



The Rhodoteller

www.nirs.rhodos.ca



December

North Island Rhododendron Society

2011/2012 Executive

President

Diana Scott338-0208

Vice-President

Paul Wurz287-4301

Past President:

Harry Wright.....338-8345

Secretary

Pauline Thompson339-3423

Treasurer

Dave Godfrey335-0717

Director: Ways & Means

Nadine Boudreau339-0909

Director: Membership

Brian Staton337-5228

Director: Revenue Table

Chris Aldred335-3221

Director: Newsletter/Library

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

Social Committee:

Louise Casson.....334-2331

Publicity:

Helena Stewart.....339-1733

Sunshine Lady:

Nancy Munro.....334-3719

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

ho ho ho



Coming Events

6th December 2011-Executive-Monthly Meeting 2:00pm

The executive meeting will be held at the home of Dave and Noni Godfrey, 4686 Montrose Drive. South end of Courtenay, turn left onto Spindrift Road. Turn at first right, then first right again, go to end of Inverness Road and turn left onto Montrose.

13th December 2011-Regular Monthly Meeting

Christmas Party.....



What is December without our NIRS Christmas Party?

Following tradition, we will be ending the year with a festive social get-together on December 13th. We will be starting at 5:30 to make it an earlier evening for the drive home in the December darkness.

Everyone attending is reminded to bring either a savory or sweet for the pot-luck "Finger food Savories and Sweets" table. **NO GIFT** required this year as we have it on good authority that Santa will be providing!

To lighten the evening a bit, Dave and Noni will be again hosting the "Christmas Jeopardy" game, with all new questions.

Your Christmas committee is working hard to try and make this year's Christmas party an even bigger success than last year. Come on out and have yourself a merry merry good time. Santa and maybe a few elves will be handing out hot cider and gifts as well as playing other games.





...by Diana Scott

Our dear friend Harry Wright passed away on November 3rd and our hearts go out to Gwen and her family at this very difficult time. Harry was at the heart of the club and he will be truly missed. It is difficult to think of the club without seeing Harry in some role – welcoming members and guests, orchestrating an event, giving workshops or presentations, sharing something in bloom from the garden, writing articles, working away at the Rhodo Garden, sagely adding his 'two cents', or gently teasing one of us.... He had a calming effect when things were hectic, and could always be counted on to put a positive spin on whatever might be happening. He loved the club and worked very hard to make sure that it would continue to be a source of social fun and companionship as well as a resource for rhodoholics for years to come. He was very proud of our group and will be cheering us on 'from the sidelines'. We are very proud of him as well, and would like to share some of his accomplishments in a separate section of the newsletter.

Harry loved every season, and took time away from his work in the garden every so often to take some wonderful photographs, some of which were highlighted in the November newsletter. He loved 'foliage' – and not only in rhododendrons! Once the brilliant colours of autumn have been raked up and added to the compost pile, the bones of the garden come into focus. The evergreen foliage seems to add weight that the deciduous plants have lost, and a simpler beauty shows through. On frosty mornings, the sparkle on some of those leaves can be simply enchanting. Angela Overy in her book **'The Foliage Garden'** states: "Even the most carefully orchestrated combination of plants will have moments of silence. During the winter the foliage can carry the tune for months." What a wonderful way to look at the role that foliage has in our gardens throughout the winter! As the days get colder you may wish to curl up by the fire with her book, and several others on foliage that we have in our library! Ahhh!



it's the most
Wonderful
time of the
Year

Let it Snow



As we move into December, the Executive is putting the finishing touches on the plans for the annual NIRS Christmas Party which will be on Tuesday, December 13th. As in years past, it will begin at 5:30pm at the Church, allowing for some time to socialize before our Pot Luck "Festive Finger Food" of savouries and sweets. We ask that you bring a food favourite for the table that can be eaten 'without a fork'! No need to bring a gift to exchange as we have done some years – just come with your pot-luck contribution, and be all set to enjoy a lively, informal evening of fun and companionship! Harry would be pleased.

As part of this season of giving, NIRS will be participating once again in the Salvation Army

Christmas Hamper program. This is strictly a voluntary activity for those who are interested in contributing. Christine Aldred has headed-up the organization again this year and we really appreciate all the 'behind the scenes' work that she does to make this happen. We hope that our Hamper can add some joy to the receiving family this Christmas. Chris is hoping to take donations/contributions as early as possible and they can be delivered to Bernie and Gloria's house, with last minute items brought to the Christmas Party. If you have any questions please contact Christine at 250-335-3221.

As the season draws closer, I wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year!



...by Dave Godfrey



A cloud of mourning hung in the air at our November meeting with the recent news of the sudden passing of our founding member, **Harry Wright**, just a few days before. President **Diana Scott** opened the meeting by paying tribute to Harry's dedication to the society over the many years since he first planted the seeds for our chapter to grow. Having been recently awarded the ARS Silver medal, Harry was recognized for the dedication this gentle man had for all things rhododendron. With great respect, the executive had decided to proceed with the meeting as scheduled, mainly because we all knew that "this was what Harry would have wanted." As we try to recoup from Harry's loss, we should all remember one of my favourite sayings: "Weep not for having lost him; smile for having known him!"

Diana also gave thanks to Harry and his committee, **Louise Casson**, **Margaret Griffith-Cochrane** and **Nadine Boudreau**, and their planting assistants **Bernie Guyader** and **Dick Bonney** for the lovely landscaping to the lower gardens outside the church doors. Additional thanks go to **Bob Smith** for donating some of the rhodos, along with the club for the financial assistance that made this possible.

During the meeting, VP **Paul Wurz** advised that plans are in the works for a return visit by Whidbey Island members in mid-May next year. More details will be disclosed as we get closer to spring. Membership chair **Brian Staton** advises that we now have 51 regular memberships and 4 associates for a

total of 55. We welcomed our newest members **Judi Murakami & Dale Patterson** to our chapter, along with **Sue & Garth Wedemire** who became our newest associate members.

However, we still have 18 regular memberships that have not yet renewed for 2012. **TIME IS RUNNING OUT, FOLKS!!** Brian will have his receipt book available for those who wish to renew at the Christmas party. Otherwise, you can mail your \$35 cheque to our chapter's address found at the bottom of page one of this newsletter. Remember, if you are not renewed in December you will likely miss receiving the January issue of the ARS 'Journal' magazine and your information will not appear in our annual yearbook. So don't delay, get your renewal paid today!

Director **Chris Aldred** is once again heading up our hamper project and is delighted to accept any non-perishable food items or cash in support of this year's family – a single mother and two boys ages 3 and 8 yrs. For those members unable to bring items to the Christmas party, they can be dropped off before December 13th to **Bernie & Gloria Guyader's** home at 1965 - 6th Street in Courtenay. The deadline for delivering our hamper to the Courtenay Salvation Army is December 14th – the day after our party!

And, on the subject of the Dec 13th Christmas party, the executive committee has plans well underway for this year. Similar in format to last year, members and guests are asked to bring a dish of sweet or savoury "finger food" for the potluck dinner. Doors will open at 5:30 PM when the festivities of apple cider, fine food and fun will begin. More details elsewhere in this newsletter.

Ross Munro surprised everyone at the meeting's Show & Tell by displaying a giant King Apple. Weighing in at 493.7 grams (or 1.08 lbs) this "Whopper" heritage King Apple grown at the Munro's Royston House property was part of an abundant crop, enough to make 75 quarts of delicious apple juice.



Ross Munro's
"King Apple"

Following the business portion of the meeting, our good friend and guest speaker **Garth Wedemire** presented Part 2 of his "To MARS and Back" program as a follow up to his presentation last year. The program opened with a recap of the gardens visited by the PARS members when they toured those of the MARS members. This was soon followed by the many colourful slides taking us on a tour of several Peace Arch (PARS) gardens in White Rock – South Surrey.



In addition to his entertaining program, Garth also gave an educational presentation on the Hirsutum website, explaining how to navigate the site and all the features it has to offer. Be sure to check it out at: www.hirsutum.info.

It has often been said that the odds seem to favour our new members and guests in winning our raffle or door prizes, and the November meeting was no exception. The raffle prizes (*Fantastica* and *R. lutescens*) were both won by Garth's wife, Sue. The Wedemires then presented the rhododendron '*Fantastica*' to **Noni & Dave Godfrey** in return for their hospitality and accommodations. The door prize of a garden wall hanging donated by **Diana Scott** was won by **Helena Stewart**. Congratulations to all.

A final work party of the fall season was held at our Comox Valley Rhodo Garden on Thursday morning, November 17th. A dozen members once again braved the elements to clean up the pathways and rake the many oak and chestnut leaves that abound. The usual coffee social followed with everyone bringing some treats to share. Photos of the event have been added to our website.

As this newsletter brings to a close another calendar year, we would like to wish each and every one of our members a very Merry Christmas and a Safe & Happy New Year!



The 15th Annual
Christmas Light Display
Haida Gold Gardens
769 Chaster Rd Courtenay
Dec. 20th, 22nd & 24th - 2011
7-9 P.M.
Cash donations accepted for
The Sunshine Lunch Program
This will be the last year for the display!

Tidbits...



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

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

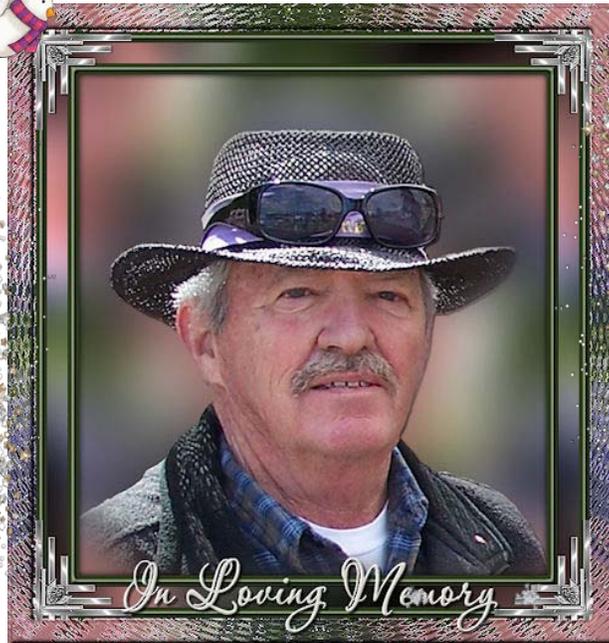
Some perennial plants remain evergreen, and these should always be left alone in the fall. In spring, you can quickly tidy up any dead or damaged leaves. In late fall, if the leaves are still green, let them be - some common examples: *Bergenia*, *Coral Bells*, *Dainthus*, and *Lavender*.

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

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



In Memoriam



Harry R. Wright

6th Sept. 1932 - 3rd Nov. 2011

On November 3rd 2011 the North Island Rhododendron Society lost a dear friend and a pillar of the rhododendron community. Harry R. Wright, long-time member of the ARS, advocate for the genus rhododendron, plants-man, hybridizer, gentleman and mentor to many, passed away at his home in Courtenay on Vancouver Island. A man of many talents yet great modesty, he was the recipient of the ARS Bronze Medal in 1995 and the ARS Silver Medal in 2009 for his contributions and accomplishments.

Harry fell in love with rhododendrons when he moved to Vancouver Island in the 1970's. His enthusiasm resulted in the development of a 1.5 acre lot in Courtenay with his beloved wife and partner Gwen. "Haida Gold Gardens" is known as a showpiece of rhododendrons and companion plants, and has been the location of countless garden tours and charity events throughout the years. Visitors were welcome and time was always taken to enjoy a 'walkabout'.

Founding member of the Comox Valley Horticultural Society, his increasing interest in rhododendrons resulted in the formation of the North Island Rhododendron Society in October 1984. President for 14 years over its history, Harry was always active on the Executive and a driving force within the club. He supported and encouraged members from the Qualicum area to form their own Chapter and in 1989 the Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society came into being.

Harry began hybridizing in the late 1980's and among the many rhododendrons he developed are the Courtenay Five, 'Iona Cee', and most recently 'Forbidden Plateau' and 'Beaufort Gem' which pay tribute to his home in the Comox Valley. He waited until he developed a rhodo demonstrating both beauty and lovely scent before giving it the name 'Gwendolyn Wright'.



In 1993, Harry started recording rhododendrons that grew successfully in District 1 and made this list available in the form of a booklet entitled "Rhododendron Varieties and Locations in BC".

Harry wanted the public to enjoy rhododendrons as much as he did. He was instrumental in the development of the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden in 1997 and a special Vancouver Island Hybrids bed which opened in 2007. His hybrid "Courtenay Lady" was chosen as the city's official plant, and May is annually proclaimed as 'Rhododendron Month'.

As Director for District 1 from 2004 to 2006, Harry worked tirelessly to promote the ARS goals and supported the Chapters within the District. He encouraged Chapters to work closely together through sharing speakers, facilitating cross-Chapter visits and garden tours, and the sharing of ideas. He strongly supported the initiatives throughout the District and was looking forward to helping develop a species garden here on the Island.

Harry was always willing to share his knowledge about rhododendrons and brought many a novice in to his caring circle. He had a gift for making everyone feel welcome and included. Community and fellowship were of utmost importance. Harry and Gwen would naturally be circulating and chatting, introducing newer members to others, connecting those with similar interests, smiling and laughing, and generally making people feel at home. No one they met would be a stranger for long!

We celebrate Harry and his contributions to the Society, while knowing that he will be truly missed.



R. Courtenay King



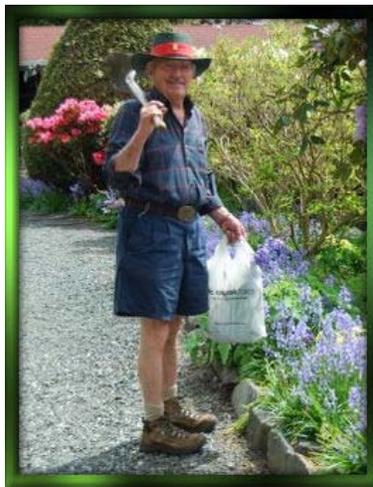
R. Courtenay Lady



R. Courtenay Queen



R. Forbidden Plateau



R. Iona Cee



R. Courtenay Duke



R. Gwendolyn Wright



R. Courtenay Princess



Poinsettias

...by Nadine Boudreau

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now that you have your Poinsettia home treat it well.

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

Following these guidelines, your Poinsettia can reward you with its beauty for many months, often from November until March. The milky sap can cause skin irritation, but there is a misunderstanding that they are poisonous. There have been many studies, the Ohio State University showed that a 50lb child would have to eat more than 1 ¼ pounds of Poinsettia bracts (500-600 leaves) to exceed the doses that found no toxicity. Of course we all discourage the eating of ornamental plants!!

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

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

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



Merry Christmas





Some Christmas Bites From Chris Aldred

Rum-soaked Currant and Orange Bites

- $\frac{3}{4}$ C currants (I used raisins)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ C rum
- 1 tbsp grated orange zest
- $\frac{3}{4}$ lb butter-(room temp.)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ C icing sugar
- $\frac{1}{3}$ C cornstarch
- 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ C A.P. flour

Steep the currants in rum for an hour or so- ahead of time. Drain currants, you can reserve the liquid for use in other recipes cakes etc. Beat butter and icing sugar 'til well combined and light, gradually beat in the flour and cornstarch. Mix the currants and orange zest together, add to mix.

Gather the dough into a ball, then roll into 1 inch balls by hand. Place on baking sheets and refrigerate for 20 mins. Preheat oven to 300 F bake cookies for 20 mins, until very lightly golden at the edges, cookies will still be very pale.

Cool, dredge with icing sugar just before serving. Freezes well, but do not dredge prior to freezing.



Toblerone Fudge

- $\frac{1}{2}$ C sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ C butter
- $\frac{3}{4}$ C evaporated milk
- 1 x 400g bar

Toblerone chocolate broken into pieces- (there are less expensive makes of these bars.. Superstore etc) Line an 8' square pan with parchment paper, ends extending beyond the rim, for ease of removal.

Place sugar, butter and evap. milk in a saucepan. Bring to full boil on medium heat. Boil 5 minutes stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Add chocolate and stir until completely dissolved. Pour into prepared pan and refrigerate about 3 hours, until firm. Remove from pan and cut into squares.

Note: when cutting fudge, wipe the knife blade between cuts to keep the cuts clean.



Cranberry and white chocolate shortbread.

- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ C A.P. flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ C cornstarch
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt
- 1 C butter - (room temp.)
- 1 tsp vanilla
- $\frac{3}{4}$ C icing sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ C dried cranberries
- $\frac{1}{2}$ C chopped white chocolate

Oven to 300F
In a med bowl, combine flour cornstarch and salt. In a larger bowl, beat butter, sugar and vanilla until creamy, Stir in the flour mixture, then cranberries, and chocolate. Flour hands and pat mixture into a 9"x13" pan. Bake approx 40 minutes or until edges are golden. Let stand for at least 30 minutes before cutting. When completely cool, dust with icing sugar.



Notting Hill Brownies

- 2 C butter melt and cool
- 2 C white sugar
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ C brown sugar packed
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp vanilla
- 6 eggs
- 1 1/3 cups cocoa powder
- 2 C flour
- $\frac{3}{8}$ tsp baking soda
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt
- 1 C chopped walnuts or pecans

Oven to 350 F grease and line a 9"x 13" pan Beat melted butter and both sugars with vanilla and eggs. In a separate bowl, combine flour, cocoa, baking soda and salt. Fold flour mix into egg mix, and blend well with mixer. Fold in nuts.

Pour into pan, smooth top with spatula, and bake 35 to 45 mins. (don't bake too long) cool, turn out, cut into whatever sizes you like, and drizzle with melted chocolate (milk and white choc, if doing this, put the white on first...looks better) Don't be stingy with the chocolate!!



Until Next Month



Noni

