



The Rhodoteller

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November

North Island Rhododendron Society 2010/2011 Executive

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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 November 2010-Executive Meeting 2:00 pm

The executive meeting will be held at the home of Diana and John Scott, 6432 Eagles Drive Courtenay. Drive down Coleman Road, turn left onto Left Road, and Eagles is close to the end. Left on Eagles, their house is on the right hand side and has a push button gate.

9th November 2010-Regular Monthly Meeting

Ron Knight "Dazzling Dwarf Rhododendrons"

Ron Knight is a retired biology teacher and school administrator. He is a confirmed rhodoholic, past-president of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society, and a past-director for the American Rhododendron Society's BC Division. Ron is a busy guest speaker at garden clubs on the Sunshine Coast, Vancouver Island, and the Mainland.

Over the last fifteen years, Ron and his wife Carla have created Caron Gardens at Pender Harbour on the Sunshine Coast. In this one-acre lakeside garden, they display over 500 different rhododendrons along with thousands of companion plants, host garden club tours, sell rhodos, and teach a variety of gardening courses. Ron considers the garden to be "almost full" and is concentrating now on finding spectacular dwarf and low growing rhododendrons

to fill the remaining spaces. Caron Gardens has been featured in the March 2009 edition of Gardens West magazine and on television. More information can be found at the garden's website: www3.telus.net/rcknight

Many of you will recall Ron gave our chapter a presentation in March on digital photography in the garden. For our November meeting, Ron has put his photography skills to work and created an educational presentation entitled, "Dazzling Dwarfs". It will offer suggestions on garden design and illustrate how dwarf rhododendrons can provide an ideal solution for gardeners who are looking for gorgeous plants to put in containers, fill small garden spaces, or grow in sunny rock gardens. He will also be demonstrating how to plant dwarf rhododendrons in containers. Ron will have a selection of dwarf species and hybrid rhododendrons for sale at the meeting. So be sure to not miss this exciting program at our November meeting.



The rock garden below Caron Gardens' gazebo contains several dwarf rhododendrons including *R. lepidostylum*, *R. nakaharae*, Frosted orange, Wren, Pink Drift, and Patty Bee.

President's View

...by Diana Scott

November brings all that lovely rain I wished for in July, and if the winds aren't too strong, the beautiful fall colours that can't help but lift the spirits.

As with perennials that bloom in the garden, the fall colours seem to come in waves. The brilliance of the Boston Ivy came and went, the euonymus alata (Burning Bush) coloured up early and is still making its presence known, and the maples have been changing in a series, some of which have now lost their leaves entirely, while others are just coming into their glory. On those days when the sun is shining, the Valley is nothing short of jaw-droppingly beautiful!

I'm always intrigued by how those leaf colours happen. From past research I know that changes in the length of daylight and temperature in the fall cause the leaves to stop their food-making process. The chlorophyll that they've been producing all summer breaks down, the green colour disappears, and the yellow and orange colours which have been masked by the green become visible. Other chemical changes may be taking place at the same time -- which form the reds, purples and brilliant oranges that wow us each fall. It's said that warm wet springs, favourable summer weather, and warm sunny fall days with cool nights produce the most brilliant autumn colours. We have certainly been enjoying the results!

Our speaker this month is Ron Knight who will be talking with us about those Dazzling Dwarf Rhodos. I know I am interested in knowing more about some of his favourites, and hope to purchase a couple at the meeting!

It seems a bit early, but our next planning will be for the Christmas Party. Watch for details in the next newsletter, and mark December 14th on your calendars!

Member's Notes

...by Dave Godfrey

At the October meeting, members of our chapter were invited by **Paul Wurz** to partake in a propagation workshop on Saturday, Oct. 16th. To read about the adventures of the day, see an article and photos provided by **Pauline Thompson** in this newsletter.

There was also a propagation workshop held by NIRS associate member **Ken Webb** and the Victoria chapter propagation group on Saturday, Oct. 30th. Although there weren't any NIRS members in attendance, **Dave McIntosh** of Ucluelet's George Fraser Project attended, as there is an interest in propagating some of the original Fraser hybrids. We look forward to hearing more on this project as it transpires.

At our meeting on Oct. 12th, we welcomed a new member to our chapter, **Ron Cameron** of Merville. Once again, Membership Chair **Brian Staton** reminds everyone that it is important that members renew before mid-November in order to ensure delivery of the winter issue of the ARS 'Journal' magazine in January. So if you haven't already done so, please be sure to renew your membership with Brian at our November meeting, or mail your \$35 cheque payable to N.I.R.S. to our club's mailing address found at the bottom of the first page of the newsletter.

Guest speaker **Garth Wedemire** accompanied by his bride, Sue, from the Fraser South chapter in the Fraser Valley gave a colourful presentation "To MARS and Back Again." It highlighted the gardens of some members of the Mount Arrowsmith (MARS) chapter. Members of the PARS (Peace Arch) chapter made the two day bus trip to the Parksville and Tofino areas in the spring of last year, and Garth captured the beauty of the many gardens they visited. Garth closed his presentation with a special pictorial display, accompanied by the music "Perhaps Love", as a tribute to his late wife, Avril, and dear friend Dot Gibson.



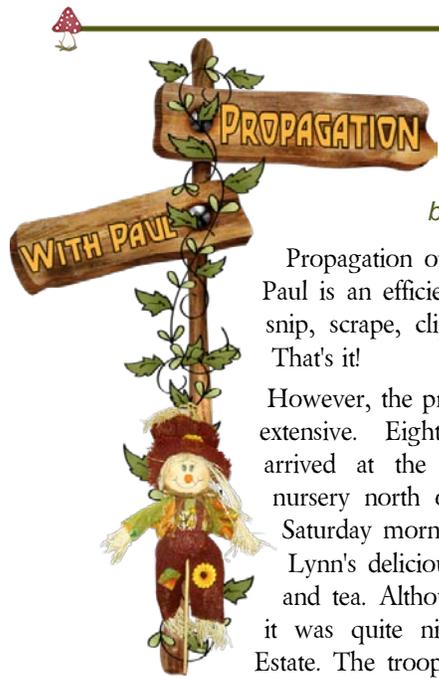
Garth and Sue Wedemire

Congratulations to the many prize winners of the evening. **Adrienne McNabb** won the rhododendron raffle prize 'Rim Fire' provided by **Paul Wurz**. The door prize of *R. impeditum* donated by **Brian Staton** was won by **Jill Gould**. As a second door prize, our Ways & Means member **Nadine Boudreau** won a fancy sedum planter donated by **Noni Godfrey**. As always, the goodies were delicious, with thanks to all those members who pitched in and brought the treats.

As the fall season is drawing to a close, don't forget to bring along some of the bounty from your gardens to share with other members by making a donation to our Revenue table. **Christine Aldred** appreciates any and all donations to her fund raising efforts.

For those who have one, don't forget to wear your name tag to the meetings. You never know when that extra raffle ticket might be the lucky winner! See you at the meeting.



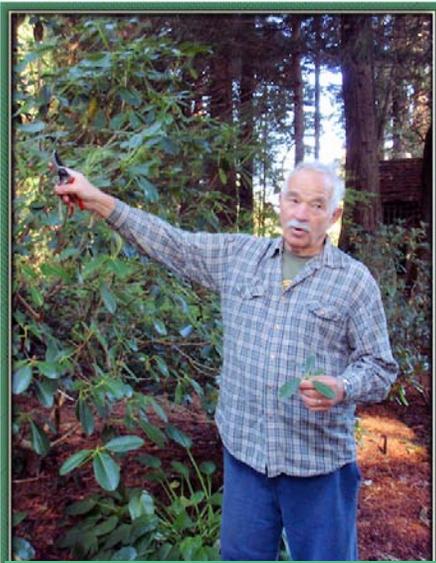


Propagation of Cuttings with Paul Wurz

by Pauline Thompson

Propagation of rhodos by cuttings with Paul is an efficient, almost speedy affair - snip, scrape, clip, dip, dibble and plant. That's it!

However, the pre-propagation planning is extensive. Eight enthusiastic rhodofiles arrived at the beautiful Hidden Acres nursery north of Campbell River, on a Saturday morning to be welcomed with Lynn's delicious muffins and hot coffee and tea. Although the sun was shining, it was quite nippy at the shady Wurz Estate. The troops were eager to head off to the propagation lab but little did they know what was in store for them.....



Paul pointing out another 'favourite'

With a smile on his face, Paul stepped into his garden and said "let's get going". For the next two hours we followed Paul as he moved from one favourite rhodo to the next drawing our attention to the characteristics of each plant that makes them a good or not so good candidate for selection for propagation. Aside

from being dazzled by his encyclopedic knowledge of the name and source of each of his 'favourites' (essentially all of them!) we started to realize that the selection of the right scion is the most important step. A scion is the bit that is clipped off the donor plant and used for propagation.

First of all, is it the right plant? What are you looking for? Fragrant? A particular colour? Dwarf or compact, species or hybrid, small, medium or large leaf, early or late flowering, shade or sun? These are questions to consider whether you are propagating 1500 or five rhodos. Choose a rhodo that you want or that your customers will want. The choice you make may impact the time of year that you start your cuttings. You must choose new growth, but not too new, and not so old that it is becoming woody, you will need to examine the plant

to determine the best time for selection. Some plants mature rapidly and new growth becomes woody quickly while others are very soft for a much longer period. Basically, you shouldn't just dash off into the garden and snip a bit off and plant it.

Now that you have made your selection, is the plant healthy? Look for mildew, (yellowish green blotches on the leaves), weevils (little nibbles around the edges of the leaves), chlorosis (yellowness in the leaves when they should be dark green). Always select a plant that is healthy.

Which bit do you cut off? With your scissors in hand consider the following: do not choose a stem with a flower bud on the end. Look for new growth that is flexible without being soft and about four inches long. Do not cut it off too short as you will still need to do a little trimming before planting. For vigorous growing rhodos that produce six to eight inches or more of new growth that is as thick as your finger, look closely for that later, less vigorous stem that is slimmer than a pencil. Our sharp-eyed troops were quick to spot these on some of the large vigorous fragrant *loderii* they were imagining getting their hands on. These have a better chance of rooting than the larger, thicker stems. The dwarf rhodos will have quite small new growth stems so one way to get the length you want is to feed it up in June to encourage a little growth spurt that will produce the right size of scion for cuttings. Another way to get cuttings of the right size is to pinch the buds off in July to initiate new growth which should be the right size by fall. Rhodos with yellow flowers tend to harden off their new growth early so don't wait until the fall if this is your choice. If possible choose a stem that has little nodes along it. There is no evidence that this actually makes a difference but it appears to be a good omen. Paul has been successful with stems with and without nodes.



Rosevallon

So as our toes froze and our tummies rumbled, Paul snipped off a couple of scions and we headed to the propagation greenhouse. We were all struggling with which plant we would have selected. Paul had pointed out a number of plants that were very difficult to root, especially some of the larger species plants but we had

also succumbed to his infectious excitement about each favourite plant as we rambled through the extensive grounds.

The propagation shed is specially fitted out to keep the new cuttings warm on the bottom and cool and humid on top. The planted cuttings are arranged in labeled flats on tables. One has an old water bed mattress as a base and the other three have heating wires covered with pea gravel. These bases ensure that the cuttings get heat from the bottom over the next six months while the roots establish. Overhead there is a sprinkler system that mists the little plants several times a day to maintain 100 per cent humidity. The plants also enjoy around the clock illumination.

Paul starts by rinsing the cuttings in a bleach solution to sterilize them then he **snips** the end of the scion at a 45 degree angle and reduces the length to about three inches. He uses scissors because if the stem is too old the scissors won't cut it. Avoiding any nodes that may be on the stem, gently **scrape** the outer layer off the stem from the top end of the cut 3/4 of an inch up the stem. **Clip** the leaves back leaving about an inch and a half still attached to the stem. This is better for spacing and there is less evaporation. Choose your favourite rooting solution; #3 *Stim Root* rooting powder or *Roots* gel. Some propagators use both - double dipping. **Dip** the cutting and then insert the cutting in the hole made with your **dibble** to **plant** it. The planting medium should be a moist mixture of 2/3 perlite to 1/3 coarse peat moss. Do not add fertilizer.

Perlite vs Vermiculite? Vermiculite is a alumino-silicate clay mineral that is mined and heated to expand the particles. It's sterile, soaks up 3-4 times its volume in water, and attracts nutrients such as calcium, magnesium, potassium, and phosphorous. Perlite, on the other hand, is a silicon-rich volcanic rock. It's also mined and heated to expand the particles. It will soak up some water but is mainly used to aerate and improve drainage in potting mixes. The vermiculite attracts nutrients by remaining wet. For other plants that might be okay but for rhodies it's a death sentence.

For the few cuttings that many of us might try, consider planting in a 2 liter bottle, cut in half and taped together after planting to form a terrarium. Or place your plant in a plastic bag with supporting sticks to keep the moisture in.

Rooting will take about six months. When the cuttings are well established - could be up to a year old - transplant them to a four-inch pot and apply 20/20/20 to the soil or spray weekly.

Thank you Paul for a very interesting tour and workshop.



Lest We Forget

*"They shall not grow old, as we who are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,
We shall remember them."*



Pruning your climbing Rose ensures that the plant will flower well each year and grow vigorously. If left unchecked, climbing roses will become a tangled mess of branches and will probably not have many flowers. Rose pruning, is not difficult if you adhere to a few simple rules or procedures.

When to prune:

Climbers are routinely pruned in late autumn or in winter, after the flowers have faded. Renovation can be carried out at any time between late autumn and late winter. It is easier to see what you are doing when the rose is not in leaf, plus there is a better response from the rose, which should grow back vigorously the following spring.

How to prune climbing roses:

Formative training and pruning of young climbing roses

Climbing roses are not self-clinging and will need supports such as a trellis, arch or wall. Wires stretched horizontal to the ground also work as a framework to anchor the shoots.

- Set the lowest wire 18in off the ground and space subsequent wires 12in apart.
- If training roses up pillars, arches or pergolas, twist the main shoots gently around the uprights, keeping them as horizontal as possible, to encourage flowering shoots to form low down. If the main stems are slow to branch, tip-prune them to the first strong bud to encourage side shoots, otherwise leave them to fill the available space.
- Remove dead, damaged, diseased or spindly growth, and deadhead during the flowering season to encourage further flowering.

Routine pruning of climbing roses

- First remove dead, diseased or dying branches.
- Then tie in any new shoots needed to fill supports.
- Prune any flowered side shoots back by two thirds of their length.
- If the plant is heavily congested, cut out any really old branches from the base to promote new growth.

Renovating overgrown climbing roses

- Remove all dead, diseased, dying and weak shoots.



- Cut some of the old woody branches to the ground, retaining a maximum of six young, vigorous stems that can be secured to supports.
- Saw away any dead stumps at the base of the plant, where rain can collect and encourage rot.
- Shorten side shoots on the remaining branches and prune back the tips by one third to one half, to encourage branching.
- Give pruned plants a boost in the following spring by spreading a granular rose fertiliser over the soil and mulch them with a 2in layer of garden compost or well rotted manure.



COFFEE GROUNDS & FISH COMPOST FOR RHODOS

The Fall 2007 Gardenwise magazine has a good article regarding a good recipe for a mulch for rhodos, camellias and azaleas. In an article aimed at organic gardeners, Sheena Adams has interesting suggestions.

Rhodos use a lot of energy when blooming and then immediately begin producing new growth for the following year's bloom. So it's no surprise that many Rhodos show signs of yellowing leaves at this time. A malnourished plant is not only unattractive; it's also susceptible to pests and diseases.

An easy way to treat - better yet, prevent - this problem is to fertilize Rhodos twice yearly, immediately blooming ends, and again in early summer. A controlled-release organic fertilizer is best, since these plants are shallow-rooted, and a high powered chemical fertilizer can easily burn the roots, perhaps even killing the plant.

Rhodos must have acidic soil in order to access and absorb the nutrients, so if your rhodo is in sweet soil, feeding it will be a waste of time and fertilizer. Here is an easy way to mulch, acidify the soil, recycle your coffee grounds and nourish your rhodo, azalea or camellia.



RHODO MULCH

- * 32-litre or 8 qt. bag of fish compost, such as "sea soil".
- * 1 cup (250 ml) organic all-purpose fertilizer.
- * ¼ cup (60 ml) Epsom salts.
- * 8 cups (2 l) used coffee grounds

Blend all ingredients and apply a 2" (5cm) layer to the drip line twice a year, in early spring and early fall.

Another school of thought on Rhododendron Feeding: Feed Rhodos four times a year (4-12-20). Once before they flower, once right after flowering, six weeks after that and another six weeks after that. Usually that works out to March, May, July and September. These feedings supply enough nourishment for the entire year and will increase next year's show and the overall health of the plant. The same is true for camellias.

WINTER PROTECTION

Protect your garden from Winter Weather. Avoid losing your plants to sun, wind and snow by taking preventive measures in the fall. Wrap plants loosely in a weatherproof fabric like burlap or remay to protect them from drying winds, and snow. Tie up or stabilize floppy branches, or protect from underneath to prevent cracking and splitting from the trunk. Pile leaves or compost on the crowns of perennials that are susceptible to winter temperatures. Dig and store those tubers and corms that need winter protection. A little prevention in the fall makes for less pruning and clearing in spring!

GOOD RELIABLE "old" RHODOS

Clive Justice, writing in the Vancouver Rhodo newsletter of April 2006, described some of the rhodos that were on the market in the 1920s. There were only two rhodo nurseries in B.C. at the time - Layritz in Victoria and George Fraser's in Ucluelet. R. 'Pink Pearl', R. 'White Pearl' and R. 'Strategist' were all bred before 1900. You can probably still buy a R. 'Pink Pearl' somewhere.

R. 'Boule deNeige' and R. 'Cunningham's White' have been around since the 1870's and bloom faithfully every year in my garden. Have you seen Harry Wright's 'Fastuosum flore pleno'? Created in Belgium before 1846. R. 'Gomer Waterer' is a lovely plant (maybe mine had the wrong tag on it for it is a pale mauve colour, not a pink bud, opening white). There are many more of these tough old rhodos, hybridized 150 or 160 years ago and as beautiful as ever.



Planting Rhodos

Rhododendrons are one reason gardeners love our area, and November is the best time to plant or replant these beauties. Plants put in the ground now establish better and faster than those planted in the spring.

The general rule of thumb for planting (or transplanting) is that the later in spring you plant, the more you will have to water for the first year. Then once the plant takes hold, you should be able to resume a more normal watering schedule. They do have some specific needs to bear in mind as you choose the planting site.

"WASH" is the key. **"W"** for water – a minimum of one inch per week year-round, either from natural rain or from whatever method you have available. But a hot, dry site will not fill the bill regardless of the amount of water you want to pour into it. Conversely, rhodos don't like to have their roots in moist soil, so a well drained site is equally critical. **"A"** for acid – the soil should be in the pH range of 5.0 to 6.0. **"S"** for shade – a general rule of thumb is the larger the leaf, the more shade the plant will need. However, they do need some sun to flower well. For example, plants with a five inch long leaf need an average of six hours of sunshine in mid-summer in order to set flower buds. This is somewhat modified in the case of red varieties, which seem to be more sun-tolerant than other colours, but in each case you might want to investigate the requirements of a particular plant you have chosen. And finally **"H"** is for humus content of the planting bed, which should be 50% of the backfill soil mix. This can be in the form of peat moss, compost, oak leaf mulch, shredded bark, or a combination of any of the above.

The planting hole does not need to be deep – usually about 12" is sufficient, but should be at least three times as wide (some say five) as the existing rootball or container. This allows for humus rich area as the shallow, surface roots spread out. When placing the plant in the hole, be sure that it is no deeper than it was in the container. Some bone meal mixed in the backfill soil is good, but no other fertilizer is needed at this time. Mulching with a nice fluffy layer of shredded bark or bark mixed with oak leaves will also be appreciated. (Oak leaves because they are acidic.)

If you have a rhodo that seems "sick" this would be a good time to try to correct the situation. Dig straight down at the drip line to a depth of about 12". Small plants will be no

problem to lift, but for a larger plant you may need to "lever" it out with the aid of a plank. Slide it onto a tarp for easy movement. If the site seems to have been the problem, consider changing the location. But if you can't, then make a properly amended hole and enlarge it more than you normally would widthwise. Replant and keep well watered. This will often do the trick, but do remember that plants are living things and there are some that are sickly and will never amount to much, so you may occasionally get one that resists all efforts. In this case, you may find that replacement is in order.



Just a reminder that our club has a pHD soil tester available for members to use. The tester can be borrowed for a week for a nominal fee of \$10 (\$5 refunded upon safe return) and can be picked up from Harry Wright.

Why test our soil you might ask? Well pH is the measure of the degree of acidity or alkalinity (often called "sweetness") of the soil. The lower numbers are acid and the higher numbers are alkaline, while a pH of 7.0 is called 'neutral'. The nutrients that support growth usually cannot dissolve in soil moisture that is very acid or very alkaline. If they can't dissolve, they can't help a plant grow. Also, normal beneficial soil bacteria, which promote soil enrichment, are unable to live in very acid or alkaline soil.

Further, the whole process of pH is ever changing and almost always drifts to the acid side, which is great for rhododendrons and azaleas but not for other plants. Therefore, it needs regular resting so maximum soil productivity can be attained, meaning fast growth and bigger healthier plants, flowers and vegetables, etc.

Be sure to give Harry a call at 338-8345 to arrange to borrow the tester to ensure your garden is in good shape for the spring and summer growing periods.



Fall ^{IS IN} the AIR

Recipe Requests!

Hamburger and Noodle Soup

Chop up 1 onion and a few stalks of celery
Fry with 1 to 1-1/2 pounds of ground beef
or ground turkey

ADD

2 beef bouillon cubes (or 2 teaspoons
granular bouillon). I've used chicken or
vegetable bouillon in a pinch.

1 large can chopped tomatoes
(or whole tomatoes mashed).

4 cups hot water 1 whole bay leaf

1 Tablespoon Worcestershire Sauce

One 10 oz. package frozen mixed veges

Simmer for one hour.

Add 1 cup noodles and cook until they are
soft. I tend to extend the soup at this point,
I usually put in three big handfuls of noodles
and extra tomatoes.

Season to taste with salt and pepper. (this
soup is good with red pepper flakes
sprinkled on the top just before eating.)

Take out the bay leaf before you serve.

*Can be made ahead of time. Just follow the
recipe up until the point where you put in the
noodles and refrigerate. When you are ready
to serve it, bring it back to a boil and cook
the noodles. Freezes well.*

Creamy Lemon Squares

1 C Graham Crumbs	$\frac{1}{2}$ C flour
$\frac{1}{4}$ C brown sugar	$\frac{1}{4}$ C cold margarine
1 pkg (250 gr) cream cheese	1 C sugar
2 eggs	2 Tbsp flour
3 Tbsp lemon zest	$\frac{1}{4}$ C lemon juice
$\frac{1}{4}$ C Baking Powder	2 tsp icing sugar

Heat oven to 350°F

Line an 8 inch square pan with foil, with ends
extending over sides.

Mix crumbs, $\frac{1}{2}$ C flour and brown sugar in
medium bowl. Cut in margarine until coarse
crumbs, press onto bottom of pan. Bake 15
mins.

Beat cream cheese and sugar until well
blended. Add eggs and 2 Tsp flour, mix well.
Blend in 1 Tbsp lemon zest, juice and BP;
pour over crust.

Bake 25 to 28 minutes or until center is set.
Cool completely. Refrigerate 2 hours,
sprinkle with icing sugar and the remaining
zest just before cutting into squares to
serve.

Cheesecake Brownies

1 pkg brownie mix (440 g)

$\frac{1}{2}$ C applesauce $\frac{1}{4}$ C water

3 egg whites, divided

1 pkg (250 gr) cream cheese

$\frac{1}{2}$ C sugar $\frac{1}{4}$ C flour

Heat oven to 350°F

Mix brownie mix. Applesauce, 2 egg whites
and water until well blended. Pour into 13 x 9
inch pan sprayed with cooking spray.

Beat cream cheese spread, sugar, flour and
remaining egg white with mixer until well
blended; spoon over brownie batter. Swirl
gently with knife.

Bake 28 -30 mins or until toothpick comes
out with fudgy crumbs. (Do not overbake)
Cool completely.

Until Next Month

Noni