



The Rhodoteller

www.nirs.rhodos.ca



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.

COMING EVENTS

4th October 2011-Executive Meeting 2:00pm

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

11th October 2011-Regular Monthly Meeting

A PowerPoint Presentation of....

"Species deciduous azaleas of North America"

The October 11th meeting of the North Island Rhododendron Society presents Mr. Mike Stewart as our guest speaker on the subject of 'Species deciduous azaleas of North America.' Mr. Stewart owns and operates Dover Nursery in Sandy, Oregon and is a Past President of the American Rhododendron Society. Mike is also a recent recipient of the prestigious ARS 'Gold Medal' award for his many achievements in the promotion of the genus rhododendron. Doors open at 7 PM and meeting underway at 7:30 PM. Refreshments during the break.





...by Diana Scott

Although spring is my favourite time of year in the garden, I must say that fall comes as a close second. Both are typically 'hard work' times - cleaning up, weeding, moving plants, and potting up goodies for the upcoming plant sales. The temperature is usually great for working outdoors and the gardens look refreshed after the stresses of the summer. I love this time of year!

One of my friends was wondering what she should be doing with her rhodos in the fall, and I was reminded of our discussion last year on that subject. We agreed that an early fall pruning might produce tender growth that may not do well over winter. Pruning dead, diseased or broken limbs however, is always timely. Fertilizing was our next topic, and I sent her the following information provided in our October 2010 newsletter. I thought you might like a summary:

- Fertilizer aimed at root and bloom development (not leaf) is used by some growers during the summer.
- Many of our growers fertilize in late winter/early spring (February/March) or late fall when the soils are wet. This timing ensures good nutrient uptake by the plants and minimizes fertilizer root burn.
- See Terry Richmond's 1993 article "Fertilizing Rhododendrons the Organic Way" (<http://www.rhododendron.org/v47n4p202.htm>). He typically fertilizes in early spring (March).
- The article on fertilizing rhodos by Meerkerk Gardens in Greenbank Washington (<http://www.meerkerkgardens.org/fertilizers.pdf>) provides good general information. Among the suggestions for Fall, the article indicates that rhodos may benefit from a top dressing of rotted manure in October.
- Fraser M Hancock's article (ARS District 12 in the Niagara Region of Ontario) entitled 'Feeding Rhododendrons: PLANTS SHOULD EAT WHEN THEY ARE HUNGRY'

(<http://www.rhodoniagara.org/feed.htm>) indicates that fertilizers work best when the roots are actively growing. According to the article, there is little benefit in feeding rhododendrons while the shoots are developing since the roots are relatively inactive. Hancock explains why feeding in early spring when the ground is warming, and in late fall prior to dormancy are appropriate times to fertilize rhododendrons based on root activity.

Lots to think about!

Continuing with our rare and unusual rhodos for the raffle, this month we are offering *R. davidii* PW #52 donated by Ken Webb and grown on by the club. The write-up from the Rhododendron Species Foundation website describes *R. davidii* PW#52 as: "Grown from seed collected at 4,800 ft. in northern Guizhou Province, China. Flowers dark pink? New to cultivation (and science?)."

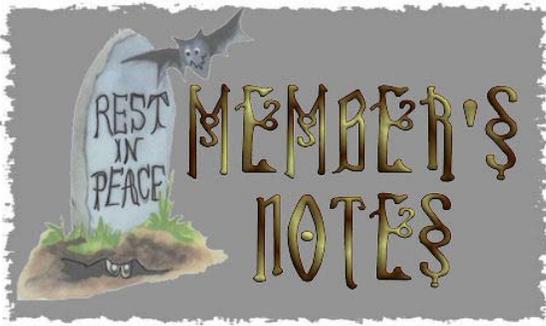


R. davidii

NOTE: These show some resemblance to *auriculatum* and may be more closely related to or a hybrid with it although they are remarkably uniform for a hybrid swarm - perhaps better as *auriculatum* aff.?" Another wonderful species for some lucky member's garden. Thanks Ken!

Enjoy your time in the garden, and I'll see you at the October meeting!...Diana





...by **Dave Godfrey**

Our new season of monthly meetings began on Tuesday, Sept. 13th with **Vice President Paul Wurz** in the chair. Paul welcomed everyone back from the summer break, and congratulated member **Brian Staton** on his 5 gold and 4 silver medals in swimming at the recent B.C. Senior Games held in the Kootenays (Castlegar, Trail and Nelson).

There were 44 members in attendance along with 4 guests, including our guest speakers, **Becci & Keith Russell**. Seventeen memberships were renewed, including our friends and associate members **Susan & Art Lightburn**, along with a BIG welcome to our newest member **Maureen Denny**.

Before the meeting ended, several members including new member Maureen, presented some interesting samples of plants blooming in their gardens; **Jill Gould** gave information on an uncommon native perennial groundcover called 'Henderson's Checker Mallow' (*Sidalcea hendersonii*) that she found growing near her new garden; **Bernie Guyader** showed a double marsh marigold, while **Maureen Denny** presented her 'Begonia Brandisiana'.

In lieu of an educational portion of the meeting, VP Paul opened the floor to any questions or comments relating to members' gardens this past summer season. There was considerable lively discussion about the pros and cons of the composted product called 'Skyrocket'. It was generally agreed that any compost needs to be left to mature as using too fresh (hot) can cause serious root and plant damage.



As they did last September, **Becci & Keith Russell** provided us with an entertaining and informative presentation, this time on 'Gardening with Containers.' They showed many colourful photos of their lovely Stone Tree B&B garden, where they use a mix of pots and containers to grow a variety of plants from espaliered fruit trees to decorative sedums. As Becci explained, container growing dates back to the beginning of time when plants had to be transportable and the root stock of herbs and plants protected for future generations. To this day, many large conservatory

greenhouses in England still use large containers for many of their plants.



As we all know, special care must be taken for the right mixture of soil to use in containers and regular watering is vital for many plants. Due to the restricted size of containers, regular pruning is also an important factor. What are normally large plants and trees can be grown in small containers, if they are pruned and root pruned to control their growth, as demonstrated by the Cryptomeria planter that Becci & Keith kindly donated as the evening's door prize.

The lucky winner of this lovely door prize was Ways & Means director **Nađine Boudreau**, while **Dorothy Law** won the raffle prize of the rhodo 'Fantasica' and guest **Olive Hagar** the winner of *R. latoucheae*. Congratulations to all the winners, and a big thank you to everyone who supported the Revenue table with donated items. Director **Chris Aldred** encourages everyone attending the meetings to find something to donate towards our ongoing fundraising efforts. Funds from the Revenue table and the raffle ticket sales help support the cost of our hall rental and the free refreshments provided at each meeting.

Ross & Nancy Munro recently visited Norman Todd's Firwood Nursery in Saanich and purchased about two dozen 2 and 3 gallon rhodos for the club. Although some specialty rhodos will be used to supplement the CV Rhododendron Garden, many of the others were offered for sale to members at the meeting. Unfortunately for those who could not make the meeting, these have all now been sold. However, **Brian & Barb Staton** also paid a visit to Firwood Nursery and bought a few dozen smaller planted cuttings. These will be grown on to 1 or 2 gallon sizes and then used for raffle prizes or gifts.

If you haven't already done so, you are invited to submit your suggested names for his new Rhodo cross to **Harry Wright** before October 1st. (Details in last month's *Rhodoteller*.) The chosen name will receive one of the plants as a prize. So don't delay, submit your suggestions today! And while you are at it, Harry would like a names list for each member's Rhododendrons. He is planning an update to his book of Rhododendrons in B.C. and hopes to have it published by next September in time for the Western Regional Conference in Nanaimo.

Membership chair, **Brian Staton**, wishes to remind members that their 2012 memberships must be renewed by the end of November in order to ensure receipt of the winter

(January) issue of the ARS Journal magazine. Be sure to bring your cheque or cash to the October 11th meeting.

Speaking of the October meeting, be sure to mark your calendars as you won't want to miss our guest speaker for the evening. **Mike Stewart** owns and operates Dover Nursery in Sandy, Oregon and will give a presentation on 'Species deciduous azaleas of North America.' Mr. Stewart is a Past President of the American Rhododendron Society and a recent recipient of the prestigious ARS 'Gold Medal' award for his many achievements in the promotion of the genus rhododendron.

At the meeting, it was announced that **Judy Walker & Brian Pierson** would open their vineyard on Gage Road in Comox for NIRS members to tour the following evening. About a dozen members arrived at 5 PM for the tour and were shown all aspects of growing grapes for wine production. Although they do not produce the wine themselves, Greengage Farms (Judy & Brian) has all the equipment and knowledge to grow hundreds of pounds of grapes, both red and white. Our thanks to Judy & Brian for providing this informative tour. *(See photos in our website's Members' Gardens Photo Gallery.)*



Brian Pierson gave the tour!

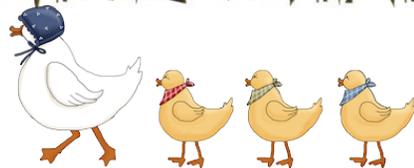


Ross Munro and Harry Wright

Then, on Thursday morning (Sept. 15th), a work party was held at the CVRG to tidy up the beds and pathways. Again, despite inclement weather, about a dozen members arrived with buckets and tools to pull weeds and tidy the community garden for the fall season. Another work party may be called next month for a final cleanup in preparation for winter. No doubt there will be more information at our October meeting. Hope to see you there!

(Editor's note: Coincidental to Becci & Keith's presentation, one week after our meeting I received a "Special Container Edition" of the Gardens West magazine in place of the October issue. For those who subscribe to the magazine look for it in your mail and for others on newsstand shelves.)

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 2012 remain at \$35.00. All associate memberships are \$10.00. Mail cheque to Brian Ståton, or bring to the next regular meeting.

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



PUMPKINS

...by Helena Stewart

Among vegetables, pumpkins do not exactly intrigue like, say, an artichoke might. Big, fat, round and orange – what more is there to say? Well, dig a bit below the surface and there's a lot to say.

For starters, pumpkins are not vegetables – they're fruits and they've been around for centuries. Their name originated from the Greek word for "large melon" (*pepon*) and this was nasalized by the French into *pompon*. The English then jumped in and changed it to *pumpion* which is the word Shakespeare used in his *'Merry Wives of Windsor'*. Later, American colonists who applied their own spin on the English language took *pumpion* and created... (Voila!) *pumpkin*.

No one is certain where pumpkins originated but it's thought they began in North America since the oldest hard evidence is a bunch of pumpkin-related seeds found in Mexico dated between 7000 and 5500BC. Today, they are grown on six of the world's seven continents (so far Antarctic hasn't been able to grow them) and they have a wide variety of uses from animal food to our familiar Jack o' Lantern.



Jack o' Lanterns have been used at Halloween for centuries and date back to an Irish myth about a man named "Stingy Jack." According to the story, Stingy Jack invited the Devil to have a drink with him but Jack refused to pay for the drinks. Somehow he convinced the devil to turn himself into a coin so that Jack could use it to pay for the drinks. Once the devil complied, Jack put the coin in his pocket next to a silver cross which stopped the Devil from resuming his original form. The Devil was not exactly delighted and Jack was eventually persuaded to release the Devil but on one condition – that he not bother Jack for one year and that, should Jack die, he would not claim his soul. When the year was up, Jack again tricked the Devil into climbing into a tree to pick a piece of fruit whereupon Jack carved the sign of the cross into the bark (methinks this Devil was not exactly the sharpest knife in the drawer.) He finally promised Jack he would not bother him for another ten years. Soon after, Jack died. As the legend goes, God would not allow such an unsavory figure into heaven and the Devil wouldn't let him into hell. He sent Jack off into the dark night with only a burning coal to light his way. Jack put the coal into a carved-out turnip and has been roaming the Earth ever since. The Irish began to refer to this ghostly figure as

"Jack of the Lantern" and then simply Jack O'Lantern, the symbol of Halloween.

Halloween incidentally is one of the world's oldest holidays and its name originated in the Catholic Church as a corruption of All Hallows' Eve. In the 5th century BC in Celtic Ireland summer officially ended on October 31 with the celebration to the saints (Samhain) November 1. During this period, the Druids believed that the dead would play tricks on mankind and cause panic and destruction. In order to appease them, country folk gave the Druids food as they visited their homes – hence trick or treating.

The original lantern (Jack's) was carved out of a humble turnip and for eons the Irish and Scots carved scary faces out of turnips or even potatoes to place in their windows to scare away Stingy Jack and any other wandering spirits. In England, they used large beets. When the Irish immigrated to the US after the Potato Famine and found huge orange pumpkins they decided these would definitely make better jack o'lanterns.



Most parts of the pumpkin are edible beside the shell (does anyone remember Al Capp's shmoos?). You can eat the seeds (nutritious!), the leaves and even the flowers. Small green pumpkins can be cooked up like zucchini and in Thailand they steam them with custard inside for dessert. The Japanese make tempura out of them, Kenyans and the Chinese use the leaves in soup and as a vegetable and in the Middle East there are scores or recipes for sweet pumpkin desserts. All sorts of health benefits are claimed for pumpkin seeds since they are a good source of protein, zinc, magnesium, phosphorus and other vitamins and are said to lower cholesterol. Can't sleep? One gram of pumpkin seed protein contains as much tryptophan as a full-glass of milk. Researchers in China claim the seeds can help lower insulin dependence for diabetics.

 **A final grab bag of pumpkin tidbits:** Looking for a new sport? Try pumpkin chucking, a competitive activity in which teams build various mechanical devices designed to throw a pumpkin as far as possible – catapults, trebuchets, ballistas and air cannons are most commonly used.



The world's largest pumpkin weighed in at 1810.5 pounds and was grown in 2010 by a Minnesota farmer.



Morton, Illinois is the self-declared pumpkin capital of the world and has held a Pumpkin Festival since 1966.



Witches are a central symbol of Halloween and they were said to fly after rubbing a sacred ointment onto their skin. In the initiation of new witches, they were blindfolded, smeared with the flying ointment and placed on a broomstick. The ointment confused the

mind, sped up the pulse and numbed their feet which made them believe when they were told "you're flying!"

 Pumpkin pie originated when the American colonists sliced off the pumpkin top, filled the insides with milk, spices and honey and baked the pumpkin in hot ashes. The largest pie ever made was more than five feet in diameter and weighed over 350 pounds. It used 80 pounds of cooked pumpkin, 36 pounds of sugar, 12 dozen eggs and took six hours to bake.

 Want to spend a day in Victoria looking at hundreds of carved pumpkins with themes that range from cartoon characters to prime ministers to the royal family? For two weeks, this pumpkin art will be on display in shop windows in Oak Bay and from 5pm to 10pm daily Oct.28-31 on the Oak Bay Municipal Building grounds at 2167 Oak Bay Avenue.

 Pumpkins were once recommended for removing freckles and curing snake bites.

A couple of other common names for the fall crocus are 'Naked Lady' and 'Meadow Saffron'. And now a couple of pictures from our garden:



...by Harry Wright

The Autumn Crocus (*Colchicum Autumnale*) in our garden is always the first indicator that summer is on its way out.

Early September these bright spots start appearing and before long they can be seen all over our garden, in areas where they never were before.

One can surmise that the reason for this is that during the summer when I am weeding I'm always accidentally digging up bulbs of the Autumn Crocus and re-planting them in any open area I can find. After a couple of years a single bulb can develop into a nice sized clump.

In the spring the leaves of these beauties just seem to appear. They are a very coarse foliage, resembling thick tulip leaves. These leaves recharge the bulb and then die down and are inconspicuous until September.

One must not forget however, that these beautiful fall flowers (and leaves) are a very toxic plant in the family Liliaceae. So keep all animals and humans from tasting the flowers!

Question: Which Rhododendrons are good for growing in containers?

Answer: by Norman Todd



I grow thousands of rhododendrons in containers - black ones - for selling; and I hate them. I don't know why some understanding entrepreneur does not come out with a light coloured plastic pot. If the summer sun beats on black pots the soil can reach sterilization temperatures and cook the roots.

So a good (first) rule in selecting a container is to choose a light toned one. Glazed ceramic pots are good, especially if of some thickness to provide some insulation for the plant's roots. Wooden ones are good too, but not if the wood is treated with a phytotoxic preservative. An effective way to keep cool roots is to place a pot within a pot and fill the space with perlite or some other heat protecting material.

Many growers start out growing a small leaved rhododendron as a bonsai. The classic forms and protocol of bonsai growing intrigues my mind and I have a couple of books on the subject. I have sat in on a few lectures, but I am woefully inept at following the discipline. Still, I have a few "bonsais" at the back door and they give me a lot of pleasure. They don't have 100-year-old gnarled trunks; they are not even of kindergarten age; they are still in day-care. Still, they are very satisfying. Occasionally, one can find an old misshapen plant in a nursery that can be pruned and wired to give a geriatric look.

There is a growing interest among some rhododendron fanciers in trying their hand with some of the Madenia. These are the semitropical ones, many of which are wonderfully fragrant. *Rs. edgworthii, rhabdotum, crassum* 'Else Frye', 'Fragrantissimum' are all good candidates. I have an 80 cm. 'Heaven Scent' that is just 80 cm. away from this computer that must have 100 flower buds. I have to admit that the pot, though still almost portable stayed where it was through last winter when we had the coldest temperature (-9C) we have ever experienced in the 30 years we have been in this place. My laziness overcame my common sense and I did not move it to a protected place and it did lose half its flower buds, but the smelly show was still worthwhile. Some of the Madenia get really tall and as a lot of them are epiphytic in nature growing like orchids in the crotches of tree branches they tend to be open leggy plants so they do respond to some pruning. Do this early in the year so the dormant growth buds can break and grow and perhaps develop a flower bud. I have found that 'Mi Amor' breaks readily from the older wood.

The Japanese are of course the masters on container growing and many of their prized azalea trophy plants are hundreds of years old. At the Regional Conference at Harrison Hot Springs a few years ago, they had a workshop on bonsai. All those who attended came home with an azalea in a bonsai pot. Mine was certainly cruelly mistreated and ended up being shaped like a haggis but it is a treasure.

The Lapponica are good candidates for containers. Mounds of *impeditum* or *fastigiatum* arranged on a stairway look wonderful. Strangely, a plant most find somewhat challenging to grow in the ground — *campylogynum* ssp *myrtilloides* — does very well in a container. Its larger cousin — *campylogynum* ssp *celsum* — performs equally well and is easier to bloom. Both are absolutely choice.

There is no shortage of material. The smallest garden or a balcony can become a veritable Eden with a few bums and a couple of twisted freaks. Of course there is a draw-back - they have to be watered in the summer. In very hot weather maybe even twice a day, but so do we and one regime is to think of the plants when you fill your own glass.

THE YEAR
Harry Registers
"Paradise Meadows"

She is a sister seeding of: 'Courtenay Queen', 'Courtenay Princess', and 'Iona Cee'

A cross of "Haida Gold x Golden Star" The plant, registered this year, is very similar to the three above, but the difference is the color of the bracs enclosing the flower buds. These bracs catch the eye even before the flower buds are open, as can be seen in this photo.



HAPPY Halloween





RECIPE REQUESTS



CHICKEN TETRAZINI

(Noni Godfrey)

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 Med Onion chopped | 10 Chicken Legs or thighs |
| 3 or 4 Garlic Cloves | 2 C Milk |
| 3 Tbsp butter or margarine | $\frac{1}{4}$ C Parmesan Cheese |
| 2 Cans Cr of Mushroom Soup | 2 - 3 Tbsp Parsley |

Sauté onion and garlic in butter. Add chicken, cook until $\frac{3}{4}$ done. Add soup, parsley & milk...cook a further $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ hour. Cook spaghetti or linguini enough for 4 to 6. Arrange spaghetti, chicken and cover with sauce. Sprinkle parmesan cheese over all and bake uncovered for 30 - 40 minutes. Makes 4-6 servings.

I find there is enough sauce for two casseroles (large oval Pyrex), just cook more chicken legs. Freeze the extra casserole for a quick dinner sometime.

CHEESY VEGE BAKE

(Noni Godfrey)

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 8 oz Velveeta Cheese (or cheese whiz, or cheddar) | |
| 1 Can cream of Chicken soup | $\frac{1}{2}$ C milk |
| 3 Tbsp chopped onion | $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp oregano |
| 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 C broccoli | 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 C baby carrots |
| 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 C cauliflower | 1 C bread crumbs |
| 2 Tbsp melted butter | |



Cube the cheese and divide in 2 parts. Combine half the cheese, soup, milk, onion and oregano in sauce pan. Stir over low heat until melted and blended. Remove from heat. Cut vegetables in bite size pieces and cook until tender. (I use frozen California mix, or similar). Drain the veges and mix together in a 9 x 13 pan then pour the cheese mixture over. Stir in a bit, then top with crumb mixture below:

Combine the bread crumbs, melted butter and remaining cheese cubes and spread evenly over the vegetables and sauce.

Bake at 350 F for 30 minutes.



HOT MILK SPONGE CAKE

(Noni Godfrey)

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| $\frac{1}{2}$ C Milk | Combine and heat to lukewarm |
| 2 Tbsp Butter | |
| 2 eggs beaten | Cream these together |
| 1 C Sugar | |
| 1 C Flour | Dash of salt |
| 1 Tsp. BP | 1 tsp vanilla |



Mix dry ingredients with eggs & sugar. Fold in hot milk mixture. Bake 350 F for 25 - 30 mins in an 8" x 8" pan.

I sometimes double recipe for a 9 x 13 pan, double the topping recipe as well.

TOPPINGS:

Cornflake Topping:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| 4 T Butter | $\frac{1}{2}$ C crushed Corn Flakes |
| 4T Br Sugar | (Rice Crispies are better) |

Coconut Topping:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 6 T melted butter | 10 T Brown Sugar |
| 1 C coconut | 4 T cream (canned milk) |

Mix and spread over cake as soon as out of oven. Place under broiler 2-3 minutes until browned and bubbly.

Until Next Month
Noni

