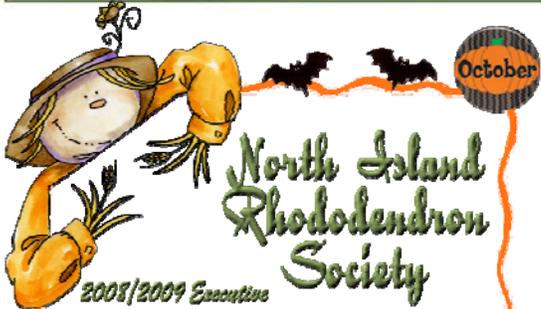




R. Courtenay Lady

The Rhodoteller

www.nirs.rhodos.ca



North Island Rhododendron Society

2008/2009 Executive

President

Diana Scott338-0208

Vice-President

Dave Crucq339-7845

Past President:

Harry Wright338-8345

Secretary

Pauline Thompson339-3423

Treasurer

Don Law339-2735

Director: Ways & Means

Dave Godfrey335-0717

Director: Membership

Brian Staton337-5228

Director: Publicity

Chris Aldred331-0395

Director: Newsletter/Library

Noni Godfrey335-0717
.....nonigod@shaw.ca

Social Committee:

Evelyn Wright339-7493

Revenue Table Committee:

Louise Casson334-2331

Sunshine Lady:

Pauline Bonney339-7594

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

Coming Events

30th September 2008 - Executive Meeting 2:00 pm

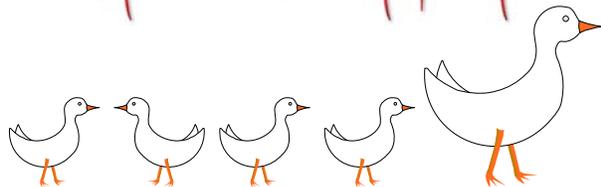
The executive meeting will be held at the home of Dave and Marleen Crucq, 2301 Seabank Road Courtenay

7th October 2008 - Regular Monthly Meeting

"Lu Zhu - A Plant Collector's Passion"

Garth Wedemire, well known member of the Fraser South Rhododendron Chapter and District 1 web master from Langley, BC, will be giving a talk and slide presentation to members and guests on Dr. Mike Bale's garden on Mt. Woodside near Harrison Hot Springs which he calls "Lu Zhu."

From the membership chairman



Membership renewals are required by the November meeting to ensure this coming year's membership with ARS and to receive your winter copy of the ARS Journal!

All individual memberships, (which can include couples) for 2009 are \$35.00 Canadian. All Associate memberships ar \$10.00 Canadian. Mail cheque and waiver form to Brian Staton or bring to the next regular meeting. (address on last page)

...by Diana Scott

President's View

Fall is a wonderful season. With our limited watering capabilities here at the Scott Garden, I love it! The sun still shines with a hint of warmth, but the cool nights and morning dew bring back the green grass and give our plants a bit of a breather from the heat of summer. We have many shrubs and trees planted to provide fall colour and they are beginning to come into their own at this time of year. The leaves on the fothergilla gardenii and hydrangea quercifolia turn purples, reds, and orange, and the maples are turning various shades of gold to red. Nothing can beat the impact of acer palmatum Osakazuki's brilliant reds! One of my very favourite trees, acer griseum, is changing colour, and with the combined impact of the peeling cinnamon bark it is very hard to beat. In addition to putting in more bulbs, fall is a great time to consider adding plants for next year's colour!

Fall is also the time to begin preparing for winter. Everyone has their own style which may include cutting back perennial seed heads or leaving them for the birds. I tend to clean up the 'messy' looking plants and the ones whose reseeding makes for a pile of work later, but have some favourites that I leave until the seeds have been eaten. In particular, the sparrows and chickadees seem to love the seed spikes of liatris spicata (gayfeather) and I don't mind when the flowers appear elsewhere in the garden.

Our Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden will need some cleanup before the winter season so I'm sure that Harry will be calling for a few Work Parties. 'Many hands make light work', and we always enjoy a coffee with a few goodies afterward. Please make sure you note the dates, bring your garden gloves, a weed pail, and a smile!

DID YOU KNOW.....

...there is a community called RHODODENDRON?



This unincorporated community is located in Clackaman County, Oregon.

Situated in the Mount Hood Corridor, it used to be called "Zig Zag" and was re-named in 1920 to "RHODODENDRON". One can only assume it was named this for the vast numbers of rhodos that grow in the area.



...by Dave Godfrey

Member's Notes

Another season of chapter meetings began on September 9th with yet another fantastic attendance by members and guests alike. Along with 31 NIRS members, 15 guests came to learn more about "Great Plant Picks for Rhododendrons and Companion Plants" presented by our President Diana Scott.

Along with several members renewing their memberships for 2009, two guests joined as new members that evening. Former NIRS Member Alice Potts rejoined after a 10 year absence, and Amie Anderson an active member of the Comox Valley Horticultural Society also joined. Welcome ladies and we hope you enjoy future programs.

Speaking of ladies, it was a first for our club that evening to have two ladies conducting the meeting from the head table. Diana Scott took over as President from Harry Wright, while Pauline Thompson replaced Diana as Secretary. Both ladies did an admirable job for their first meeting together.

To conclude the business portion of the evening, Past President Harry made a surprise presentation of a Bronze Medal award to Evelyn Wright. This well deserved award was given to Evelyn for her many contributions to the success of the club over the past 10 or more years. When I asked what year she joined the club, Evelyn said "I can't recall, but I remember my first meeting I won the rhodo and that got me hooked!"



Harry presents Evelyn with the Bronze award

Following the award presentation, several members gave a "show and tell" on a variety of plants blooming or showing fall colours in their gardens at this time of year. Thanks to Dany Fortin, Dick Bonney, Bernie Guyader, Harry Wright and Joan Cavers for taking the time to share some of the delights from their gardens.

Roberts Smith provided an educational for the meeting, demonstrating his methods for propagating rhododendron cuttings. After his hands on demonstration, Bob showed several slides of his greenhouse "grow op" with several hundred rhodies in various stages of growth.

As Bob explained, he first became interested in propagating following a meeting with NIRS associate members Les and Bev Clay at their nursery in Langley. Les showed Bob the basics of cutting and caring for cuttings, and then it was left up to him to "practice until I got it right." Bob says the success to propagating cuttings is using a hormonal root compound (powder or liquid gel) with .8% Indole butyric acid. Most local garden centers carry a brand of hormone compound, but be sure it has the correct strength.



Bob Smith demonstrating cuttings for propagating

Diana's program for the evening provided an overview of the "Great Plant Picks" program from the Elisabeth Carey Miller Botanical Garden in Seattle, WA. In order to qualify as an outstanding and 'unbeatable' plant for our gardens, it has to be hardy, long-lived, vigorous and easy to grow; disease and pest resistant, have a long season or multiple seasons of interest, adaptable to a variety of soil and fertile conditions, not require excessive moisture (unless listed as an aquatic plant), and not be invasive or require a great deal of work. They also have to be readily available in trade.

To choose the plants, a number of committees were formed that

looked at plants over several years to ensure they met the criteria. Each year since 2000 they have come up with a list of plants they consider "Great Plant Picks" for our climate and growing conditions.

After much deliberation, in 2005, the Great Plant Picks rhododendron advisory group put out a "Rhododendron Collection" and suggested a wide variety of plants that would make great companion plants.

Although too numerous to list in this article, much of the information contained in Diana's presentation can be found on the web site www.greatplantpicks.org

Our raffle winner for R. 'Double Date', a Whitney hybrid from the Crucq collection, was club Secretary Pauline Thompson. Lois Clyde was the door prize winner of a trio of 'Great Plant Picks' companion plants donated by Diana Scott. Congratulations ladies!

The evening's revenue table looked more like a plant sale, with everything from garden buckets to styrax trees, primulas to brugmansias, and tomatoes to magazines. Thanks to all who donated so generously for the benefit of the club. Let's try to have every meeting this year as well attended and full of goodies.

A reminder to all members that 2009 dues are to be paid by November in order to ensure delivery of your January (winter) issue of the ARS 'Journal' magazine. The dues remain unchanged for 2009 at \$35 for regular membership or \$10 for associate memberships. In addition to paying for membership this year, we have introduced a new permission/ waiver form, which we are asking each member to complete (new or renewal.) This form will give permission for our chapter and the ARS to use your contact information for notification of events and activities. It is also a waiver form to allow participation in any club activities. A copy of this form will be included with this newsletter to allow members to complete and return it to the chapter by mail or in person.

*"There Is Magic
In The Night,
When Pumpkins
Glow With
Candlelight."*

ALLIUMS

...by Diana Scott

Alliums are a wonderful addition to the spring and summer garden. One amazing allium is the Star of Persia, or *Allium christophii* which produces an 8 inch purple sparkler on a thick short stalk. This flower head is equally impressive when it dries, and makes a big impact in a flower arrangement! In addition to the mature bulbs in my garden, I have been nursing baby christophii alliums planted from seed 6 years ago. Last year I was finally rewarded with flowers from those seeds, and have transplanted several dozen bulbs throughout the garden. I'm looking forward to quite a show next year!



Alliums are sometimes called ornamental garlic or flowering onion, which doesn't do them justice. They

have great flowers in the spring and summer and produce striking seed heads that provide interest late into the fall. Alliums do well in my sunny, relatively dry garden and will thrive in all but boggy soil. Many are fragrant, and most are deer resistant.

Interest in alliums is increasing and there are now many different varieties available on the market. The large violet-purple *Allium giganteum* and white *Allium Mount Everest* are on tall 30 inch stalks; *A. aflatanense* 'Purple Sensation' is a striking purple 4 inch ball on 20 -30 inch stalk; and *A. karataviense* has a large pinkish-white ball on a short, 6-8 inch



stalk with nice broad leaves. This short allium looks great at the front of the border or in a pot. *A. karataviense* 'Ivory Queen' is the most striking of this variety and has a lovely ivory-white ball. For something funky, 'Hair' allium is a bizarre addition to the garden, sporting purple bulbils with green hairlike threads on tall thin stalks. Most alliums bloom in the spring and early summer, but in my garden I'm especially fond of *Allium sphaerocephalum* which has small, oval flower-heads that open green and turn deep purple-red in summer. Its tall, thin stalks rise above other perennials and put on a fine show.

If you are interested in adding drama to the garden, consider planting alliums this fall. The best time to plant alliums is between mid September and mid October. I have a number of favourites and plan to add to my collection again this fall!

GARDEN CHATTER, NATTER AND NOTES

Submitted by an "Ophidiophobic"--means fear of snakes... Yes, I do... and before you tell me that "they're only GARTER snakes, they won't hurt you" I KNOW THAT.... doesn't make any difference, they could be anacondas for all I care. Not going to eat me? Not sure about that!!!

Oh, if they are there, I'll spot 'em, I see the little devils, slipping between the sunflowers, lurking in the lupins, peeking through the peonies. They're all out there to listen for my yelp of horror, even though it seems to send them skittering away pronto, (I'm sure they have a laugh at my expense) DO snakes laugh?? Well, perhaps not. But I digress...

The other day, a young friend was working with me in my garden (he's not too fond of spiders, actually) and he pointed out one of my slithery friends, on top of an old maple stump. We both stood there, oddly fascinated by this really beautiful creature. It was several colours, but predominantly lime green, quite large with a very tiny head. He/she was quietly sunning its lovely body, probably quite aware of the audience. We watched it for quite some time, but as we were working nearby... it had to go!! I tossed a small pebble close to it, but this was totally ignored, so I used a dead foxglove stalk, and imagine the expression on my face as I gently poked it.

Well this had the desired effect, and the green wonder popped back inside the hollow middle of the tree stump. Out of sight out of mind, well, ALMOST, we carried on with our chores.

Very soon, that same tree stump will be dug up, and I can't help but wonder whether my little green friend will escape with its life. Actually, I hope so, but perhaps it will move next door!



Adult gardeners might like to make sure that their tetanus shots are up to date! If not, tetanus shots are available free of charge through your family doctor or the Community Health Unit (961 England Ave Courtenay/250-338-1711). Tetanus shots should be updated every 10 years. Be safe!

Sounds like a good idea. Apparently 3 folks have died on Vancouver Island -- one in COMOX!





'The Beginning'
by
Alan Campbell

Vancouver Island Hybridizers



(First in the series, reprinted with permission of the author)

My interest in local rhododendron hybridizers germinated 7 or 8 years ago as I attended the annual show and sale of the Victoria Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society. The Victoria Chapter, the oldest chapter on the Island having been chartered in 1980, always has an excellent truss show. Wandering among the show tables while trying to hold a studious expression, hoping that I appeared to know what I was looking at, I came upon a table holding the Vancouver Island hybrid section. I was aware of a couple of local people who had produced their own hybrids, but I was astounded to learn of the number of individuals and the volume of their work. Instantly intrigued, I began an in-depth study of what I consider a far too overlooked segment of the Island's horticultural heritage as well as that of the Rhododendron Society—the Vancouver Island hybridizers, the floral equivalent to Emily Carr and Roy Henry Vickers.

In the 1880s another industrious Scotsman was lifting his eyes from the heather hankering to follow the setting sun westward. His name—**George Fraser. Bill Dale** of the Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society has devoted many years to studying George Fraser's work. Bill's findings have been published in the newsletters of many ARS chapters, as well as the Journal of the American Rhododendron Society. I have no intention of tramping all over Bill Dale's research, but would like to reiterate some of his points as I go along.

George Fraser, as a 17-year-old in 1871, entered the workforce by attaining a position with Christies Nursery in the small town of Fochabers. East of Inverness along the Moray Firth, Fochabers sits on the east bank of the River Spey. Ahh Speyside, the very name calls forth the nosings of the Highland single malt distilleries—Macallan, Aberlour, The Glenlivet . . . ahem, yes, well, excuse me. Apparently, George was not as gripped by any amount of indecision of where to seek employment as I would have been in his time and place. Of course, Speyside also holds the mystical whisperings and spiritually guided gardens of Findhorn. Perhaps Mr. Fraser, with heritage reaching far into the Highland mists, was imbued with skills seldom granted by Mother Nature to mere mortals. Such could perhaps explain the accomplishments that George Fraser's future would hold. A less fanciful and more believable scenario I expect is that one of the premier plant hunters of that time, **Robert Fortune** (1812–1880) was also a Scot, working at the Botanic Garden in Edinburgh. Plant material derived from Fortune's expeditions and publications of the same, I imagine, would have been the stuff of dreams to a young George Fraser.

Emigrating to Canada in the 1880s, George worked his way across the country to eventually land in Victoria in 1889. Here he shouldered the responsibility of project foreman under **John Blair**, the landscape architect commissioned by the city to build Beacon Hill Park. Completing his contract with Blair, George now looked for property to buy and begin the construction of his own nursery. Upon hearing of near-perfect growing conditions on the west coast of Vancouver Island, he purchased over 230 acres of Crown land in 1894 in what is now the town site of Ucluelet. George had followed the westward sun as far as he would go.

The primary focus of the Fraser Nursery in Ucluelet were plants in the Ericaceae family, heathers and rhododendrons (azaleas included), which are my main interest here. George Fraser corresponded and exchanged plant material around the world, most notably with **Joseph Gable** of the eastern United States and, I expect, through him to the likes of **James Barto** of the western States and **Edward Magor** of the United Kingdom. His close association with Gable is apparent in the parentage of a number of hybrid rhododendrons registered under Fraser's name. *Rhododendron maximum* of eastern North America and *R. macrophyllum* of the West Coast were used to produce hybrids, such as 'George Fraser', 'Maxie', and 'Albert Close'. The deciduous azalea 'John Blair' comes from the crossing of *R. occidentali* and *R. arborescence*.

My personal favorite hybrid of George Fraser's is his 'Mrs. Jamie Fraser' [*(R. arborescens* ssp. *arborescens* × *R. macrophyllum*) × *R. arborescens* ssp. *arborescens*]. As one would expect from its parentage, 'Mrs. Jamie Fraser' will develop into a large shrub. The rather long 5-inch leaves tend to be on the light side of green, not the deep dark green that most gardeners desire. It is the flower that catches my fancy—an openly funnel-shaped flower with wavy edges and a colour best described as a blackish-crimson holding a flare of black spots. Not being a botanist or a geneticist, I am at a loss to understand how such a dark-red flower could be produced by that set of parents. I realize this colour will not appeal to everyone, but I do hope consideration is given to at least one selection from the Fraser hybrids. Perhaps the smaller, more delicate 'Fraseri', a pink deciduous azalea, would hold more interest. I have also heard whispers of a 'Fraser's Pink', but I do not know whether this is a synonym of 'Fraseri', or one plant from what has been called "the Fraser Group." If a reader could clarify this, please do.

On page 226 of the Vol. 58, No. 4, 2004 issue of the ARS journal, an article by Bill Dale describes the discovery and progression of a second-generation Fraser hybrid. Four years after the death of George Fraser in 1944, a seedling was

found growing in his abandoned garden. "Rescued" and transported to Victoria, it still grows happily after 60 years. When rediscovered by Bill Dale in the 1990s, cuttings were obtained and rooted. Registered by Bill and listed in the registry of plant names (Autumn 2001 supplement of the ARS Journal) is the hybrid 'Fiona Christie', named for a descendant of the Fochabers Christies who visited Victoria in 2000. Rooted cuttings of this plant returned with their name sake to Scotland and to Fochabers. The touch of George Fraser had come full circle.

For 50 years, George Fraser worked his nursery in Ucluelet, yet we have only half a dozen or so rhododendron hybrids to list next to his name. Does this denote a lack of focus on George's part? I don't think so! I expect his work was of a greater volume than we know. A combination of time and lack of knowledge is the culprit here. The loss of plant material through attrition, the loss or lack of documentation of the what, when, and where of plant production leaves us with a sparse representation of a life's work. That, in a nutshell, is the reason that I push for the propagation of our "heritage plants." We just can't afford to lose them. Somewhere a forgotten Fraser hybrid is growing. Perhaps it will be recognized, perhaps not, but with a little diligence we will not lose the ones we have.

FALL GARDEN CHORES

Labour Day was the earliest it could possibly be this year, and with it the sense of fall also came early. With the feel and smell of fall in the air, there are a number of fall yard chores that gardeners should consider.

Perennials need to be cut back as they fade, and at the same time it's a good idea to scratch some super phosphate fertilizer into the soil around them. Around the garden remove leftover vegetation and put it in the compost pile. There is an excellent video presentation on building a compost system on one of the "How to Series" of DVDs from *Fine Gardening* now available through our NIRS library.

Cooler temperatures are perfect for planting or transplanting large trees or shrubs because roots settle in without getting parched. Try to complete all planting by mid-October. Fall is also an ideal time for pruning some of the trees or shrubs in your yard. If wind or heavy snow is a concern, wrap small trees and shrubs in several layers of burlap or shelter them under a simple plywood lean-to.

For those with a drip irrigation system now is the time to clear the water from the lines so it doesn't freeze and damage the pipes. If an air compressor is available, a hose attachment allows for a fast way to ensure all water is forced out of the lines. A simple way to drain your garden hose is to lay it on a downward slope and pull it slowly toward you, coiling it as you do so. Once they're coiled, tie and store them in your garage or shed.

Speaking of storing for the winter be sure to clean, sharpen and lubricate garden tools before putting them away, so that they are ready for use when next spring rolls around.

Until Next Month



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Starting this year, a new information and consent form will need to be completed by **ALL** new or renewing NIRS members. For your convenience, a copy of the form is included in this newsletter or available at the membership desk at the next meeting. Please complete and return the form with your dues payment as soon as possible to:



NIRS
Attn: Brian Staton
P.O. Box 3183
Courtenay, BC
V9N 5N4

Once again, NIRS membership brings discounts at many garden nurseries and retailers. Those businesses providing discounts for 2009 include:

- Arrowsmith Nursery in Qualicum*
- Art Knapp's Plantland, Courtenay*
- Bees and Blooms Nursery in 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*
- Paradise Plants, Courtenay*
- River Meadows Farms, Courtenay*
- Serendipity, Campbell River (garden ornaments only)*
- Shar-Kare - both Courtenay and Campbell River*
- The Plant Collector Nursery and Gardens*



If any member wishes to have other business considered for discounts to our members please bring them to the attention of our Ways & Means chair, Dave Godfrey. Discounts can help save the price of your membership.

North Island Rhododendron Society Membership

Please Check: Renewal _____ New Member _____ PAID _____

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____

Spouse/Partner's Name (Optional): _____

Phone: _____ Email address: _____

Address: _____ Town: _____ Postal Code: _____

Mailing Address (if different from above): _____

The **North Island Rhododendron Society** and parent organization the **American Rhododendron Society** collects your name, address, telephone number, email and other pertinent information for the purpose of notifying you of club events, sending you a newsletter, and providing a roster of names and contact information to paid members of our Society. We do not sell, disseminate or otherwise provide your name and information to others. By signing this membership form and paying your membership dues you agree to the above use of your personal information.

By signing this membership form you agree to hold the **North Island Rhododendron Society**, its executive and members harmless for any injury or other grievance arising out of the normal course of social events held by or organized for members of this club.

DATE SIGNED: _____ SIGNATURE: _____

North Island Rhododendron Society Membership

Please Check: Renewal _____ New Member _____ PAID _____

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____

Spouse/Partner's Name (Optional): _____

Phone: _____ Email address: _____

Address: _____ Town: _____ Postal Code: _____

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DATE SIGNED: _____ SIGNATURE: _____