



# The Rhodoteller

[www.nirs.rhodos.ca](http://www.nirs.rhodos.ca)



## North Island Rhododendron Society

2012/2013 Executive

**President**

Paul Wurz .....287-4301

**Vice-President/ Secretary**

Pauline Thompson .....339-3423

**Past President:**

Diana Scott .....338-0208

**Treasurer**

Dave Godfrey .....335-0717

**Director: Ways & Means**

Nadine Boudreau .....339-0909

**Director: Membership**

Brian Staton .....337-5228

**Director: Revenue Table**

Chris Aldred .....335-3221

**Director: Newsletter**

Noni Godfrey .....335-0717

..... nonigod@shaw.ca

**Social Committee:**

Claudia Ellis .....337-8516

**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.

## COMING EVENTS

### 4th June 2013 - Executive Meeting 2:00 pm

The executive meeting will be held at the home of Nadine & Gerry Boudreau, 1817 Preston Rd. Comox. Directions: At the lights at Anderton and Ryan Roads, turn left (north) on Anderton Rd. The first right is Greenwood Cres. that becomes Preston. Drive to the very end.

### 15th June 2013 - Regular Monthly Meeting

#### Picnic Protocols....



This year our potluck picnic will be held in the garden of Lynn & Paul Wurz on Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup>. Drive through Campbell River and north past the old pulp mill. Turn left onto Duncan Bay Road (main junction), then onto Gordon Road. There are signs to 'Hidden Acres Nursery' so just follow the road around.

Attendees to this year's gala will have a chance to again play the games Brian and Barb Staton have organized. New members will be welcomed, old friends embraced - warmly, in both cases. Do wear your name badges for an extra ticket for the Rhodo draw. Festive dress would be highly desirable...but any old thing will do!

Members are requested to bring one or more dishes...each suitable for serving several people...of tantalizing appetizers, seductive savories, luxurious breads, crispy salads, succulent fruits, or decadent desserts.

The annual phenomenon of a perfect balance of dishes for all tastes will again be manifest.

The picnic committee has requested that members bring their own plates, knives, forks, spoons, etc, or whatever is needed to partake of the food. (Only a limited supply of clean gardening trowels is available!) And, your best outside mugs and drinking vessels for the communal tea and coffee, (or your own harmless or otherwise beverages) and please no disposable dishes or cutlery!

**4:00 PM....Please bring your lawnchairs!**

# President's View

...by Paul Wurz

As I write this, it's 2:30pm on May 13, 2013, and I just came in from the garden with a customer guest. In the last half hour we must have received close to a half inch of rain - now I must take full responsibility for the deluge of precipitation. Last week, when the weather was approaching 30° C and the rhododendrons were wilting, I prayed for rain and my prayers were certainly answered. Darn!!!

Now that I have discussed the weather, I would like to extend hearty congratulations to Noni for achieving the first place position in the ARS newsletter contest. Great work Noni! You have done our chapter proud and also yourself.

The NIRS year is approaching the end of another season, and we ended it with a bundle of activity. Our plant sale held on May 5th was a resounding success with over 60 of our members volunteering to help. Sales were similar to the past and the organization was flawless. Special thanks to Nadine for doing the ground work. Bernice's "bunwich" was well attended and the food was excellent - thanks again to Bernice and her "helpers" (Antje & Peter Guertler and Linda & Brad Billings.) Peter once again outdid himself by making the delicious desserts.

Our annual garden tour held on Mother's Day was successful in spite of some questionable weather - thanks to the volunteers that manned the gates, and also to members that showed off their gardens. I heard from many sources that the gardens were superb. We are all looking forward to the Cowichan Garden tour scheduled for Thursday, May 23rd.

In closing, I would like to thank the executive members for their work in the last year, and especially to Pauline who is taking a break from the Board of Directors. Hopefully, you will all attend the year-end potluck picnic at our garden in Campbell River. See you there!

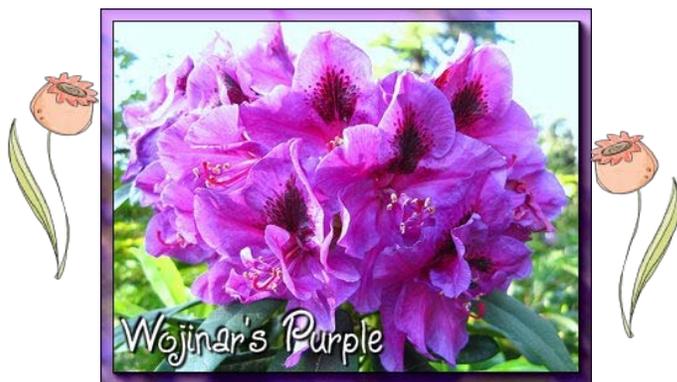
# Raffle Rhodos

...by Diana Scott

Back by popular demand is 'Holden' (Cunningham's White x red catawbiense seedling) hybridized by A.M. Shammarello from Euclid, Ohio (1958). Growing to 5 feet in 10 years, this rhodo will have an open upright form with glossy, slightly twisted dark green foliage. The flowers are stunning - large red buds that open rosy red and mature to rosy pink with green and red spots held in a conical truss. An added bonus - these flowers are lightly scented! An early - midseason bloomer, this rhodo is vigorous and heat tolerant. A stunning keeper!



Our second raffle rhodo is 'Wojnar's Purple' (unknown x unknown) hybridized by Wojnar (silent 'j'). This is a late midseason bloomer guaranteed to extend your bloom season in style! Its trusses are composed of large clusters of wavy-edged funnel shaped blossoms, vivid purple on the edges shading to reddish-purple at the centre with dark black-purple blotch on the upper lobe. It is exceptionally hardy with long dark green leaves and compact in form growing to about 4 feet in 10 years. Showy and tough. Love it!



## North Island Rhododendron Society Executive and Committee Chairs

2013-2014

### EXECUTIVE OFFICERS:

President: Paul Wurz  
Vice Pres: Jake Ellis  
Secretary: Adrienne McNabb  
Treasurer: Dave Godfrey  
Past President: Diana Scott

### DIRECTORS:

Nadine Boudreau, Brian Staton  
Christine Aldred, Diana Scott

### COMMITTEES:

#### FUNDRAISING

Ways and Means/Raffle: Nadine Boudreau  
Revenue Table: Christine Aldred  
Membership: Brian Staton  
Rhodo Sale: Nadine Boudreau  
Garden Tour: Diana Scott

#### COMMUNICATIONS

Newsletter: Noni Godfrey  
Sunshine: Nancy Munro  
Webmaster: Dave Godfrey  
Publicity: Helena Stewart  
Historian: Lois Clyde

#### SOCIAL AND EVENTS

Meeting Refreshments: Claudia Ellis  
Rhodo Garden: Ross Munro  
Facilities: Don Law  
Christmas Party:  
Hamper: Margaret Griffith-Cochrane

#### EDUCATION

Library: Ruth Fowler  
Program: Diana Scott and Dave Godfrey

A Note from Diana  
Garden Tour Coordinator and  
Volunteer Coordinator.

### 18th Annual Mother's Day Tour May 12, 2013:

The gardens this year were spectacular and despite less than favourable weather the Tour was enjoyed by all. Special "Thank You" to our Garden Hosts who opened their private paradise for the benefit our the club: Becci and Keith Russell, Gloria and Bernie Guyader, Jaimie Willms and Dany Fortin,

Ann Chevrier, Nadine Boudreau, and Dick Bonney. Thank You to our Garden Sitters who did a fabulous job welcoming the public, to our Vendors who sold tickets for us, to Adrienne McNabb who helped coordinate the Tour, and to all who worked behind the scenes to make the event a success. Bravo!

### Plant Sale Volunteers:

We had a tremendous turnout of Volunteers at our Plant Sale this year and together with Bernice and the Bunwich Team made for a remarkable showing of NIRS participation. Thank you to everyone who took part in this significant fundraiser, to Dave and Noni for sorting through the financial details, and to Nadine for coordinating the event!



'May is Rhododendron Month' in more ways than one! Not only is it the height of the blooms season, but it is the busy period for many of our members.

The month began with our annual Sale & Show on Sunday, May 5<sup>th</sup>. Ways & Means director *Nadine Boudreau* arranged for the many vendors and organized the setup of the hall, while volunteer coordinator *Diana Scott* made sure all 60 plus helpers were assigned areas in which to help. Since we were unable to prepare the hall on the Saturday evening this year work began early at 8 AM with some members setting up tables and arranging the truss display area.

All was in place and ready to go before the 10 AM opening to the public. Many members even had a chance for some pre-sales, tucking their treasures in the kitchen area for safe keeping. The usual rush of customers kept everyone hopping for the first hour or more, and then it was steady going for the remainder of the time.



The lucky winner of our draw for the rhododendron 'Honey Butter' was Heather Felson of Courtenay. This year the "People's Choice" award for favourite trusses in the show went to 1<sup>st</sup> place 'Viennese Waltz', 2<sup>nd</sup> place 'Invitation' and in 3<sup>rd</sup> place 'Olin O' Dobbs'.

Once the dust settled, our net income from vendor sales was similar to last year's total; however, the NIRS table brought in over \$1000 alone. This gave our bottom line a big boost, thanks to the generosity of the many members who donated plants and garden related items to the cause. A neighbor of **Bob & Myrna Trimmer** was about to discard several garden ornaments until Bob suggested he consider donating them to our sale. This is just one example of the consideration given to our major fund raising event, and something for others to keep in mind; not only for the annual sale, but also for the revenue table at our regular monthly meetings. Thank you one and all for your support!



As has become tradition, following the sale volunteers were invited to **Bernice Morrison's** garden for a "Bunwich" get together. This year 34 members attended and enjoyed a delicious spread prepared by **Antje & Peter Guertler** and **Linda & Brad Billings**. In addition to the delicious ham and turkey meal, a scrumptious dessert (3 different cakes) was made by Peter. Thanks to all of you for all your time and efforts to make the day a tremendous success!

The following Sunday (May 12<sup>th</sup>) it was time for our 18<sup>th</sup> Annual 'Mother's Day Garden Tour.' **Noni Godfrey** prepared the tickets and arranged the printing. **Adrienne McNabb** assisted with the distribution of tickets to the various vendors around the valley, and **Diana Scott** organized the gardens and gate sitters. A wonderful team effort which seems to flow well each year.

All six gardens on the tour this year belonged to our NIRS members. We thank **Becci & Keith Russell**, **Dany Fortin**, **Ann Chevrier**, **Bernie & Gloria Guyader**, **Nadine Boudreau** and **Dick Bonney** for generously opening their gardens to the public. Many comments throughout the day and in days following, from those who enjoyed the

tour, were very complimentary and appreciative of all the hard work it takes to maintain their gardens.

This year, the executive decided to invest in some small signs for the entrance to each garden. **John (Darling) Scott** generously constructed the frame stands for the signs that added an attractive touch to our tour. Thank you John!



Once again, with all the tickets and money counted, this year's tour was slightly less profitable than last year. But, given the sudden change from sunny weather to the rains forecast throughout the weekend, it was a blessing to have only a few short showers during the day. This change to wet weather may have accounted for the slight drop in ticket sales over previous years.

With all the road signs, host badges and ticket envelopes gathered, it was time to relax and recap the day at the home of **Bernie & Gloria Guyader**. All the draw tickets were mixed in a large bowl and the winner of R. 'Lemon Dream' was Lucia Guadalupe of Campbell River. **Adrienne McNabb** kindly delivered the prize to the winner.



On Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, it was time for our Annual General Meeting, this time in the garden of **Pauline Thompson** and **Robert Eberle**. Despite the threat of rain, 34 members attended this important meeting to hear

reports of the various committees, and in particular, the financial report for the past year. All reports were well received and it is nice to know that we had an economic impact in our community of over \$13,000 during the past year.

**President Paul Wurz** congratulated **Noni Godfrey** as the winner of the ARS Newsletter contest and everyone gave a loud round of applause. Paul also thanked **Noni** and **Pauline Thompson** for their contributions to the board as their terms in office came to an end. Everyone congratulated **Jake Ellis** as the new Vice-President and **Adrienne McNabb** as our new Secretary for the coming year.



The lucky winners of the raffle draw for R. 'Golden Torch' and R. 'Holden' were **Fran Thornton** and **Diana Scott** respectively. Congratulations ladies!

About 8 NIRS members attended a very informative pruning workshop at the garden of **Harry & Roberta Jensen** (formerly of Jensen's Nursery in Comox) on Wednesday May 8<sup>th</sup>. **Louise Casson** then kindly arranged for Roberta to give another demonstration for other interested members at the CVRG on Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup>. Again the skies were grey and threatening, but the showers held off for the morning session. All 30 members in attendance were very appreciative of the information Roberta provided. Many were anxious to rush home and begin practicing on their own rhododendrons.

On the morning of May 16<sup>th</sup>, a tour bus with 40 members of the Salt Spring Island Garden Club arrived at the CVRG to enjoy some gardens of our members. This was a reciprocal tour to the one our members enjoy to Salt Spring last May. **Barb & Brian Staton** arranged the gardens and escorted the group around the Valley. Although it was raining on Thursday morning, by the time the bus arrived at 10:30 the skies had cleared up and the rest of the day was fine. The visitors were graciously hosted by **Adela & Bob Smith** at noon to

enjoy their box lunch in their beautiful home and gardens. All in all, a very enjoyable day touring around the Comox Valley. Special thanks to **Becci & Keith Russell, Roberts & Adela Smith, Ann Chevrier** and **Robert Argall** for opening their gardens, and especially to **Barb & Brian Staton** for all the arranging.

Forty NIRS members will be boarding a tour bus early on Thursday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, for a trip to view gardens in the Cowichan Valley. Organized by **Pauline Thompson**, the gardens were arranged by NIRS associate member **Alan Murray**. (Report and photos to follow.)

At the ARS Spring Conference held at SeaTac Airport Marriott in Washington on May 1-5<sup>th</sup> our District 1 webmaster **Garth Wedemire** was awarded the prestigious ARS Silver medal. Garth, and his wife Sue, live in Langley and are associate members of NIRS. We are very pleased that Garth has received this much-deserved recognition for all the support he gives to the chapters in District 1.



(Photo provided by Sean Rafferty, editor of the Fraser South Newsletter "The Yak")

The May Conference saw a change in command for District 1 as the three-year term for Director **Mary Parker** of Nanaimo came to an end. Thank you Mary for all that you have done for our District. NIRS associate member **Ken Webb** of Victoria now assumes the position of Director for District 1 and we look forward to working with him over the next three years. Ken's alternate is **Chris Hodgson** of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society in Langley.

June's meeting will be in the form of our annual potluck picnic on Saturday, the 15<sup>th</sup>. This year **Paul & Lynn Wurz** have agreed to host the event at their 'Hidden Acres' gardens in Campbell River. (Details and directions can be found on the front page of this newsletter.) We look

forward to seeing many of you there for great fun, food and fellowship.

Finally, some members open their gardens for other members to enjoy during the spring and summer season. If you wish to showcase your garden, and all the love and attention you put into it, be sure to pass along your preferred time and date to our communications officer *Noni Godfrey*, who will then notify our members via email notices.

As we wind up our activities for another season, *Diana Scott* reminds us to continue taking photos of our gardens over the summer months. She hopes to prepare a program presentation of members' gardens during all four seasons for one of our future meetings.

Remember, one of the most important factors in growing rhododendrons successfully is soil condition. If you want to know what the pH level in your garden soil is, you can borrow the club's pH pen and check it out. Just contact *Bernie Guyader* to arrange for pick up and drop off at his place at the top of 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Courtenay East.

**LAST MINUTE NEWS:** A new company 'North Courtenay Landscape Products' offering topsoil, mulch, fish compost, etc. has joined the growing number of garden supply businesses offering a discount to our NIRS members. They are located behind the Courtenay Country Market - opposite Sunnysdale Golf Course on Highway 19A (250-650-4040). They will provide a discount on delivery charges to any member showing their membership card.

That's it for this time around. I will endeavor to post the photos of our many May events to our website in the coming month. In the meantime, have a safe and enjoyable summer, and we hope to see you at the June picnic!



Is this a 'bad year' for rhododendron leaf spot and blotches?? I'm seeing more of it in gardens and on plants in nurseries and garden centres. My usual approach when I see spotted leaves is to pick off and destroy the worst ones, then carry on. Noticing more of it around made me want to know a bit more about it so I checked with some of my rhodo friends, pulled out my home library resources, and looked

on the internet. This is what I found.

Physical injury, chemical burn, seasonal stress, rust, viruses, and fungal infections can all cause damage or spotting on leaves. Classic physical damage is notching by weevils, chew marks by caterpillars and the twisting of new growth usually caused by aphids. Drift from chemicals like paint, household cleaners and moss killer, as well as lack of water can cause leaves to turn brown some time after the initial contact. Desiccation, winter frostbite, and sunburn at any time can cause damage to leaves. It is often difficult to determine exactly what happened because some of these injuries may not show up for weeks or even months. To add to the mystery, leaves that are stressed in some way are usually more vulnerable to further damage by fungal or viral infections.

Rust is a group of fungal diseases, some of which involve two different host plants in their life cycle that can affect many garden plants including rhododendrons. Typically 'rusty' coloured (yellow/orange-red), the spore-laden pustules seen on the underside of the leaves can also be brown, black or white. I understand that specific forms of rust affect specific plant groups, and in our rural area I have seen rust on wild roses and mahonia, but haven't noticed it on our rhodos. There are a number of chemicals that can be used to control rust, and you can reduce infestations by picking off affected leaves and increasing air circulation.

Viruses are apparently neither common nor severe, however once a plant is infected, it remains infected and cannot be cured. If a plant has a virus and is not doing well the best course of action is probably to remove and replace it with a different variety. Virus symptoms typically show up as bright yellow to red-brown rings, spots or blotches. Necrotic ring spot is thought to be the most common virus in this area and is reported to occur on two-year old leaves of a few rhodos such as 'Unique' or the first year foliage of some 'Loderi' clones. Little is known about the disease but it doesn't seem to spread to other cultivars, and there is no control known or thought to be necessary.

A few rhodos have what is referred to as 'natural spots'. These spots are a faint purple, not rusty red or dull brown and are typically found on 'Mrs. G W Leak' and 'Blue Ensign' among others. Although they apparently do no harm to the plant, environmental stress can cause an increase in the spotting.

Here in the Pacific Northwest, we see a lot of fungal infections. The most prevalent is powdery mildew which has different strains affecting different plant groups. Although some types of powdery mildew are quite obviously 'powdery', on rhododendrons mildew can look different depending on the rhodo variety. It can be difficult to see,

and is detected more by the blotchy discoloration of the leaves, particularly on the underside. Leaves can have pale yellow spots on the upper surface, and feathery purple or brown spots with blurry edges underneath. Some rhododendrons have the brown spots but show no evidence of a problem on the top of the leaves. Other rhododendrons do show an actual powdery coating on one or both sides. Powdery mildew is particularly problematic in areas with high relative humidity at night and low relative humidity during the day, with temperatures in the 22° - 27° C range; and on plants in heavier shade.

Some plants can tolerate the loss of a few leaves that results from powdery mildew but others defoliate to the point of significant decline. Again, there are chemical controls (fungicides) available, but the disease goes through several life cycles a year and may need repeated treatment. By removing and destroying infected leaves, mulching, and pruning out infected shoots, improving air circulation and giving the plants more sun you may reduce further infection without the use of chemicals. Some rhododendrons appear to be more prone to powdery mildew than others, so replacing badly infected plants with ones more resistant to mildew may reduce the problem in your garden. Some suggest that 'Virginia Richards', 'Unique' and species such as *R. campylocarum* and *R. cinnabarinum* (and hybrids with their parentage) are more susceptible to powdery mildew; more resistant varieties include the *R. yakushimanum* group, *R. macrophyllum*, 'Nova Zembla', and 'Vulcan'.

There are many other fungal species that can cause spots on rhododendrons. In our area, *pestalotiopsis*, *phyllosticta*, and *cecospora* seem to be the most common and are sometimes all found on the same plant.

*Pestalotiopsis sydowniana*, or Rhododendron Gray Blight is a fungus that can affect all rhododendrons, and usually follows an injury such as sun scald or winter desiccation. Often damage doesn't become visible until early April. The spots appear white with dark brown margins, often growing into large brown areas, and if enough damage occurs the leaves may yellow and die off.

*Phyllosticta* leaf blotch is also very common and affects many of the plants in our area including salal, magnolia, holly, maple, kinnickinnick, and leucothoe. The name *phyllosticta* means tattooed or spotted, and it often starts with small circular or oval spots (beige, gray, brown or black). These spots can merge and enlarge to cover a significant portion of the leaf. Dry portions in the centre may fall out leaving ragged holes in the leaves. Severely infected leaves usually yellow and drop off.

Leaves infected with *cecospora* have round or blotchy brown spots with yellow margins. They can appear

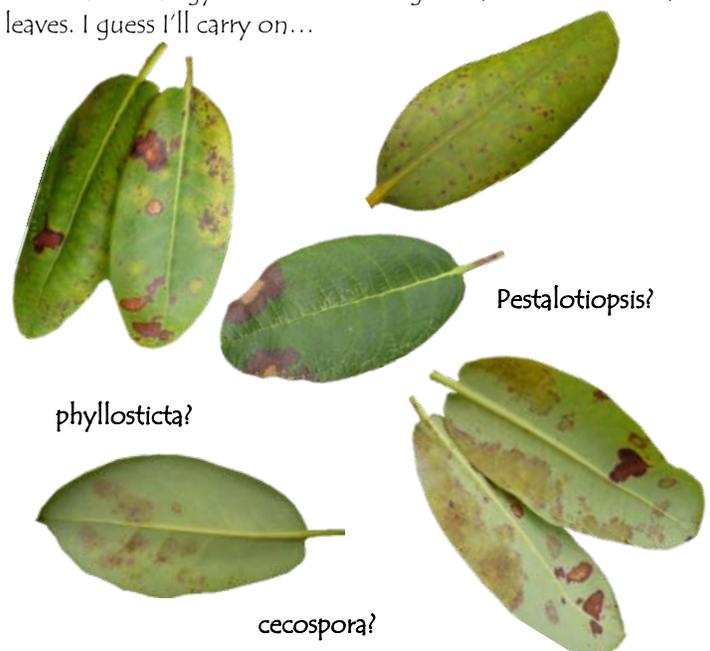
throughout the year and heavily infected leaves will drop prematurely. Typically leaves have been infected long before they show evidence of spotting. Wind and rain spread the spores and wet leaves are a major factor in facilitating the infection. Leaves spotted with *cecospora* may be further damaged by those fungi that enter via wounds in the foliage.

Despite how challenging this all sounds, most sites suggest that unless the situation is severe, it rarely warrants chemical controls. In addition, fungicides are preventive, not curative, and must be applied before leaf spotting occurs. If you do choose to use a fungicide it is best applied in the spring to protect new growth and reapplied as per label instructions.

Whether you choose to use a chemical or not, the following are suggested management strategies for reducing leaf spot on rhododendrons:

- Remove spotted leaves from the plant to reduce further infection and prevent the plant from wasting resources on damaged leaves
- Remove infected fallen leaves and discard in the trash (not compost) to minimize the amount of inoculum available for new infestations
- prune plants to promote sunlight penetration, air circulation, and rapid foliage drying; remove dead or weak branches
- If feasible, remove the plant to a location with better air circulation and/or sun
- Maintain plant vitality – proper fertilization, irrigation, mulching, attention to PH
- Minimize leaf wetness by watering before midday so the leaves dry rapidly in the afternoon

The main strategy seems to be – get rid of the infected leaves. I guess I'll carry on...





## The Making of Adrianne's Garden

Recently, it was brought to my attention that Noni wanted articles for the wonderful newsletter that she has been producing for our club. I have always gravitated towards garden magazines or books that give a personal account of how a particular garden was created. Why they choose this plant or that path material; what made a particular plant work in their garden? What were their successes; their failures? I would love if all the Rhodo club members would write a short (or as in my case a long - very long) article about their garden. Therefore, I have decided to share with you my garden developing experience.

Part of the reason I moved to the West Coast and the Comox Valley, in general, was to garden. I desired a 5-acre lot towards Ships Point. But my husband wanted a regular city lot, like the one we had owned in Oakville, Ontario. We compromised on an acre in Royston; close to a city for him, close to the country for me.

Even before the house was built, I was walking the property dreaming of the garden I would create. Unlike owning a developed city lot, this acre came with many unexpected challenges. First, after clearing many of the trees, I realized that there was just no soil. I was horrified! Secondly, what little soil was available was pure clay imbedded in rock! Third, this clay rock mixture just did not drain. What was I to do?

Research at the library was my first line of attack. I had the winter of 2005, while the house was being built, to research. I dove into many varied gardening books and magazines. In an English gardening magazine I found what was to be the solution to the problem of little soil and poor drainage.

Of course, if I had won the lottery I could have had hundreds of truck loads of soil brought in to my acre. But as I was not a lucky lottery winner, I accepted that I would be creating my own soil and addressing the drainage myself. Realizing the process for the creation of raised garden beds with my own created soil would be a lengthy process; I bit the bullet and ordered one load of soil and a load of fish compost. Two hundred dollars later, and after 2 weeks of digging out rocks and mixing in the compost and purchased soil, I had one bed about 25 feet long and 6 feet wide. This bed is still home to a Japanese maple, 3 varieties of pieris, 1 rhodo, about 20 ladies mantle, a star magnolia an ever increasing bunch of daffodils, all intermingled with two varieties of perennial grasses.

Unfortunately, I was soon to discover we had hungry deer on Vancouver Island that loved the tulips, coral bells and the dogwood I had also planted in this garden bed. This small patch of land had to satisfy my creative need to garden while I moved on to the more mundane, but needed, soil creation.

How was it done, you ask? Actually quite easily, believe it or not! I found out that you could buy, and at a very reasonable rate, bark mulch at the pole yard on Fraser Road. Next, I ordered truckloads of skyrocket (more on sky rocket later) and went on a mission to find newspaper. My husband, Rob, and I put the newspaper down to suppress the weeds. Then we wheel-barreled the huge pile of skyrocket and the bark mulch, tossing it all over the newspaper to a depth of about 12 inches. To make it all look planned, I created mulch paths out of the bark mulch and finished all the other areas with a layer of straight skyrocket to make it look pretty. Then I waited, and waited, and waited.

One year later, I pitch forked the composted newspaper, skyrocket and bark mulch into the existing rock and clay. This was not as hard as it could have been as the mulch had encouraged beneficial insect and worm activity thus making the clay easier to fork over. When turning over the soil, I removed thousands of rocks. Now I had the problem of what to do with the rock. Some were as large as basketballs and thousands the size of pebbles. I decided to expand on a theme I had in my Oakville garden and started to create a dry creek river bed.

In the newly forked over area, I planted my trees. Each tree was planted above the level of the newly created soil and another layer of the mixture of skyrocket and mulch was placed over the freshly turned mulch soil mixture. Although this was a lengthy process it gave me ample time to plan. With a lead time of over a year, I was able to scout out some great fall prices on the more exotic and pricy plants. These purchases I set up in an area close to my water barrels for easy watering. My husband kept asking if we were starting a nursery, as some plants were in pots for up to two years.

So to recap the soil production and plantings, in year one the mulches were left to compost down, in year two it was all turned over and I planted my trees. Also in year two, a second layer of mulch was incorporated over the existing mulch/soil mixture. Year 3 - I planted my shrubs my perennials and my bulbs.

Now of course I did not mulch the entire acre at once, I was working and my husband was commuting from his Toronto job. After 7 years, we have finally mulched the entire acre. I have great soil to a depth of about 12 inches, below that we have the native clay and rock. This process raised my soil level and helped partially address the drainage problems.

Raised garden beds are the way to go to help with drainage... but what to do if you raise the soil over the entire area? Yes, the dilemma of drainage



still exists. My first winter in the house was an eye-opener. Rain, more rain and then much more rain! Where would it flow to? Well my builder had ensured the house was situated in a way that all water flowed away from the house, yet the nature of the land, that darn clay and rock, would not allow for fast enough drainage.

Although the house was wonderfully dry about 30 feet down hill of the house we had Lake McNabb. Again research was needed. I knew that we had drainage tile around the house and wondered if I should use it in the garden. I complained bitterly to my husband over the water situation. He just logically said that drainage has had to have been an issue for thousands of years. He wondered what was used over the years elsewhere in the world. This was an "aha!" moment.

Back to the library to find an article I had read about a year earlier. French drains were the solution. To make it even a happier solution, you use the rock that was part of the problem to solve the problem. Could it get any better? So under my mulch paths, using the natural flow of the land, drainage trenches are dug. These trenches all flow out to my gravel driveway, from there to the regular storm sewers/ditches and eventually out to the ocean.

Making a French drain was fairly easy. We experimented with two methods - one exactly like the drainage around the base of the house... that being gravel base and then perforated plastic piping. Gravel was placed over the pipe and then a layer of garden cloth placed to help keep the soil out of the pipe. We made sure that everything was running downhill. Our second French drain was done in the traditional method. No plastic tubing was used. A trench was dug and filled in with an assortment of our own rocks and the garden cloth placed over to help with soil seepage into the rocks.

Both types of drains are functioning perfectly. We no longer have a lake each winter in our front garden. Rob can recommend the trenching tool we bought at Lee Valley Tools as being extremely useful; although he would have loved someone else to have been on the other end of it.

The drainage problem was now under control and I had rocks... a lot of rocks. Not only had I the rock from my own land, I was gathering rocks some the size of wheelbarrows off my neighbours' properties as they were unearthed while they built their homes. Where my neighbours saw the rock as a hindrance, I saw potential rock walls and a dry creek river bed (more about rock walls in a future article.) This is where the dry creek came to existence.

In Oakville, I had created a decorative dry creek. It was only 8 feet long and about a foot wide. In the city, you purchased rocks! Here in Royston, the rocks were yours for the taking; you just had to do the work.

This time not only would my creek be decorative, but it also had to be functional, draining the surrounding land. My upper garden contains an 8 foot wide dry creek that I have surrounded with many evergreens and Japanese Maples... in 2007, I was in my obsessed with all things Japanese Maples stage. I have since gone through the obsessed with barberries, coral bells, alliums, lilies and of course my rhodo stage which is ongoing.

I did not look at the dry creek and say "oh, this will be done in 1 year or 9 years." I just plodded along as rocks were available, and of course when time was available. I used lumber wrap available free from Slegg Lumber as a weed barrier on the bottom on the creek. On the edges I used a weed barrier cloth, hoping this would allow the excess water, but not earth, to drain into the creek. Larger rocks and boulders were placed on the edge, mixed in with planting pockets and, of course, cleaned rocks formed the bed of the creek. I did wash every rock that I placed into the dry creek which I know is a little over the top, but I did not want plants/weeds growing in the mud from unwashed rocks on the creek bed.

In the lower garden I was forced to make some major directional changes to my creek. We built a detached garage in 2008/9. Of course, all the rocks were saved from digging out the foundation. I then had the excavator dig out the bed for the rest of the dry creek river bed. I was ecstatic, as I knew this would save me a ton of work in the future. My plan was to have the creek wander through the dozens of huge fir and maple trees. It was to be my woodland garden. I dreamed of Rhodos and hostas, woodland bulbs and meandering paths.

Alas, this was not to be! Easter Monday we had a wind storm, and just 3 days after obtaining our occupancy permit for our garage, two extremely humongous fir trees tore down part of it. There were two casualties, other than the garage. That very morning, I had planted two lace-leaf weeping Japanese maples. Three hours later, they were twigs under a pile of garage.

Needless to say, my husband insisted that we cut down every last tree and my dream of a woodland garden was gone. Yet the idea of a creek still existed. Although unfinished, rerouted and delayed as we dealt with the cleanup of about 30 trees, along with their root balls and subsequent holes.

Again I had to create soil, but this time every hole was filled in over a period of 3 years with garden waste and then the mulch mixture. Eight years later, the dry creek riverbed is complete. As always, fine tuning continues. Planting of beds is ongoing, but made much easier as my shovel digs into marvelous soil years in the creation.

In writing this article, I focused on my own garden and my experiences with its unique challenges; how I overcame the problems and what I felt were the solutions. Every garden faces its own challenges, but many are similar. I finish with knowledge I have acquired over the years. Every garden must have a good base.

Shortchange your soil and drainage, then be prepared to struggle with plants that thrive for a year or two and then die. A strong foundation leads to healthy happy plants; those that are subject to less disease and are able to survive the unexpectedly severe winter or that long dry spell. Younger gardeners need the joy of succeeding with their plants; a strong foundation will help them succeed.

*(Editor's note: We were fortunate to have Adrienne's garden featured on our Mother's Day tour last May. For those who missed the opportunity to visit this tremendous garden, perhaps Adrienne and Rob might consider a "Member's Tour" sometime this year.)*



**HAPPY Father's Day**



# Tidbits...

## Discover your soil type:

Here's an easy way to find out what type of soil you have. In a glass jar, mix a generous handful of dirt with two-thirds of a quart of sterile water and a teaspoon of dishwashing soap. Shake it up and let it settle. Heavy sand will drift to the bottom quickly. But leave your jar undisturbed overnight so medium-grade silt and the lightest clay can settle more slowly. You should see clear lines dividing the soil types. Dirt that is about 40 percent sand, 40 percent silt and 20 percent clay is ideal, and it is called loam.

## Smell your new dirt:

If you bring in new top soil mixed with compost for your new raised beds, smell it. It should smell clean and fresh, like the ground after a rain. If it smells like ripe manure or has a sour smell, the added fertilizer is still too fresh and will burn the roots of your plants.

## Simple math for fertilizer:

If you want to figure out how much nitrogen is in your fertilizer follow this simple math trick. The vital information is hidden in the NPK formula. Each of the numbers separated by dashes tells you what percentage of the bag is pure mineral. N stands for Nitrogen, P for phosphorus, and K for potassium. So to figure out how much nitrogen is in a bag, multiply the weight of the bag by the percentage of nitrogen. If a 50 lb bag has an NPK of 10-4-4, multiply 50 by .10 –you have 5 pounds of nitrogen.



# Recipe Requests

## Orange Cream Cheese Loaf

(Noni Godfrey)

1-8oz pkg cream cheese, soft	1 2/3 C sugar
1/2 C Shortening	2 eggs
2 1/4 C Flour	1 tsp salt
1 Tbsp Baking Powder	1 C Milk
1/2 C Chopped nuts	1/4 C orange juice
2 Tbsp grated orange peel	

Combine cream cheese and shortening, creaming well. Add sugar beat until light and fluffy, and then add eggs, beating well. Combine dry ingredients, flour, BP, salt, and then add alternately with milk to the creamed mixture. (Beginning and ending with flour mix). Stir in walnuts and orange peel. Pour batter into 2 greased and floured 8 1/2 x 4 1/2 loaf pans. Bake at 375°F for 55 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean. Let cool in pan for 10 minutes then sprinkle orange juice over loaves. Finish cooling on wire rack.



Another year has passed and this is the last issue of the NIRS Rhodoteller until September. Once again, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a pleasant and fruitful summer! A little rest from the computer is in order, however there is still time to enjoy and work in the garden, and of course the odd golf game. So I will leave you once again with this last verse or garden proverb:

The kiss of the sun for pardon  
The song of the birds for mirth  
One is nearer God's heart in a garden  
Than anywhere else on earth

