venue: This year's Annual General Meeting will be held in the garden of Terry and Charline Law, 1336 Casey Road, Comox BC.

Note: In the event of inclement weather, meeting will be at the regular meeting place – The United Church in Comox.

Directions to the Law's: Going South on Pritchard Road turn East onto Noel Avenue to Torrence Road. Turn right on Torrence and then left onto Casey Road.



PRESIDENT'S VIEW

...by Harry Wright

Wow, what a garden tour we had on Whidbey Island! I'm sure it will be covered in a later article, or next month when the editor has more time to collect all the photos from all the shutterbugs. Everyone attending had a fantastic time and we all saw some absolutely fabulous gardens.

As April comes to a close what is it with all the frosts that make some of the rhodo's look the same colour? The silver lining in all this cool weather; the blooms are lasting longer and colours are darker. Eventually the sun will come out one day and warm us up a bit, or two or three in a row, now wouldn't that be nice.

May, as always is our busy Rhodo month. We raise the bulk of our funds to carry us forward for another year. Our plant sale and garden tour need many members to ensure a smooth operation. Be sure to give Diana a call and sign up to help out wherever possible.

May

North Island Rhododendron Society
2007/2008 Executive

President
Harry Wright 338-8345

Vice-President
Dave Crucq 339-7845

Past President:
Paul Wurz 287-4301

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



In the furor of activities this month, don't forget your own garden. Remember this is the time to fertilize those prized rhododendrons to keep them happy and healthy. A good product is "Rhododendron & Azalea Food" 10-8-6 with trace elements. The soil should be damp when applying and the product watered in well. This shouldn't pose much of a problem if the current weather prevails!

See you at the meeting....

MEMBER'S NOTES

...by Dave Godfrey

Another record turnout, as 15 guests joined 36 members for our meeting on April 8th. Guest speakers Wanda McAvoy and Dave McIntosh, of the George Fraser Project Committee in Ucluelet, gave a presentation on the history and recognition now paid to this pioneer rhododendron hybridizer and propagator.

Dave began by providing an overview and some historic slides of George's early years in Ucluelet, and mentioned some of George's most famous hybrids. In the second half of the presentation, Wanda explained and showed slides of the work accomplished by the local George Fraser Project since it was founded in the early 1990's.

Prior to this time, George Fraser and his life's work had faded from the memory of most Ucluelet residents. Even though he had lived and worked his property in the heart of the Village for 50 years until his death in 1944, George was a virtual unknown until Bill Dale and Dr. Stuart Holland, researching Fraser's work with rhododendrons, revived local and international interest in this world-renowned horticulturalist.

Since 2000, a special George Fraser Day, in conjunction with the local Heritage Fair, has celebrated the accomplishments of this great and humble man. This year's celebration will take place on Saturday, May 24th, and all NIRS members are invited to attend to see first hand the beauty of the Fraser rhododendrons still thriving almost 100 years later. Also to view the many rhododendrons donated by Vancouver Island chapters of the ARS that now adorn the highway leading into Ucluelet. Mark your calendars and call ahead to reserve a room for this annual community event.



Wanda McAvoy and Dave McIntosh

NIRS members have been generous in the past with donations of plants for the silent auction, door prizes, raffle, etc. at the Heritage Fair. Any members wishing to donate again this year may contact me and arrangements can be made for getting them to Ucluelet. Thank you.

Following the presentation, a draw was made for the raffle prize of rhododendron 'Odee Wright' and Isobel Petch was the lucky winner. A shocked Isobel was also the winner of one of the two door prizes for the evening, a small potted hellebore. Guest Mike Duncan won a gardening book as the second door prize.

Mentioned during the meeting was the need for volunteers to help with our two major fund raisers for the year, our Rhodo Sale & Show on May 4th, and the 13th Annual Mother's Day Garden Tour on May 11th. Any members willing and able to assist with these events are asked to contact Diana Scott.

On Monday, April 7th, approximately 33 members and guests enjoyed a tour of Robert Argall's gardens. There are thousands of bulbs in bloom at this time of year, and some early rhododendrons. Photographs of the tour will be added to our web site's 'photo gallery' page in the future, along with photos of the club's Whidbey Island garden tour trip on April 22nd.

CORRECTION: In the April issue, I incorrectly stated that rhododendrons were "acid loving" plants. However, I have since been advised that the correct term is "acid tolerant" plants. Sorry for any confusion this may have caused.

Volunteers Needed

May 4th: Rhodo Sale and Show 10am to 2pm
Komox Band Hall on Dyke Road.

We have Volunteers for specific jobs at Rhodo Sale well in hand, but can always use more folks to greet the public, help with the NIRS table and Truss Show, and assist purchasers take their plants to the cashiers and then to their vehicles. We typically need extra help from 9am until opening to fill and organize the vases for the Truss Show and to tag and price plants for the NIRS Table. If you can spare a couple of hours, and haven't already signed up — please join us!

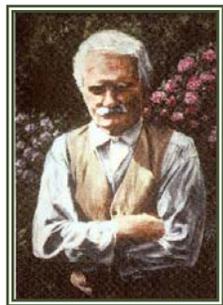
May 11th: Annual Mother's Day Garden Tour 10am to 4pm.

We are delighted to have 6 beautiful gardens for the tour again this year, in addition to the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden. Thanks to garden hosts Jennye and Jeff Holms, Roberts and Adela Smith, Lo and Cec Lockhard, Dave and Marleen Crucq, Dick and Pauline Bonney, and Rob Argall!

We now have a complete slate of garden sitters to greet the public and check off tickets from 9:45am to 1pm and from 1pm to 4pm. Garden Sitters will be contacted by email with further instructions and directions to your Garden, and will receive a complimentary ticket to the tour for when you are not on your 'shift'. Thanks to our hosts, to the garden sitters and to all those volunteers working hard behind the scenes!

George Fraser - Pioneer Canadian, Rhododendron Grower, and Hybridizer

(Ed. Note: The following article was written and published by Bill Dale in 1993, and is reprinted here by permission of the author.)



From the very beginning of his life in Ucluelet, Fraser had been interested primarily in the breeding of rhododendrons, yet his first and most important rhododendron hybrid came about almost by chance. In a shipment of cranberry plants sent to him from Nova Scotia in 1897, which he intended to cross with the local wild variety, he recognized a weed as *Rhododendron Canadensis*, the wild rhododendron of eastern Canada and the United States. He planted it separately, and 15 years later, when it first bloomed, promptly crossed it with *R. japonicum*. The result of this cross first bloomed in 1919, and later that year he sent a budded plant to the Arnold Arboretum in Boston. When they failed to acknowledge receiving the plant, he sent a second budded plant to Mr. William Watson, curator at Kew Gardens, who in 1929 named it *R. fraseri*. The same year, and quite independently, the Arnold Arboretum also named it *R. fraseri*.

In 1919, George Fraser began a correspondence with Joseph Gable which was to last for the rest of his life.

Its beginning was noted by Doctor John Wister in a paper he delivered at the 1961 American Rhododendron Society's convention in Portland, Oregon on work of Gable, Nearing and Dexter.

In the section on Gable he said, "On his return to his farm after WWI, Mr. Gable became interested in the wild azaleas in the nearby woods and wrote to Professor Charles S. Sargent of the Arnold Arboretum about the plants which turned out to be *R. nudiflorum*. Professor Sargent and E. H. Wilson, who would later become famous as a plant hunter in China, became interested in the young man. He encouraged him to study and grow other azaleas. They also advised him to get in touch with George Fraser, a rhododendron breeder of Ucluelet, British Columbia, Canada. Mr. Fraser urged him to try his hand at breeding and sent him a letter on introduction to E.J.P. Magor of Lamellan, Cornwall.

Mr. Fraser also arranged for Gable to join the R.H.S. and urged him to subscribe to the British Gardeners Chronicle.

This connection between Ucluelet, B.C., Stewartstown, Pennsylvania, and Lamellan, Cornwall, was to have a considerable influence on rhododendron hybridizers for the next 20 years.

Unfortunately all of Fraser's records were destroyed in a fire of his house some time after his death. Fortunately, Joe Gable had saved Fraser's letters to himself and in 1960 sent 64 of these handwritten letters to the Vancouver Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society. These letters are now in the Provincial archives in Victoria. Much of our information on Fraser's work as a rhododendron and azalea hybridizer comes from these letters.

In a lot of respects, Fraser was breaking new ground in the field of rhododendron hybridizing. It is important to remember that he had been born at least a generation before most of those who would emerge as our foremost hybridizers.

Gable, himself, had no doubt about the debt that he owed Fraser. In a letter he wrote to Guy Nearing in 1942 he said: "I just had a Christmas note from Mr. Fraser of Ucluelet, who first introduced me – by mail- to Mr. Magor. So to these two men more than any others, almost to the exclusion of all others, I owe my acquisitions in the first few years of my rhododendron growing."

Besides rhododendrons and azaleas, Fraser's other love was growing heathers. When his first catalogue was published in 1915, more than 15 species and varieties of heather were listed; among them was the Scottish heather, *Calluna vulgaris*. Although *Calluna vulgaris* is not indigenous to British Columbia, it is interesting that botanists of Pacific Rim National Park have identified it in a large number of localities in the Ucluelet/Tofino area. There is a large area adjacent to the Tofino airport covered with Scottish heather and it was in all probability planted by Fraser. During WWII, Fraser often visited the American Air Force squadron stationed at the Tofino air base, and knew a number of Kitty Hawk pilots well. He gave some of them small packages of *Calluna vulgaris* seeds which the pilots scattered on flights over the surrounding mountains.

Fraser was also particularly interested in the native plants and wild flowers growing on west coast of Vancouver Island. In 1921 he sent bulbs of some different varieties of *Erythronium* to the curator of the Royal Botanic Garden, Kew. One of these, *E. revolutum*, he described as "Canada's most beautiful wild flower."

George Fraser was a great favourite in the small community of Ucluelet. He played his violin at all events such as school concerts and dances. Like many an old bachelor, he took great interest in his friends' lives. At Christmastime he would send a box of holly and pernettya to Mrs. Gable in Pennsylvania, and he never forgot his Scottish friends in Winnipeg or Victoria, sending them boxes of heather in January for their Burn's night celebrations.

George Fraser died on May 3rd, 1944 in his 90th year. He remained at his home in Ucluelet until the last few days. When it came time for his friends to carry him to the speed boat on the shore in front of his home which would take him to Port Alberni, he said to his friend Bud Thompson, "I don't know here I'm going to end up, but it doesn't matter – I have had my heaven here on earth." He died in hospital in Port Alberni two days later.

Fraser lay in his unmarked grave in Ucluelet for almost half a century until several different organizations decided that the life and work of this very modest but talented horticulturist should be recognized. In 1990, a George Fraser Memorial Garden was started in Ucluelet. This is on land which Fraser had donated for the purpose of building a school with an adjoining playing field. The Lions Club, the Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans club, and the Ucluelet and Area Historical Society, all had a hand in placing a

granite head stone on his grave.

Also in 1990, the American Rhododendron Society posthumously awarded George Fraser their "Pioneer Achievement Award". This was only the fourth time this award had been given (the only one outside the United States.) Joe Gable had been the first recipient.



Rhododendron Days at Milner Gardens

May 1st through May 11th ----- 10:00am to 5:00pm (last entry at 4:00pm)

Come and enjoy the named and labeled collection of Rhododendrons and other spring flowering plants through a series of weekend walk-talks or self-guided tours. We often get calls for tearoom reservations. We do not accept reservations except for large groups; it is first come, first served for tearoom service. On Mothers Day the tearoom will be open from 11 am to 4 pm., but lunch will not be available. Memberships make great Mothers Day gifts.

Michele Lacey.....Secretary.....Milner Gardens & Woodland.....2179 West Island Highway.....Qualicum Beach, BC V9K 1G1

Tel: (250)752-8573.....E-mail: <mailto:milnergardens@shaw.ca> Web Page: www.milnergardens.org

Lake Cowichan - Memorial Rhododendron Park - Grand Opening



Saturday, May 17th, 2008 - 12:00 Noon

Point Ideal Road, Lake Cowichan, BC. (next to the Info Centre)



"Bringing Back Our Rhododendron Heritage".....Part of our town's Annual Heritage Days, a three-day event May 16, 17 & 18

For further information on the Town of Lake Cowichan Days program please contact Katherine at Cowichan Lake District Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Centre (250)749-3244 or info@cowichanlake.ca Website: www.cowichanlakecc.ca



The Eighth Annual George Fraser Day & Heritage Fair, Ucluelet, BC

Saturday, May 24, 2008 - 10:30 am - 4 pm



Bench unveiling at George Fraser Memorial Park - Interpretative walk down Fraser Lane to "The George Fraser Gardens"

Honourary presentation in memory of Bob Sinclair, rhododendron propagator and former nursery owner in Ucluelet

1 - 4 pm Heritage Fair, UAC Hall in Ucluelet, historical exhibits, silent auction, Coombs Old Time Fiddlers, door prizes, refreshments, guest speakers, plant sale, George Fraser Power Point Presentation....and more.

Contacts for more information: Email: gfraserproject@hotmail.com Wanda McAvoy, Fraser Day Event Coordinator



by Mary Palmer

After reading an article in Gardens West about making a styrofoam fish-box into an imitation hypertufa container, I grabbed a can of grey paint and a pail of sand and went to work. 3 coats of each, on each side, and the box really does look like hypertufa, and weighs almost nothing. Of course, by the time I filled it with soil, heather, ivy, a fern and a grass, I needed help to move it to a permanent position. If you try this, don't forget to cut several holes in the bottom and add some rocks or broken crocks before adding soil. Use a mix of soil, coarse sand, and perlite - depending on the kind of plants you intend to put in the box.

I put mine in a partly protected spot for the winter, and the box has now come through two winters in perfect shape. The plants have grown huge and may have to be replaced.



Snippets Remembered



(Editors note: Original Article by Rose-Marie Silkens was published in May 2002)

In late winter and early spring, rhodo gardeners are apt to get a little breathless with the anticipation of seeing their treasures bloom, and the show of flower buds fuels the excitement. I am inclined to think that the ARS ratings should include a fourth category for quality of flower buds. Some plants have such glorious buds that it is not just their promise of flowers that makes them a welcome sight.

Most of the *R. yakushmanum* hybrids put on a fine display of chubby round buds, pale green to cream in nice contrast with the foliage, or silver-green on the species. In my garden, *R. 'Yaku Incense'* is perhaps the best exemplar, but all the other yaks and part yaks are in close competition. Another favourite is *R. 'Helene Schiffner'*. Here buds aren't particularly large, but their deep purple colouring through winter into spring is most appealing.

Unequivocally though, the full-five rating would have to go to *T. 'Rotenburg'*, which sets such immense buds that they swell before your eyes as the days lengthen. Fortunately, the burst of rich cream bloom that is finally released is a performance worthy of the overture.

Horticulture, as in so many other human endeavours, is subject to the vagaries of fashion, and the popularity of certain plants is often subject to the whim of influential media personalities. While I can't lament over anything that makes people more appreciative of the garden and its contents, I am sometimes sorry to see certain plant groups and gardening styles slip out of currency because no one has put them on the cover of a glossy magazine for a while.

The last few years, that has been the fate of biennials, the once-ubiquitous wallflowers, 'Sweet Williams' and 'Canterbury Bells' that were the mainstay of borders and cutting gardens. I am particularly fond of that trio. They provide plenty of garden colour, they are wonderful for cutting, and the first two have delightful fragrance to offer. I can't imagine my early summer garden without rich swaths of 'Sweet William' backed by the lush intensity of Canterbury Bells.

Most often I simply discard them after bloom (after collecting seeds), filling the spots with chrysanthemums for fall, or annuals such as cosmos or several of the new perennials I seem to be trying each year that have been waiting in pots for their turn. When a particular colour is

too endearing to discard, I cut back the plants quite hard, and in fact had both Sweet Williams and Canterbury Bells perform well for a number of years in consequence. Wallflowers last for many years here; they are planted along the south wall of my house, and I do cut them back hard after bloom. I grow the Sutton's 'Persian Carpet' strain, which has a lovely colour range.



Camellias in Pots

John Kelly, writing in "Amateur Gardening", tells us that camellias are as happy in pots as ducks in water. Have you had trouble with these plants? - read on. Most of us don't have to worry about Mr. Kelly's main concern - limy soil - but many of us find we just can't grow them. In a pot we can move our plant in and out of the weather - a greenhouse or even a garage when snow threatens.

Camellias can't stand sun on their flowers after a frosty night - how simple to just move the pot if frost threatens in early spring. Another reason for using pots is that you can have a variety of camellias, including japonicas, reticulatas, and autumn-flowering sasanquas, to give a flowering season from fall until spring.

These plants will all flower earlier under glass, so why not try a *C. sasanqua* 'Narumigata' which will flower around Christmas. Put conservatory plants outside from about the middle of May until the end of July, so they will form flower buds and escape the red spider mite, aphids and scale insects. Watch for signs of vine weevils though.

Those permanently outside in tubs should be placed on the north or west side of the house. Look for varieties of *C. x williamsii*, the hardiest ones for some of our cold gardens.

Grow the plants in a soil-based compost, with added grit for drainage. Line the pots with bubble plastic, leaving a hole in the bottom, and some broken crocks or rocks for drainage, and pack the plant in with an ericaceous compost.

The only item Mr. Kelly does not mention is the local deer who love to munch on camellia leaves. I spray Bobbex around and hope for the best.

Pot these plants on once every 3 years, in a pot a little larger than the last one. Fertilizer should have little or no nitrogen in it. Dried blood when growth starts, and superphosphate in summer, with a little sulphate of potash, is all they need, apart from an occasional feed of trace elements.

All plants in pots need a good drink of water once a week in summer, with extra water and protection from hot sun in a drought. Also, remember to protect the camellia from cold winds, frost and snow in winter. Give the plants a good drink in October and set them in a cold frame or other protected spot for the winter months.



Garden Chatter Natter and Notes

by Mary Palmer

Taxonomists around the world have decided to standardize the names of plant families. Each family name must be based on an established genus and end in "aceae". So (for instance), as there is no genus named "Umbellifer", the umbellifers have become the Aoiaceae (Based on the genus *Apium*). Compositae are now Asteraceae, Gramineae (grasses) are now Poaceae, Cruciferae are now Brassicaceae, and Leguminosea are now Fabaceae. There are many other examples, but you get the idea. (I may have made some spelling errors here!)

Do you have any problems growing *Daphne*? Many do. I lost a *D. retusa* after a "Bad" winter when stems were split by snow, then the plant was attacked by coral spot fungus. I have not been able to find another plant. *D. tangutica* is a larger sister to *retusa*, but sprawly. However, it has the same lovely purple buds, white flowers, and perfume. *D. odora* dies of "root rot" in some parts of the country, but sharp drainage solves that problem. Many are planted under roof overhangs, so no water in summer and very little in winter. They are then sprawly plants also but seem to survive very well. Wonderful perfume. *D. cneorum*, a low sprawler with bright pink blooms, is expensive and often not too long-lived in this area. There are many other varieties, but they are seldom on offer, except of course *Daphne mezereum*, deciduous (most others are evergreen), and seeds itself all over my garden, but not easy to find in nurseries.

D. laureola is an evergreen weed in forested parts of Vancouver Island. These last two are almost weeds, but the rest are iffy and need tlc. The person who wrote the Horticulture article mentioned root rot caused by long-lived fungi left over from cotton cultivation. Cotton has not been grown on Vancouver Island, but there are other root rotting fungi around.

Another article from this magazine talked about the many lovely bulbous plants for summer flowers when the rhodos are finished. Some are not hardy here, but can be planted in pots and protected in winter.

Tulipa sylvestris should be hardy here, has lovely violet-scented perfume and bright yellow flowers. *xAmarrinum* "Fred Howard". hardy Zones 7-11, so good for pots, might be hardy here. *Polyanthus tuberosa* "Mexican Single", pots north of Z9. *Gladiolus callianthus* (*Acidanthera*) is not hardy north of Z8. Try a Ginger - *Hedychium*, wonderful perfume, hardy Z 8-11. *Muscari muscarimi* has strange-looking greenish flowers, nutmeg perfume, hardy Z4-8. *Iris reticulata* - lovely flowers in various shades, hardy Z 4-8 but I am not the only one who complains they bloom the first year then there are just leaves after that.. Maybe they prefer pots.

I want to try a *Phormium* - some have brilliant green to orange leaves, not hardy, but should do well in a pot for the

summer. Look for "Rainbow Surprise". My absolute favorite grass now is *Hakonechloa macra* "Aureola" which dies into the ground for the winter, but pops out in April, and within a couple of years you have lots of extra to share with friends or take to a plant sale.

Hydrangeas

Nearly every year we have a spectacular display of hydrangea flowers in this area, mostly after the rhodos have finished blooming. They are happy in the same conditions as rhodos with regard to acid soil, part shade for protection from the strongest summer sun, and generally hardy in our cool wet winters. During the summer and fall we are treated to not only large flower-heads of white, blue, pink or maroon, but many varieties have leaves which change colour in October. I have found they need water during periods of drought, but my soil is underlain with river gravel.

"The Hydrangeas", written by Michael Haworth-Booth in 1950 - my copy came from the Garden Book Club in 1975 - published by Constable & Co- is a comprehensive book, but has only black & white photos.

As of 1995 there is a new book, even more comprehensive, and full of excellent line drawings as well as b&w and coloured photos. This book, "Hydrangeas" was written by Toni Lawson-Hall and Brian Rothers, published by Timber Press. In 2007, Firefly Books published "Complete Hydrangeas" written by Glynn Church, so we have lots of reading material to help us grow these plants.

Hydrangeas, like *Rhododendrons*, are an ancient plant - fossils from 12-70 million years ago have been found in western North America, from Alaska to Colorado and California, and also in China. Now, they grow naturally in eastern Asia, in eastern North America, and western South America. They were introduced into England and France during the 17th and 18th centuries, but were favored garden plants in Japan for centuries before that.

In this genus are to be found dwarf and taller shrubs, small trees, and climbing plants. They have been divided into two sections - eleven deciduous species, all in cultivation, and twelve evergreen self-supporting climbers, not as familiar or easy to purchase.

Flowers of hydrangeas are a conspicuous feature, being freely borne, long-lasting and often highly decorative. There are tiny fertile true flowers in the centre of the corymbs, with large conspicuous sterile enlarged sepals around the edges.

These books have many examples of leaf and flower shapes, and should be very useful for identifying hydrangeas in the garden or nursery. There is a copy of "Hydrangeas" in the Rhodo Club library. Borrow it and you will feel well-able to purchase just the plant you have in mind.

Member Profile

Diana R. Scott

John and Diana Scott retired to the Comox Valley from Winnipeg in 2000, renting in the Miracle Beach area and in Courtenay while their house was being built. They have developed their garden on 2 ½ acres near Kitty Coleman Park north of Courtenay. With limited water and compacted thin soils, it has been a challenge as well as a pleasure to determine what will grow well. Plantings that are both drought tolerant and have multi-season interest are a priority. Diana is currently trying her hand at winter gardening and has been happily growing a few winter vegetables over the last two seasons. John supports and encourages her, but would prefer to be working on 'projects' in his woodworking shop! Diana's newest acquisition is a small greenhouse which she has been coveting for years. Alas, they seem to have built it on the site of an old well, so drainage is now an issue. Who knew?



They have a number of Rhodos in their garden, some of which are doing better than others. Diana began her small collection by picking flowers that she liked, but she is currently looking for Rhodos with interesting leaf forms.

She can identify a few Rhodos and knows "a wee bit about their culture", but admits she has LOTS to learn! Despite this limited knowledge, she is somewhat of an 'info-junkie' and delights in learning about all aspects of gardening. Early on, she was encouraged to come to the NIRS meetings by friend Lois Clyde, and eventually volunteered to be Secretary which she has done since 2003. Diana thoroughly enjoys the meetings and the social connections through the club, and has learned a tremendous amount from our members. She feels that "everyone has their own gardening talents and interests, and it has been great fun to get to know

folks in the club and share ideas."

In addition to being President-elect for NIRS, Diana is involved in a number of other gardening groups including the Comox Valley Horticultural Society (past President and worked on both Membership and the Newsletter); Comox Valley Growers and Seed Savers; Newcomers Garden Club; has worked on the Filberg Garden Show committee; and been involved in various informal garden associations. Diana has assisted friends in the development of their gardens, made several gardening presentations, and is always eager to learn from others!

John and Diana are spending more time traveling these days and have recently enjoyed 2 bike trips in France, just spent a month in Mexico, and are getting ready to spend much of the summer on their boat, "Islander". They belong to the Yacht Club and participate in many Yacht Club cruises and functions. Life is full for the Scotts!

What's Blooming Now

(Beside Rhodos)

Daphne is a genus of 70 species of evergreen and deciduous shrubs, native to Europe and Asia. The most commonly planted, *Daphne cneorum*, is in bloom now with its highly scented rose-pink flowers. It is a native of Europe, growing 6-8' high with a spread of 2-3'. The pure white form 'Alba' is less vigorous. This is a good rock garden plant, where a moist root run can be assured.

D. mezereum is a deciduous shrub up to 5' in height and 2-4' wide. The flowers appear January-April, depending on the severity of the winter, appear before the leaves, and can vary from purple through pink to white, followed by showy poisonous berries in the fall.

Daphne retusa, a native of western China, is an evergreen alpine shrub up to 3' high and 1 1/2 to 3' wide. The lustrous dark green leaves are oblong and thick. Purple buds open to white flowers in May, followed by red berries in the fall. *D. tangutica* is similar, but a larger and taller shrub. A common weed of shady corners and woods is *D. laureola*, a native of Europe and W. Asia. It is an evergreen shrub, 2-4' in height with small yellow-green flowers in Feb. or March. This plant provides handsome foliage in heavy shade. Recently, this has been listed as a bad weed, needing to be pulled up wherever it is found.

D. odora is a more tender member of the family. It is an evergreen shrub of lax habit, 5-6' high and wide. The fragrant reddish-purple flowers appear in Jan. or Feb.

Daphnes grow in any ordinary garden soil, in sun or partial shade. However, *D. mezereum* can be devastated by heavy wet snow, such as we had this winter. Whole branches were ripped off mine. *D. odora* hates our wet winters. If grown under an overhang of a roof or veranda, where it gets very little moisture, it will be happy. However, it will also sprawl. But the perfume is worth it!



Opinions vary as to whether daphnes are easy or difficult to propagate. Try cuttings of non-flowering shoots, with a heel, planted in peat and sand or peat and perlite, July to Sept., and keep in the cold frame for at least a year. Mary Greig suggested twisting the cutting into a coil in the medium (the small cracks may speed rooting). Seeds may be sown when ripe (no later than October) in a cold frame, if you can find any after the robins strip the plants. *R. mezereum* seeds itself all over my garden, but their first job is to grow a 6" carrotty root which makes them difficult to dig up and transplant.

Pests and diseases are few but you might find aphids, cucumber mosaic virus and leaf spot to be problems. Heavy wet snow can rip and smash branches of *D. retusa* and *D. tangutica* as well as *D. mezereum*. It's not easy to find many of the varieties mentioned, and they can be quite expensive. If you do, treasure it and try to find just the right place for it.

Mango Pudding ...Christine Luovic

3 pkgs Knorr's unflavoured gelatin
 $\frac{3}{4}$ C Cold Water $\frac{3}{4}$ C Hot Water
 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ C milk or whipping cream or half and half
 1 Can Alphonso Mango Pulp (3 cups)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ C sugar (or according to taste)

Follow the instructions on the Knorr's package to make your mixture of gelatin, using the hot and cold water. You must stir the gelatin mixture until it's completely dissolved.

Add milk, mango pulp and sugar, stir well. Refrigerate overnight to set.

The hardest part of making this is finding the canned Alphonso Mango Pulp. It is available in the Indian Food aisle at Superstore or sometimes Quality Foods.

Nanaimo Bars ...Noni Godfrey

$\frac{1}{2}$ C butter 1 egg
 $\frac{1}{4}$ C sugar 2 C graham wafer crumbs
 5 Tbsp cocoa 1 tsp vanilla
 1 C coconut $\frac{1}{2}$ C chopped walnuts

Place softened butter, sugar, cocoa, vanilla & egg in bowl. Set bowl in a dish of boiling water. Stir well until butter melts and the mixture resembles custard. Combine graham wafer crumbs, coconut & nuts - blend well.

Add the melted mixture then pack evenly in a 9 inch square pan.

Second layer: Cream $\frac{1}{4}$ C butter, add 3 Tbsp milk which has been combined with 2 Tbsp vanilla custard powder. Blend in 2 Cups sifted Icing sugar. Spread over base and let stand about 15 minutes to harden somewhat.

Icing layer: Melt 4 squares semi sweet chocolate with 1 Tbsp butter and spread over custard layer.

Refrigerate and cut into bars when set.

Recipe Requests

Banana Crunch Cake ...Evelyn Wright

2 C flour 1 tsp soda
 $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp salt 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ C sugar
 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ C margarine (butter) $\frac{1}{2}$ C sour milk
 2 or 3 mashed bananas 1 tsp vanilla
 2 eggs

Mix and sift dry ingredients, Cut in margarine, add half of the sour milk, bananas and vanilla. Beat well then add eggs and remainder of sour milk.

Topping:

Mix $\frac{1}{2}$ C marg/butter, 1 C brown sugar, 3 Tbsp cream, 1 C coconut and $\frac{1}{2}$ C chopped nuts.

Place under low broiler until soft and bubbly - around 3 -5 minutes.



NIRS Sale and Show

4th May - 10am - 2pm

North Island Rhododendron Society's



**13th Annual
"Mother's Day
Garden Tour"**

SUNDAY – 11th May 2008

10 a.m. until 4 p.m.

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