



The Rhodoteller

Season's Greetings

www.nirs.rhodos.ca



DECEMBER

North Island
Rhododendron
Society

2012/2013 Executive

President

Paul Wurz.....287-4301

Vice-President/ Secretary

Pauline Thompson339-3423

Past President:

Diana Scott338-0208

Treasurer

Dave Godfrey335-0717

Director: Ways & Means

Nadine Boudreau339-0909

Director: Membership

Brian Staton337-5228

Director: Revenue Table

Chris Aldred335-3221

Director: Newsletter

Noni Godfrey.....335-0717

..... nonigod@shaw.ca

Social Committee:

Louise Casson.....334-2331

Publicity:

Helena Stewart.....339-1733

Sunshine Lady:

Nancy Munro.....334-3719

Library:

Ruth Fowler.....890-9448

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



4th Dec 2012-Executive Meeting 2:00 pm

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, which is about 1 Km past the Kingfisher resort. Then turn at first right, then first right again. Go to end of Inverness Road and turn left onto Montrose. House is on the left, look for tall house with green shutters next to an empty lot.

11th Dec 2012-Regular Monthly Meeting Christmas Party.....

NIRS Christmas Party time again....where did the year go?? Following tradition, we will be ending the year with a festive social get-together on December 11th. 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 again be hosting the "Christmas Jeopardy" game, with all new questions.

Your Christmas committee is working hard to make this year's Christmas party a big success. 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 some guessing games.



...by Paul Wurz

There always seems to be a few rhododendrons in the garden that catch one's eye during the winter months. The most obvious ones are those with outstanding foliage that manage to stand out through the year: R. bureauvii and its hybrids are my favorites. They not

only have a very dark shiny surface, but the suede indumentum is an added bonus. R. morii, R. erosum, R. makinoi (with its long narrow leaves), R. pachysanthum, all catch your attention on those cool winter walks through the garden. The big leaf rhodos always seem to capture a special spot in the garden in the winter with their huge dark, glabrous leaves – R. calophyllum, R. sinogrande, R. rex, and R. fictolacteam are but a few. Unfortunately they do not look so great when the temperature drops a few degrees below freezing!

There are also many hybrids that are equally impressive and showy during those dull winter months. One of my favorites and most superb is Frank Fujioka's "Chemainus" – few people walk by it without making a comment. Ebony Pearl and Elizabeth Lockhart, with their dark burgundy leaves, look almost as attractive as their flowers in the spring. The "yak" hybrids are often grown more for their foliage than for flower, with their velvety new growth. Some rhodos tend to display their buds throughout the winter – the most noticeable in our garden are Taurus, Summer Skies, Clayoquot Warrior, and Prid'n'Joy. These big bright buds are extremely noticeable from September to bloom time.

Plants, other than rhododendrons, in our garden that deserve to be mentioned are: callicarpa (Beauty Berry) which have shown their shiny purple berries for the last 2 months; pernettya, with either bright pink or white berries; Black Knight holly covered with red berries. Some of those deciduous trees that were so attractive for the last few months are now showing off their bark. The most noticeable in our garden are the "paper bark maple" (acer griseum), "weeping birch", and the "silver birch".

Within the next month or so, if this mild weather continues, the hellebores and snow drops will start peeping through the ground, and spring will be just around the corner – how time flies!!



The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, in hopes that St. Nick would soon be there.

...by Daye Godfrey



SOCIAL CHANGES! I thought this headline might grab your attention. No, I'm not talking about the use of computers, Twitter or Facebook, but changes to our NIRS social committee.

As committee chair **Louise Casson** explained at the November meeting, she has other commitments which prevent her from continuing as chair of the social committee. She put out an urgent call for another member to take over the committee. Following the meeting, **Claudia & Jake Ellis** have agreed to co-chair the committee with help from **Corinne Innes** and **Adrienne McNabb**. The official change will take place in January. Louise thanked everyone for their continued support, especially those who have provided the goodies at our meetings.

Attendance continues to remain steady with 53 members and guests at our November meeting. This time of year always sees slim offerings for the revenue table, but **Chris Aldred** is always grateful for any garden related items, including magazines or books which always sell well. Keep this in mind for our January meeting as we may not be in a position to send out reminders over the holiday period this year.

Membership chair **Brian Staton** reports that we now have 51 regular memberships and 5 associate members for a total of 56 for 2013. We welcomed new members **Cathy and Brian Storey**, as well as **Shane Tillapaugh** to our club. For those members who have not yet renewed, please bring your cheques to the December party, or mail it to the club's address found at the bottom of the front page of each newsletter. It is important to have the names of all 2013 members before the end of December in order for you to receive the ARS Journal's winter issue and for inclusion in our local "Members' Yearbook."

For the Show & Tell, **Diana Scott** offered some wild columbine seeds to anyone who had shown an interest in them during the summer. Diana also asked members to take digital photographs of their gardens throughout the coming year capturing the different seasons. These can then be used to build a PowerPoint presentation as one of our programs for next winter. Start clicking!!

Secretary **Pauline Thompson** announced that members of Salt Spring Island Garden Club, who hosted our members on

the bus tour to their gardens last May, wish to visit some of our gardens on Thursday, May 16th. A volunteer to coordinate this one day event will need to be found, as well as a number of gardens. This visit will follow our 18th Annual Mother's Day Garden Tour fundraiser on Sunday, May 12th, and a week before our planned bus tour to visit gardens of the Cowichan Valley chapter on Thursday, May 23rd. (*Details on all these events to follow in the New Year.*)

After the business portion of the meeting, we were treated to the second part of "Our Trip to China" with **Susan and Art Lightburn**. Their program featured some of the fabulous photographs that Susan took during a 5 week holiday to China and Tibet in May 2010. The many temples and monuments offer tremendous colour and artistic detail. The modernized cities provide a stark contrast to the less affluent villages in the countryside.



Potala Palace, the official residence of the Dalai Lama

Enduring a 44 hour train ride, they eventually made their way from Chengdu, China to Lhasa, Tibet. There they saw the Potala Palace, the official residence of the Dalai Lama. Since the Dalai Lama is in exile, the large 1000 room mansion is virtually empty. However, they were able to tour the palace and quietly take some photographs of the luxurious rooms. With a lot of walking and much climbing, the Lightburns were able to make their way to the base camp area of Mt. Everest and the spectacular views that it affords. We thank Susan and Art for providing an enlightening and entertaining program.



Art & Susan with friends at Mount Everest base camp

Congratulations to all our draw winners for the evening. For the rhodo raffle prizes '*R. Catawbiensis Album*' - **Louise Casson** and '*R. Elizabeth de Rothschild*' - **Alice Potts**. Keeping it "All in the Family", the door prize winners for the evening were **Ross and Nancy Munro** who took home a garden hand rake and a book "Gardening with Peat Moss", respectively. A big thanks to all who support the raffle draws, as the monies raised help to pay for our hall rent each night.

Congratulations also go out to NIRS member **Shasa Nowicki** of Nowicki & Rae Law Office for recently being selected as one of the 2012 Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce's "Top 40 Under 40" recipients. The awards program is a way to celebrate the accomplishments of young professionals and youth who are making a difference in the Comox Valley.

Lily and John Vanderhorst are on the move! Finding their acreage to be no longer manageable, they hope to buy a small rancher in the Courtenay East/Comox area in the near future. So if you know anyone looking to purchase a 2230 square foot modern home on 2 1/2 acres of ocean view property on Langlois Road, north of Courtenay, why not pass along their name and number. Contact info can be found in your little member's booklet.

Plans are almost finalized for this year's Christmas party on Tuesday, December 11th. If you haven't already done so, those attending are reminded to notify **Noni Godfrey** by email, A.S.A.P. We need to make sure Santa has enough gifts and supplies available. The executive committee will begin setting up around 4:30 PM with the doors open to members at 5:30. Please be sure to bring along a potluck dish of "finger food" (appies, entries or desserts) to add to the dinner table. All members and spouses are welcome to attend, but please let us know the numbers soon. We look forward to an evening of food, fun and fellowship, and hope to see many of you there.

This party will also be your last opportunity to pay your 2013 dues in person, as membership chair **Brian Staton** will be accepting renewal cheques. **Margaret Griffith-Cochrane** will also be accepting any last minute donations of cash or non-perishable food items for our hamper project.

One final reminder - for our January 8th meeting, the Comox Valley's well-known 'Duchess of Dirt' - **Leslie Cox**, will be our guest speaker. In her presentation "Horticultural Wonders" Leslie will showcase some delightful plants and their combinations. For this meeting, **Linda Billings**, **Ann Chevrier**, **Dorothy Law** and **Jill Gould** have offered to bring along some tasty treats. Be sure to mark your 2013 calendars.... Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

(Photos by Susan Lightburn)

THE LODERI STORY PART 4

...by John M. Hammond. (Reprinted with permission from the Eugene Chapter newsletter)
 (Photos from Hirsutum.info and with permission from Dave Parker at www.invectis.co.uk)

About 1803, a thousand acres in the south of Lower Beeding parish were sold from the St. Leonard's Forest estate to Charles George Beauclerk, being known after c. 1870 as the Leonardslee estate. In around 1852 the estate passed to W. Egerton Hubbard, a Russia merchant in the City of London, and a new house was designed in the Italianate style by T. L. Donaldson and built of local sandstone in 1853. Much of the property had originally been covered by scrub, birch and oak, and sometime prior to 1852 Beauclerk had begun to lay out the 40-acre grounds in the style of an 'American Garden', containing rhododendrons, azaleas, magnolias and other ornamental shrubs; and the Wellingtonias were evidently planted at that time.



The main feature is a very long deep valley, narrow and wild at the high end, running down from north to south, deepening, widening and opening itself more and more to the sun. In the bottom a stream flows down through a chain of pools, ponds and lakes, the waters becoming larger and wider as the valley broadens out. On the edge of the western plateau stands the house, commanding an extensive view of the valley, of the lake with its various waterfowl below, of the hills, of woods, and to the right, away over miles of Sussex, to the Downs.

He immediately began planting trees and shrubs on a grand scale to create an 80-acre woodland garden from the somewhat empty valley on the Wealden sandstone to the south of Horsham. Following the

lead of James H. Mangles, whose pioneering work with *R. griffithianum* created a range of hybrids from the primary species available between 1860 and 1880, and who probably had commenced a program of secondary crosses prior to his untimely death in 1884, Sir Edmund took up the torch that Mangles had carried for over 20 years. Sir Edmund perceived that if rhododendrons were to be improved as garden plants some new strain must be introduced to create hybrids that would in future become good flowering shrubs. This theory he put into practice by acquiring a fine collection of the Himalayan species and a few of the best Chinese then known and crossing them together, as well as using them as pollen parents on the best of the *R. caucasicum*, *arboreum* & *catarbiense* hybrids already in existence.

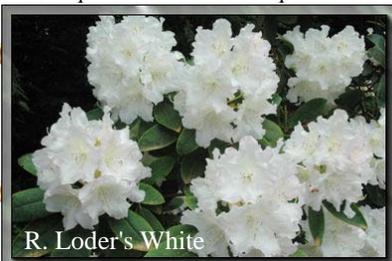


John Guille Millais, artist and natural history author, lived at Compton's Brow in Horsham, Sussex where he had a sixteen-acre garden running down to a valley in St. Leonards Forest; and had a friend and neighbour in Sir Edmund Loder at Leonardslee. Millais was an avid do-it-yourself gardener and this came to the fore in the opening chapter of his 1917 monumental work titled, *Rhododendrons and their Various Hybrids*:

In the formation of the garden and its surroundings, it is much better that he who will always live there should create his own even if he does make the most colossal errors. In time by the study of others gardens he can correct most of the mistakes, and will appreciate any success he may achieve in far greater proportion than if it had been created by others. The very essence of the enjoyment of gardens is to do things yourself. One point, too often missed that is of importance, is that the owner should introduce into his garden his own individuality.

Sir Edmund was a man with a mission, and engaged the services of James Pulham & Sons, the famous landscaping company of Woodbridge in Suffolk, to create a massive sandstone rock garden near the House.

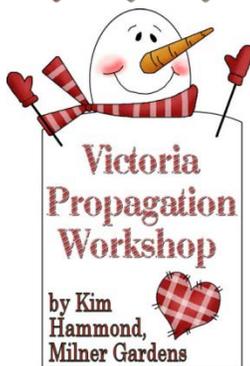
James H. Mangles was struck down with a serious illness in 1884 and, when it became clear he would no longer be able to care for the seedlings from his on-going hybridization program, a load was sent to his friend Colonel Frederick Du Cane Godman (1834-1919) at South Lodge in Horsham to be grown on. Mixed in with the plants were a few seedlings raised by another of Mangles' hybridizing friends, Mr. Luscombe of Combe Royal, Cornwall and, as the hardiness of the seedlings was uncertain, Col. Fred Godman placed them all in a cold greenhouse. Col. Fred Godman had bought the South Lodge estate in around 1880 and had started to develop the gardens prior to rebuilding the house in 1883. One of the seedlings did particularly well, but became too large to continue growing under glass, so he gave his new neighbour on the other side of the road at Leonardslee, Sir Edmund, some cuttings to graft. It was probably one of Sir Edmund's skilled gardeners who grafted the cuttings on to plants of *R. ponticum* and these were planted in various parts of the garden, and placed in a cold house, to determine their hardiness.



The plants in the greenhouse grew well, producing the clear white flowers of a *R. griffithianum* parentage in April and, when it was possible to ascertain the grafts were hardy, Sir Edmund sent specimens to his friends in Cornwall for trial in their climate. It quickly became clear that the cross flowered somewhat later outdoors, was very hardy, and this milestone in the annals of hybridization became referred to in Cornwall as 'Loder's White'. Sir Edmund exhibited, introduced and registered 'Loder's White' in 1911, when it received an Award of Merit. There has been much debate as to origin and parentage of the cross, and the 'officially' suggested parentage is probably incorrect; Frederick Street whose knowledge of old hybrids was extensive, and who had the ability to recognize them from their leaves, is probably much nearer the mark:

"The habit is compact and the foliage is dark and shiny. The shape of each leaf is very similar to that of the old hybrid called 'Album Elegans' which was used to raise 'Alice Mangles', and were it not for the compact habit of the plant, I would say it was another seedling of the same cross."

Despite James H. Mangles being particularly meticulous with his hybridization program, his records have never been found, but it would not be unreasonable to suggest that he had progressed to make secondary crosses using 'Alice Mangles' and 'Album Elegans', which led to the first hardy hybrid of *R. griffithianum* that Sir Edmund and many of his friends used to make a plethora of new crosses.



(Reprinted with permission from the MARS newsletter – November 2012)

Under rain tarps on the deck of Ken Webb's home, forty plus people gathered (October 13th) to discuss their favourite topic - rhododendrons. Ken Gibson spoke first on general propagation needs. Heating cable (apparently Integrity Sales in Victoria sells "proper"

heating cable) spaced four inches apart, heated to about 70 degrees, plants covered to contain humidity, and how cuttings should be an "average" length. The width of your hand seems to be the determined size. Large cuttings will rot too quickly. Cuttings should have the right amount of "bendiness". Obviously a subjective thing but he insists you get better at judging that as you go.

Dean Goard was next, speaking on hybridizing and saving seed. Seeds saved are placed in 6 pack cells under lights and bottom heat. Once rooted he pots them up immediately and places them in dappled shade on the north side of the house and off the ground. They are repotted in small increments and Dean says it takes him about five years to get to a full 2 gallon saleable plant. My take away from Dean is that roots on seedlings are more robust than those produced by cuttings.

Lloyd Gilmore collects seeds when light yellow to brown and encouraged people to buy seeds and pollen from ARS and RSF and try their own crosses. The seeds once planted will need protection, preferably inside for the first year. He fertilized with 20/20/20 at one point (tsk tsk) and found all his leaves turned yellow. He has since resorted to Milorganite (usually sold as an organic lawn fertilizer) and was very pleased with results. The resulting discussion about the Milorganite and organic fertilizers was quite an

eye opener for me as to how many were unfamiliar with organic methods. (I still find it an interesting phenomenon that most rhodie people are male - is there a correlation to "doing the way it was always done"?)

Bill McMillan was next on pruning - always a hot topic in any garden setting. He is a firm believer in bud pruning for good branching and removing weak branches. He also recommends raising crowns and being diligent about removing root stock growth. Bill suggests using hockey tape instead of electrician's tape - it breathes better. He shears small leaved rhodies, including the azaleas and lepidotes and reminded us that lepidotes will break from hard wood.

Next was a slide show of Jim Barlup's rhodies soliciting many oohs and aahs. Apparently some of the plants will be available from Erica Nurseries in Pitt Meadows.

Ken Gibson spoke on grafting. He uses Rhododendrons 'Cunningham's White' and 'Polar Bear', with a one inch slope on the cutting. Once placed, he wraps, labels, waters, covers, places it on heat and waits. He places his grafts on the North side of the house, no sun, in February and March.

The final speaker was a guest nicknamed Super Dennis (Bottemiller.) He is the propagator for the Rhododendron Species Foundation and the information was extensive. What I managed to scribble down follows.....

He calls rhodie propagation a race between rotting and rooting. Taking the cutting is the most important step with many considerations. The length, condition, placement on the plant itself, stressed or not, juvenility, bendiness (there it is again!) non-budded, (if you must take a budded stem do not de-bud - it rots). The downside of using a budded stem is that the buds are inhibitive. He likens the readiness of a cutting to a snap bean. If the Carbon /Nitrogen ratio

is right for cutting success he says it has that snap bean feel/sound.

He ensures the plant was well watered the day before, that there is no lignified tissue (brown bits) in the cutting, (watch for second year growth that is starting to turn yellow - it indicates the beginning stages of lignification) as lignified tissue is actually another inhibitor to rooting. Axillary stems are more rootable than terminals. If a cutting is really bendy and doesn't break it is likely too high in nitrogen and will rot. The width of your hand or larger is his suggested size but it still is relative to the leaf size. Good soil stem contact is important and Dennis recommends removing all of the indumentum on stems AND leaves. He uses 1/3 coir fibre and 2/3 perlite, no ragged edges on cuttings, including heel cuttings, they will rot too easily and the size of the cutting should be relative to the leaf size. No leaves should touch the medium. Wounding should be on the lower side of the cutting so that when it is placed into the soil it is less likely to disturb and peel back the layers between the cambium and outer tissue, giving fungus a place to settle. Do not wound into the pithy part of the stem. Wounding works because auxins go to the wound site to heal the wound and the auxins promote the rooting process. Bruising or crushing are no-nos! Remove all mosses and liverworts as they appear (they block air exchange). Azaleas root better with gels and liquids as opposed to powders. Once rooted, fertilize very lightly to bulk up roots. When being potted-up he suggests an open bottomed pot at least five inches deep, on 70 degree F. heat. His big thing... roots rot if they're too hot! There was so much information I'm sure I'll need to hear his talk a few more times to really retain it all. Altogether it was a great day of learning with an overwhelming amount of information from some of the best. The food, the people, the garden, even the drive there and back, even getting lost in the process was an adventure I'd do again, and again, and again...

Kim Hammond

Christmas Magic at Milner Gardens and Woodland

Here's a great event to get you in the Christmas spirit. Take some time away from the frenzy of Christmas preparations to enjoy a

Milner Gardens Christmas!

December 7th to 9th and December 14th to 19th



Recipe Requests

Coconut Date bar (Dick Bonney)

Base:

$\frac{1}{2}$ C Margarine $\frac{1}{2}$ C icing sugar
1 C of A.P. flour.



Cream marg, gradually add icing sugar and flour. Press into a 9 x 9 inch baking pan.

Bake at 350°F for 12-15 mins.

Filling:

1 C Brown Sugar 2 eggs well beaten
2 Tbsp A.P. flour. 1 tsp Baking powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ C chopped dates $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp vanilla
1 1/3 C coconut.



Add eggs to brown sugar beating until light and fluffy, blend in flour and B.P. Stir in dates, vanilla and coconut. Pour onto base and continue baking another 30 Minutes. Cool and cut into bars.

-As enjoyed at the executive meeting in November.

Lemon Slice (Dick Bonney)

Base:

1C butter. (soft) $\frac{1}{2}$ C sugar
2C plus 2 Tbsp flour Pinch of salt

Mix together and refrigerate for 30 minutes

Pat in a 9 x 13 inch pan and bake at 325°F for 25 mins

Filling:

4 Eggs 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ C sugar
3 Tbsp flour $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt
 $\frac{3}{4}$ C Lemon Juice. (three to four lemons)
3 Tbsp lemon zest Icing sugar for top.



Whisk eggs, flour, sugar and salt until smooth. Whisk in juice and zest. Pour over hot crust and increase the heat to 350°F. Bake until topping is set. (no longer wiggles when pan is moved) and edges are a golden brown. approx 20 to 25 mins. Cool completely and dust with sifted Icing sugar



Until Next Month
Merry CHRISTMAS Noni