



*North Island
Rhododendron
Society
2009/2010 Executive*

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Vice-President

Dave Crucq 941-1957

Past President:

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Pauline Thompson..... 339-3423

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Director: Ways & Means

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Brian Staton 337-5228

Director: Publicity

Chris Aldred..... 335-3221

Director: Newsletter/Library

Noni Godfrey 335-0717

..... nonigod@shaw.ca

Social Committee:

Marleen Crucq..... 941-1957

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

6th October 2009-Executive Meeting 2:00 pm

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

13th October 2009-Regular Monthly Meeting



"Rhodo Trekking in Nepal"

~Presented by Tom Carter~

Guest speaker for our October meeting will be Tom Carter of Nanaimo. Tom and his partner, Marci Lyon, are local organizers of Himalayan treks. His slide program "Rhodo Trekking in Nepal" will recap some of the many annual treks he has organized since 1998. Tom has said: "These treks are precious opportunities to celebrate the amazing cultural diversity of our planet. Walking through Rhodo forests in full bloom with snow peaks towering above is an unforgettable experience. It overwhelms me every time, and makes me eager to share this beauty with others."

A HAPPY HALLOWEEN





President's View

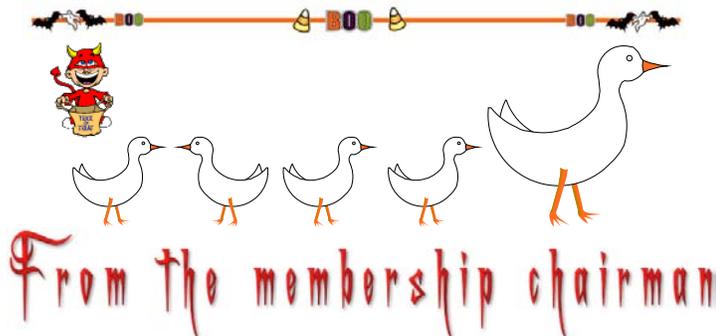
...by Diana Scott

It's hard to believe that after our hot, dry summer FALL is actually here. The gardener in me was delighted with the short spell of dreary rainy days we had mid-September. That cool drizzle greened up the yard and gave our garden a welcome bit of relief. The days now are definitely shorter and the mornings are quite chilly, but there have been some wonderful sunny days to be out in the garden. Who hasn't been out dividing plants, moving things around and generally planning for next year?!

Part of our fall walkabout is checking on potential for next spring. Despite the heat and marginal water resources, we did try to give the Rhodos priority this summer and they have budded up nicely. With water issues and very little shade, we're always struggling with ways of getting adequate nutrition to the plants, so I spent a little time on our ARS website, revisiting their resources.

Under 'Plant Care' there are a number of articles that have appeared in the Journal over the years. Although I was hoping for a quick route to Terry Richmond's organic fertilizer recipe, I ended up spending quite a bit of time looking at a number of their articles. 'Tips for Beginners' provide a wealth of information and a good review for Rhodo lovers! I did find Terry's recipe in an article entitled 'Fertilizing Rhododendrons the Organic Way', and also spent some time reading 'Good Soil Promises Rhodie Success' compiled from our Greer's Guide, as well as 'Rhododendron Nutrition Notions' by Ted Van Veen from Portland, Oregon. I'd highly recommend taking a browse through some of the resources to be found on the website (<http://www.rhododendron.org/>) Remember, you can always find this link through our website (www.nirs.rhodos.ca) under the "links" page.

See you at the meeting!D



From the membership chairman

NIRS dues for 2009 are now due. To ensure continued membership, and to receive your January (Winter) issue of the ARS Journal, please make your payment of \$35 for a

regular membership (single or couple) to our membership chair, Brian Staton. A new membership card will be issued upon payment.

Again this year, an information and consent form needs to be completed by all new or renewing NIRS members. For your convenience, a copy of the form was included in last month's newsletter and will be available at the membership desk at the next meeting. Please complete and return the form with your dues payment as soon as possible.

Once again, NIRS membership brings discounts at many garden nurseries and retailers. Those businesses continuing to provide discounts for 2010 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 (ornaments only)
- Shar-Kare - both Courtenay and Campbell River
- The Plant Collector Nursery and Gardens

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



Member's Notes

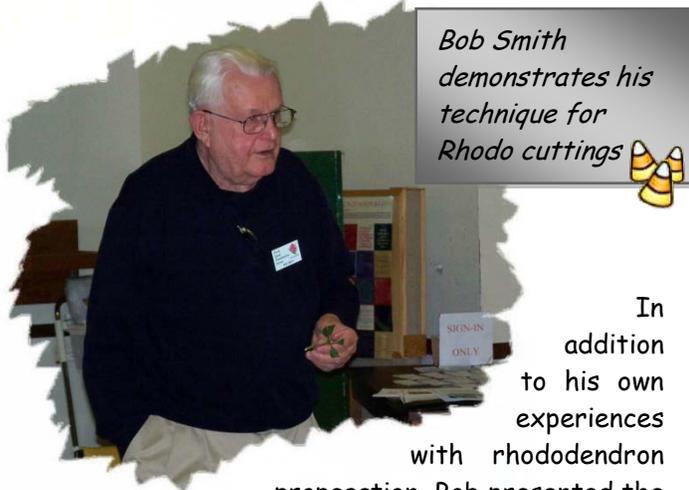
...by Dave Godfrey

Our meeting on September 08th was a great start to a new season of informative, educational and entertaining programs.

Following the regular business portion of the meeting, 37 members and 8 guests were educated by Bob Smith with an explanation of his "File Maker Pro" database. The program allows Bob to catalogue all the information on his rhododendrons and their location in his many garden beds. As Bob explained, "once you collect more than a few rhododendrons you need to know where they can be found on your property."

Bob followed this up after the social break with the

evening's program, a demonstration and explanation of his method for propagating rhododendron cuttings. Slides helped show his set up and success with many young potted plants. One key factor with any work space is sterility. As Bob suggested, using an anti-fungal solution (Serenade) to clean the work areas and dipping the leaves in a 1% solution of Clorox bleach helps reduce any possible contamination.



Bob Smith demonstrates his technique for Rhodo cuttings



In addition to his own experiences with rhododendron propagation, Bob presented the

video "A Passion for Rhododendrons" produced by the Mendocino (California) Chapter of the ARS. This video, which gives various explanations on methods of propagating, also includes tours of Mendocino members' gardens. This combination makes the video both educational and entertaining. Bob was kind enough to donate a copy of the video to our club's library. It is available for sign-out as are several other educational DVDs.

During the meeting, guest Helen Stewart was the lucky winner of our raffle for the rhododendron "Apricot Fantasy", while guest Cecile Lowe won the door prize "GrassScapes", a book on various grasses. Congratulation ladies, and thanks to all who support our raffles.

Eleven members of our chapter made up the largest contingent in attendance at the ARS Western Regional Conference in Federal Way, (Tacoma) Washington on the weekend of Sept. 18th to 20th. It was an opportunity for our members to meet members of many other chapters, and to learn more about the genus Rhododendron. In addition, it provided an opportunity to tour the Rhododendron Species Foundation's Botanical Garden which was only minutes down the road from the conference hotel. Details of the conference can be found in a separate article in this issue.

Be sure to attend our October meeting to take in a great presentation from Tom Carter of Nanaimo, who has made many trips to the Far East in search of rhododendrons and other plants. Tom's audio and video presentation "Rhodo Trekking in Nepal" promises to be an entertaining one.

With the fall season upon us, it is a great time to think about a contribution to our revenue table. We still have a small supply of half gallon pots available if members wish to use them for splitting up plants to share with the rest of us. Any excess fruit or vegetable donations are also welcome. Don't forget to bring along your cheque book to keep your membership dues up to date for 2010.

Vancouver Island Hybridizers

The Weesjes/ Larson Connection

by Alan Campbell, Cowichan Valley Chapter

Part II



Being the astute readers that you are, the third relationship that I alluded to should be apparent by now. Few people can claim to be employed at an occupation which is also their source of enjoyment and their hobby. Nick and Evelyn were two of these, and while working alongside it was natural that their working relationship should evolve beyond the platonic. The Weesjes, upon reaching retirement age and leaving the employ of UBC in 1981, now directed their energies to their own dreams. Other than the four years between 1938 and 1942 when, as a young girl, she lived in Scotland, Evelyn had grown up in Victoria, her birthplace. So acquiring land and moving to the north end of the Saanich Peninsula was not an unexpected relocation. Here were 4 hectares of raw land, a diamond in the rough, ready to be shaped and polished to reflect a dream.

Towner Crest began in 1982, and it took several years for the planting beds to take shape. The results of 20 years of collecting the best to come out of British gardens while working at UBC quickly filled beds with mature plants, while the assessing of hybrid seedlings filled even more. The main feature of the cultivated 3 hectares is rhododendrons in the natural setting of native conifers, but hardly the only feature. [Please keep in mind while you read that this new undertaking was being done by a retired couple.]

Other than the driveway and the house site, all work was done by hand. A few large-leaf maples and any dead or diseased conifers were removed; the remaining native flora was retained. This native flora included Douglas-fir, grand fir, big leaf maple, red alder, cascara, arbutus, and yew, as well as Oregon grape and sword fern for ground cover.

Nick also dug, by hand, a drainage ditch 60 cm deep by 30 cm wide to reroute excess water around the 4 hectares or toward a small creek running through the property, in effect making the property as a whole a raised bed. A maze-like watering system runs through the garden, giving each plant its own drip feed or micro spray, not just to the rhodos, but also to the hundreds of other trees, shrubs, hostas, and candelabra primulas that make up the more than 3000 plants currently planted out.

It will have become apparent to you that in designating Vancouver Island hybrids I am being liberal, geographically speaking. The hybrid 'Malahat' ('Gill's Triumph' x *R. strigillosum*) I can't include. This is a Larson hybrid produced and grown in his nursery at Tacoma; he just happened to name the plant after one of his favourite drives. The same goes for 'Qualicum's Pride' ('Anna' x 'Cotton Candy'), a hybrid produced and raised by Lloyd Newcomb at his garden in Snohomish, Washington State. The plant was chosen from his garden and named by the Mount Arrowsmith Chapter to be its marquee plant at the ARS Western Regional Conference held in 1995 at the mid-Island community.



'R. Dave Dougan'
Evelyn Weesjes' nice,
well-behaved yak hybrid

But when a stalwart of the local rhodo community, Dave Dougan, raves about an unnamed hybrid that the Weesjes have grown from Larson seed and Evelyn names that hybrid 'Dave Dougan' (*R. yakushmanum* x (*R. calophyllum* x 'Grisette')) registered 1993, that plant I just have to include. Evelyn says she can see very little of *calophyllum* in it, but that it is a nice, well-behaved yak hybrid. Evelyn honoured another well-known Island rhododendron grower and historian

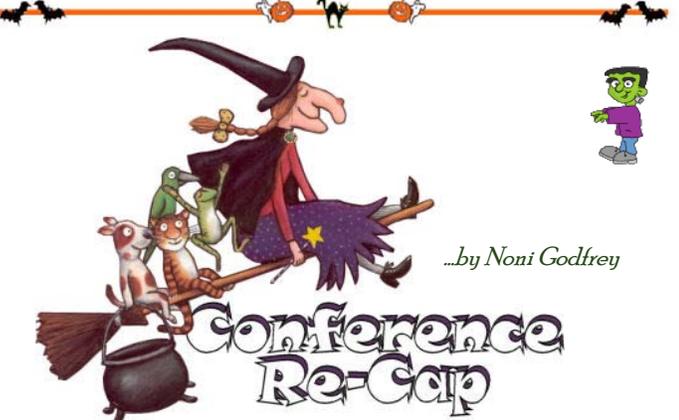
by naming another of her Larson seedlings 'Bill Dale' (*R. yakushmanum* x *R. strigillosum*) (1993). A sister seedling, 'Elze Weesjes', named for one of Nick's sisters, was registered in 1996. Two more of his sisters had rhodos named for them in 1994, appropriately enough, sister seedlings of *R. yakushmanum* x 'Mrs. Horace Fogg'. A well-known plantsman and member of the Victoria Chapter lent his name to yet another Larson seedling, 'John Trelawny' ('Jutland' x 'Fusilier') (1994). The next hybrid evaluated and found worthy of registering in 1995 was 'Gretha Rijksen' ('Kluis Sensation' x 'Fusilier'), once again named for a sister of Nick's. After much prodding from Evelyn, an excellent red *strigillosum* hybrid was named and registered by Ken and Dot Gibson of Tofino as 'Clayoquot Warrior' ('Essex Scarlet' x *R. strigillosum*) (1995). The latest Larson seedling from the Weesjes garden to be evaluated and chosen is 'Lies Weesjes' (*R. yakushmanum* x 'Belvedere') (1998), named for yet another of Nick's sisters. Of all the Larson/Weesjes hybrids listed above, 'Clayoquot Warrior' is perhaps the one most available. The others have not been propagated as much, but I'm working on that.

Building a new garden from scratch, growing on and evaluating 1000+ seedlings of Hjalmar Larson's crossings must have kept Evelyn busy, but she did find the time to demonstrate her own aesthetic nature. Her keen eye and artistry are evident in the hybrids 'Nick's Choice' and 'Towner Crest', sister seedlings of 'Van Nes Sensation' x 'Mrs. Horace Fogg', both registered in 1995. Both of these plants growing in our garden have set buds and will bloom next spring. Herman Vaartnou of Victoria, of whom I will speak more next month, was honoured by Evelyn with the naming of her hybrid 'Dr. Herman Vaartnou' (*R. macabeanum* x unnamed *R. lacteum* hybrid) (1996). Originally the lacteum was received by Evelyn in one of the seed shipments from Britain as species seed, but as the seed grew and matured it just didn't seem to key out to the true species. She expects the seed was the product of naturally-occurring hybridization, which is why she calls the cross as being from "an unnamed *R. lacteum* hybrid". I have yet to get cutting material of 'Dr. Herman Vaartnou', but I have managed to obtain cuttings of the lacteum hybrid as it is also a fine plant. Evelyn has intimated that there are many more unnamed hybrids planted out amongst her gems. That teaser intrigues me to no end!

The locals as well as informed others seem to use the

Weesjes garden as a semi private park, coming and going as whimsy takes them, and Nick and Evelyn are more than generous in sharing their Eden with those who take pleasure from it. In conversation with Evelyn, she asked that I mention herself and Nick less and their garden more, but the garden is them. The garden expresses their expectations, knowledge, drive and commitment much more than any conversation would draw from this quiet and self-effacing couple.

What the garden cannot tell you is that, in 1970, the ARS proudly awarded Evelyn the Gold medal, its highest award, for her work on the genus rhododendron and in 1990 the Victoria Chapter was very pleased to present her with the Bronze Medal for her work at the Chapter level. Towner Crest, the garden overlooking Towner Bay from the crest of the hill, is a jewel in the crown of gardens encircling the Garden City of Victoria.



Attendees to the 2009 Western Region Fall Conference in Federal Way (Tacoma) Washington enjoyed an opportunity to meet other rhododendron enthusiasts. Although this year's conference had lower registrants (95) than previous years, those who did attend were pleased with the presentations and organization of the event.

With eleven members registered, the North Island chapter was the largest group attending. David Moore from Powell River attended along with Harry & Gwen Wright, Brian & Barb Staton, Paul & Lynn Wurz, Dave & Noni Godfrey, and Bob & Adela Smith. Others attending came from as far away as New York and California.

Learning sessions on Friday and Saturday mornings and afternoons were too many and too varied to mention all of them. A few of my favourites were: "Rhododendrons in Alaska, Canada and the Werstern North American Species Project" with Clarice Clark; "Micropropagation at Briggs Nursey" with Lynne Caton; "Soil Improvement/Compost Tea" with Tad Hussey; "Nurseryman's Nirvana" with Dennis Bottemiller; and "Landscaping with Rhododendrons" with Ed Hume.

Guest speakers for the conference dinners included world renowned Steve Hootman from the Rhododendron Species Foundation, speaking Friday evening on "Collecting Rhododendrons in Sikkim". Saturday's dinner speaker was Richie Steffen curator of the Betty Miller Foundation. His very entertaining and knowledgeable presentation on "Istanbul to Patagonia: Searching for Rhododendrons and Other Garden Treasures" kept the audience enthralled.



The conference afforded members an opportunity to tour the Rhododendron Species Foundation's Botanical Garden, situated on 22 acres of property leased from the Weyerhaeuser family at no cost. The Garden is home to one of the largest collections of species rhododendrons and azaleas in the world. At the center of the Garden is a lovely gazebo and observation deck with a wonderful overview of most of the areas we visited. Within the Garden are four areas of special interest—the Alpine Garden, the Pond Garden, the Big-Leaf Garden and the Azalea Collection. The most recent addition to the Garden is a very large greenhouse type conservatory. The conservatory will house the Vireyas, orchids and other tender, rare and unusual plants. The newest special interest garden area is a Fern Stumpery, supported and built by the Washington Hardy Fern Society. The Stumpery garden was officially opened on Sunday, Sept. 20th



Steve Hootman and the RSF very kindly offered to transport any plant purchases our members made at their garden. Their annual species delivery to Canada is at the end of October and our purchases will travel along with them. As an added bonus to all of us, they also agreed to transport our small "table favours" which happen to be small potted rhododendrons, and other plants purchased at the convention plant sale. So Steve, if you are reading this.... special thanks from all of us!

The Nanaimo ARS chapter is preparing to host the Western Region Fall Conference in 2012, and this should be well attended by most members from Vancouver Island. Next year's conference will be held October 8-10th in Florence, Oregon, and will afford attendees an opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the Oregon coast. Make plans now to be there.

Web sites that may be of interest from the conference:

Rhododendron sighting and mapping for the Western North American Rhododendron Species project. www.wnarsp.org
Compost tea puts the "good" biology back onto the plants and into our soil! www.simplici-tea.com
Do my plants need fungi? www.mycorrhizae.com

Tidbits:

Milner Gardens Fall Colour Days

2179 West Island Highway, Qualicum Beach



10:00 am – 3:00 pm Oct 24th and 25th

Bring the children for a Jack O'Lantern search. Admission by donation, all proceeds to Milner's 'Shoots with Roots' children's education program. Enjoy soup and scones in the tearoom from 11 am to 2:30 pm.

FMI 250-752-6153 or www.milnergardens.org



The *Victoria Hardy Plant Group* is pleased to present John Massey of the famous ASHWOOD NURSERY in the UK at their 2009 Elizabeth England Memorial Lecture

TOPIC: "Seasons in the Garden at Ashwood Nurseries"

DATE: Tuesday November 17, 2009--TIME: 7 PM

VENUE: Salvation Army Citadel 4030 Douglas St, just north of Mackenzie Avenue, Victoria, BC

FMI: call Margaret Argue at 250-472-0475



happy halloween



...by Dave Godfrey

As always, there have been many visitors from far and wide to our chapters web site. I'm pleased, and proud, to say that our web site continues to be touted within District 1 as the one to emulate.

In an attempt to keep the site current, I have included a 'link' on the web site's "Links" page to the "Ultimate Rhododendron Conference" which will be held at UBC in April 2010. As it states in the detailed information on this poster, "the Ultimate Rhododendron Conference is ultimately concerned with relevant learning about rhododendrons and rhododendron gardening." It provides two levels of classes, one for the novice and one for the experienced members. If you might be interested in attending you will need to register soon, as there are only 100 spaces available and there is a registration discount until the end of 2009.

Visitors to our site may also notice a slight change to the Photo Gallery's slide show program. This change gives better performance, especially for those using the Mozilla web browser. Archived albums are now available, including a couple from 2006. So be sure to check them out.

We continue to receive some rhododendron related email inquiries through our web site. These emails are forwarded to members knowledgeable and experienced enough to respond.





PUMPKIN TIME

By Nadine Boudreau

Pumpkin is the common name for the genus Cucurbita of the family Cucurbitaceae. The popular cultivars of the species C.pepo, C.maxima and C. moschata are all referred to as pumpkins. The common name originated from the Greek name 'pepon' meaning large melon. The French version was 'pompon', the British changed the name to 'pumpion' and when the early settlers came to North America it became pumpkin.



The origin of the pumpkin is believed to have been in Mexico, evidence dates back to 7000 and 5500 B.C. Native Americans use of pumpkins included drying strips of pumpkins to weave mats. They ate the pumpkin pulp and seeds. They would roast pieces of pumpkin on the open fire. The early settlers enjoyed the roasted pumpkins also, and they soon started to take a whole pumpkin, sliced off the top, removed the seeds, filled the cavity with milk, honey and spices and then roasted the pumpkin in the hot ashes. This was the origin of the pumpkin pie. Pumpkin was served at the pilgrim's first Thanksgiving celebration and has become a yearly holiday tradition since.

To grow pumpkins successfully you just need to follow a few guide lines. The first is that they need lots of room. The large varieties need 50 to 100 square feet of garden space! Thankfully there are small varieties and bush varieties, they still need a fair amount of room. Pumpkins like a well drained soil that has been amended with lots of compost. Soil should be hilled, for large pumpkins the hills need to be 5-6 feet apart, with rows 10-15 feet apart. Plant 4-5 seeds per hill, 1 inch deep when soil has warmed. Thin to 2 plants when true leaves emerge. Miniature and bush varieties hills should have about 3 feet between hills and 5 feet between rows. Plant 3 seeds per hill, thinning to one plant when true leaves emerge.



Keep hills weed free and watered, pumpkins like lots of fertilizer and will perform better with a weekly feed of liquid fertilizer like Miracle Grow.

Pumpkins produce both male and female flowers (monoecious). The male flower is the first to bloom. You can identify the female flower easily, the ovary is at the base of

the petals, is like a mini pumpkin. These flowers have a very short life span, some only last one day. Bees are extremely important for pollination of these flowers. If you do not notice many bees you could try to pollinate them yourself. Pick the male flower, late in the day is best, when the pollen is mature and comes off the stamen readily, and then rub it on the open female flower. Bob Smith's presentation last month gave us a great demonstration of this with Rhodos.

Now you have baby pumpkins growing and the vine will continue to grow. You need to prune some of the vine in order to enhance the fruit. On the large vines, leave about 10 feet of vine past the fruit. Side shoots should also be pruned to about 10 feet; any shoots that grow from these cuts should be trimmed.



Pumpkins can be harvested when they become the deep solid color of its variety, and the rind is hard. This is usually late September or early October before frosts. Cut the pumpkins from the vine leaving 3-4 inch stem, cut rather than snap the stem as if the stems breaks off the pumpkin will not keep well. Store in a cool, dry building until ready to carve, harvest seeds and make a pie from the pulp



Garden Chatter, Natter and Notes

Do you use the terms "fall" and "autumn" interchangeably? If so, you are just like most other people in America who agree that the two words are meant to mean the same thing (the season that comes after summer and before winter). But there is another school of thinking which says that autumn and fall are two subtly different seasons. How many people agree with this depends on where in the country you are living. In some places, the seasonal shift between the two is too subtle to warrant a difference in the name. But in other places, such as Eastern Canada, there is an obvious **difference between autumn and fall** and people will tell you that this means there are five seasons instead of four.

Basically, autumn is the beginning of this season. It is the weeks during which the change happens after summer, when you can feel that crispness creep into the air and you

know that the summer is over. It is the time of year where, in many places, the colors of the leaves are bright and eye-catching. And autumn is associated with excitement about this change. In contrast, fall is when the leaves have fallen off of the trees and are down on the ground. The air is cold all of the time so that the crispness isn't so much refreshing as just standard. And instead of excitement about the season, most people are anticipating the winter holidays.

Now gardeners know the season as...BULBS... time to get all those bulbs in the ground for a colorful showing in the spring. Following is a Readers Digest condensed version, so to speak, on understanding the ups and downs and ins and outs of bulbs. So let's call this "Bulbs for beginners".



1. Bulbs planted in the Fall bloom in the Spring.
2. Bulbs planted in the Spring bloom in the Summer.
3. Generally your local stores will only sell what you should be planting during a period of time when it is safe to sell. So, if you find it in the store, it's okay to buy and plant now.
4. Planting bulbs could not be easier. They are resilient. Even if you do not follow directions, they still thrive.
5. The basic of planting is to learn which way is up. Most bulbs will have one side with a point and one side that is concave. Place it in the ground pointing up. If you cannot tell which side is pointy, look for roots and put them down.
6. In general, plant the bulb twice as deep as its size. Therefore, very small bulbs can be just pushed into the ground with your finger. Larger bulbs are planted deeper. Just make a hole, drop it in, and cover it up. It's that easy. Yes, they have instructions for how far apart they should be, but I have found that doesn't really matter. Scatter them about or clump them together for a real "wow."



7. In general, God waters bulbs. Plant them and leave them. They will do their thing.



8. The biggest and hardest knowledge needed in growing bulbs is that you must leave the foliage after they bloom. Do NOT cut it back until it dies down. Why? It is during this time that the bulbs draw into themselves from the foliage the nutrients necessary to make beautiful blooms the next year. It is hard to let them be as the foliage can be so ugly while dying back



9. Don't forget to enjoy them while they last!

RECIPE REQUESTS



Chocolate Zucchini Cake

(Marleen Crucq)

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2 1/2 cups flour | 1/2 C cocoa |
| 2 1/2 tsp BP | 1 1/2 tsp BS |
| 1 tsp salt | 1 C chop walnuts |
| 3/4 C oil | 1 C sugar |
| 1 C brown sugar | 3 eggs |
| 2 tsp vanilla | 1 tsp grated orange rind (opt.) |
| 2 C grated zucchini | 1/2 cup milk |



Grease and flour tube or Bundt pan. Blend dry ingredients and nuts. In another bowl beat sugars and oil. Beat in eggs one at time, add orange rind (opt), vanilla and zucchini. Add dry ingredients to creamed ingredients, alternating with the milk. Pour batter into pan. Bake at 350° F for 1 hour.

When cake is cool, ice if desired with a boiled chocolate icing or plain white icing drizzle... or with a decadent Cream Cheese frosting.

Cocoa Cream Cheese Frosting:

- 1 1/2 pounds soft cream cheese
- 1 lb. confectioner's sugar
- 2/3 c. cocoa powder



Use an electric mixer fitted with a whip to mix thoroughly.



Until Next Month
Noni