



# The Rhodoteller

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

Happy Mothers Day



## 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 & Jake 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

5th May 2013 - Rhodo Sale and Show

7th May 2013 - Executive Meeting 2:00 pm

The executive meeting will be held at the home of Helena Stewart, 2431 Seabank road. (Just down the road from Dick Bonney, same side.)

12th May 2013 - Annual Garden Tour

14th May 2013 - Annual General Meeting

**Venue:** This year's Annual General Meeting will be held at the home of Pauline Thompson and Robert Eberle 350 Torrence Road, Comox. Going north along Pritchard Rd. turn right on Dogwood St. to the end. Turn right on Torrence, and house (not visible from the road) is on the left just after Casey Rd. (350 is across the street from 327)

**Note:** Meeting will start at 7:00 pm with a tour of the garden. The regular portion of the meeting will follow around 7:30 pm. Dress Warmly!!

**Parking:** Please park outside the gate along the road.

...by Paul Wurz

## President's View

It is too bad that May does not have a few more days in it, as there is so much to see and do for rhododendron gardeners – having May designated as Rhododendron Month in the Comox Valley is appropriate. In the past two weeks I have had the opportunity to visit the Statons, Robert Argall's, Gwen Wright's, Helena Stewart's and Dick Bonney's gardens - they were all spectacular!

Our garden in Campbell River is a bit of a disappointed this year as we have had a lot of late bud damage to our rhodos. After such a spectacular bloom last year on Vancouver Island, we were expecting a great show following a very mild winter. Unfortunately, this mild winter had the buds develop earlier than usual. Then we had 3 nights of cooler weather with the temperature dropping to -3. A very critical time for the developing buds and some didn't survive. Fortunately, we have enough plants to still have a significant show. And of course, it is always very exciting to see some plants bloom for the first time.

Many of our newer members may not be aware of the Rhododendron Garden that we maintain by the Courtenay Air Park. Our club, under the direction of the late Harry Wright, partnered with the city of Courtenay in 1996 to develop and maintain this spectacular garden. In 2006 we enlarged the garden behind the historical train building and developed our 'Born On Vancouver Island' section. There are several of Harry's hybrids in this garden, as well as other 'Vancouver Island' hybridizers.

Our regular work parties, especially during the busy growing and deadhead season, have always been a wonderful way to get to know other members. Our club has always maintained a very close camaraderie between members because of these fun work parties. So I encourage our new members to come out and help, and have a coffee, goodies and a chin wag session following the work. I am sure that our garden director, Ross Munro, will be calling a few work parties in the near future.

In closing, I am looking forward to seeing all members in the many activities that NIRS has scheduled in the month of May, and our wrap up picnic in June. It has been an excellent year for our club!

## RAFFLE RHODOS

...by Diana Scott

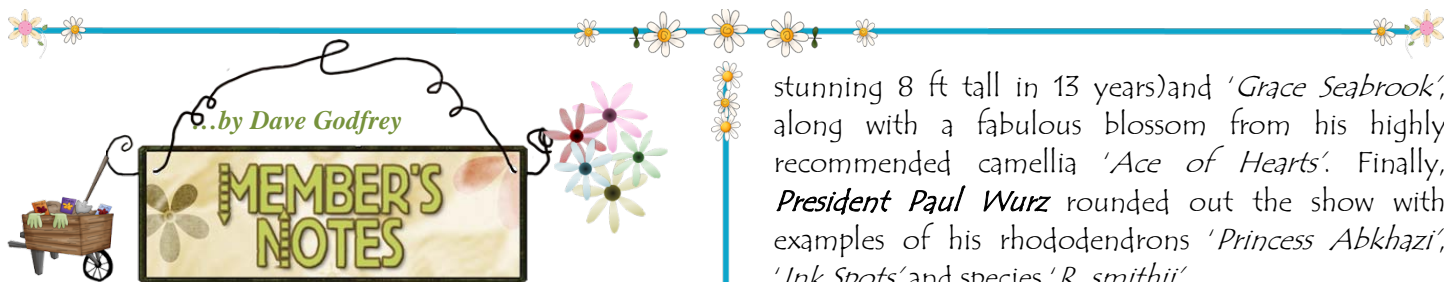
Our first raffle prize is 'Golden Torch' {Bambi x (Grosclaude Group x griersonianum)} hybridized by John Waterer (1972). 'Golden Torch' is a small compact plant growing to about 3 feet by 3 feet in 10 years. This plant has outstanding foliage; matte green with light indumentum. Blooming in May, the compact trusses of bell-shaped, pale pinkish-yellow flowers are faintly spotted deeper yellow opening from pink-tinged buds. Consistently reliable, this is a wonderful plant and winner of the RHS Award of Garden Merit.



Our second raffle rhodo 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. Another winner!







At our meeting on April 9<sup>th</sup>, we welcomed *Summer Joy* and *Jim Webb* as our newest members. This brings us to a record total of 80 memberships (74 regular and 6 associate.) And before going any further, I do have to apologize for a mix-up in names for our two new memberships in March. *Arlene & Brad Hooper* (not Brian) and *Heather & Stuart Mackenzie* (not John) joined our club at the March 12<sup>th</sup> meeting.

During the business portion of the April meeting, *Nominations Chair Pauline Thompson* appealed to members to consider taking a position on the board at the AGM on May 14<sup>th</sup>; especially for someone to fill the position of Vice President for the coming term.

Pauline also mentioned that she now has all 40 seats filled for the Thursday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> bus tour to the Cowichan Valley. For those who have not yet paid the \$40, you will have one more opportunity at the AGM in order to secure your place on the bus.

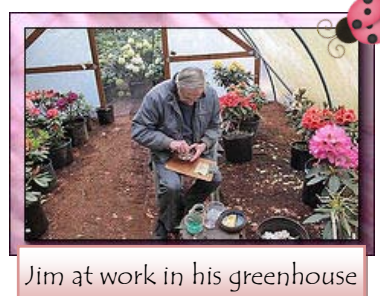
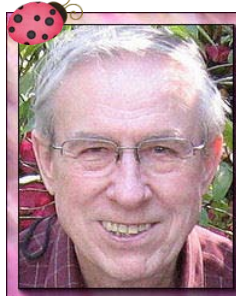
On a sad note, *Gloria Guyader* advised our long standing members of the passing of *Peg Challenger*. Back in 1993, both *Peg & John Challenger* served on the club's executive; Peg as the club's secretary and John as a director for a few years. A card has been sent to the family on behalf of the membership.

With many flowers in bloom at this time of year, there were several members who brought in examples for the "Show & Tell" portion of the meeting. The usual contributors *Bernie Guyader* and *Dick Bonney* (with *Ann Chevrier* acting as his 'Vanna White') displayed numerous perennials, rhodos and some annuals that are currently beautifying their gardens; incidentally both of which are on our Mother's Day Garden Tour this year.

*Louise Casson* brought in samples of her skimmia, marsh marigolds, hellebores and Armandi clematis, along with blooms from her rhododendrons 'Taurus' and 'R. edgeworthii'. *Don Law* displayed blooms from his 'Malahat', 'Rosamunde', 'Lady Alice Fitzwilliam' and 'R. fulvum', while *Robert Argall* showed off his stunning blossoms of 'Sir Charles Lemon' (which is a

stunning 8 ft tall in 13 years) and 'Grace Seabrook', along with a fabulous blossom from his highly recommended camellia 'Ace of Hearts'. Finally, *President Paul Wurz* rounded out the show with examples of his rhododendrons 'Princess Abkhazi', 'Ink Spots' and species 'R. smithii'.

This brought to a close the business portion of the meeting. Then, following a short refreshment break, it was time to introduce our guest speaker for the evening, *Lois Blackmore*. In her opening commentary, Lois mentioned becoming interested in rhododendrons when, in 2003, Roy brought home a copy of Whitney Gardens catalogue. She was first introduced to world famous Washington State hybridizer *Jim Barlup* in 2009 at the conference in Everett, WA. Lois and her husband Roy have since become very close friends with Jim and his wife Judy, and when Jim's medical condition prevented him from travelling to give his presentation, Lois stepped in and offered to present on his behalf.



Jim at work in his greenhouse

As Lois explained, Jim Barlup has been hybridizing rhododendrons on his half acre property in Bellevue, Washington for the past 37 years. He now has 173 registered hybrids to his credit - 124 of which Lois and Roy have on their property in Victoria. For his work in hybridization, Jim was honoured with the ARS Gold medal in 2004.

During her PowerPoint presentation, "A Journey of Love", we saw colourful examples of Jim's many hybrids. Along with 'Champagne Lace', the official flower of the 2015 ARS Conference hosted by District 1 in Sidney, there were also the notable hybrids 'Lois Blackmore', 'Judy's Choice' and 'Peggie Roberts'. Although it is difficult to differentiate between several hybrids due to their similarities, each has a unique trait. The many exquisite photographs were a delight to the senses and make one dream of someday owning a few. Thanks to Lois and Roy for taking the time out

of their busy lives to share this program with the 65 members and guests in attendance.

Last fall, associate members **Art & Susan Lightburn** were kind enough to donate a dozen trillium plants they had grown in one gallon pots. Most of these were snapped up at our revenue table, and one was given as a door prize. Congratulations to **Peter Guertler** for winning the trillium, and to **Chris Aldred** winner of the hepatica, donated by **Bernie Guyader**. The lucky raffle prize winners for the evening were **Dick Bonney** (R. 'Pink Cameo') and **Jill Gould** (R. 'Mrs. T H Lowinsky'). Thank you once again to all those who purchased tickets in support of our programs.

Speaking of support, **Diana Scott** has at least 61 volunteers willing to lend a hand at the Rhodo Sale & Show on Sunday, May 5<sup>th</sup>, and a total of 24 gate sitters for our 18<sup>th</sup> annual 'Mother's Day Garden Tour' on Sunday, May 12<sup>th</sup>. Tickets for the tour have been printed and are now available for purchase (\$10 each) at Art Knapp's Plantland, Anderton Nursery, Home & Garden Gate (Courtenay and Cumberland) and at Blue Heron Books in Comox. All six gardens on the tour this year belong to our NIRS members: **Becci & Keith Russell, Dany Fortin, Ann Chevrier, Bernie & Gloria Guyader, Nadine Boudreau** and **Dick Bonney**.

Once again, the Mayor of Courtenay has declared May as "Rhododendron Month" in keeping with our many promotional activities throughout the month. In preparation for this busy spring period, garden director **Ross Munro** called for our first work party at the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden (CVRG) on Wednesday, April 17<sup>th</sup>. (See photos on our website.)



About a dozen members attended the work party to help pull weeds, deadhead some of the early bloomers, and generally clean-up the garden paths. It is unfortunate that other members, especially those new to the club, were unable to attend as this is an ideal opportunity to get to know each other during these informal gatherings. There will be other work parties

in the weeks ahead, both daytime and evening. So we encourage everyone to attend at least one or two to help maintain this showpiece garden.

**Bernie Guyader** was kind enough to update the garden directory to include all the recent additions and changes. This plan is now included in the CVRG photo gallery on our website.



As well as the garden work, **Pauline Thompson** and **Bob Eberle** took the opportunity to install a new information sign near **Harry Wright's** memorial bench at the BOVI bed. The sign outlines Harry's efforts to establish the bed to recognize rhododendrons hybridized on Vancouver Island. Many of Harry's hybrids, including the Courtenay series, are featured in this bed.

Pauline & Bob have graciously agreed to host our AGM on Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup> in their garden on Torrence Road in Comox. Members are encouraged to attend this important meeting to hear reports from members of the executive and the committee chairs regarding our many activities over the past year. Be sure to bring along a lawn chair, otherwise you may be standing for the duration. In the event of inclement weather, we do have the church hall as a backup. But hopefully this won't be necessary!

Our AGM coincides with the BC Election Day this year... so vote early and vote often! There likely won't be an election at our AGM and there won't be a revenue table at this meeting. But we will still have a raffle draw. So be sure to bring along your loonies and townies, and wear your name tag to receive an additional ticket when purchasing tickets for the raffle. Our meeting will start at the usual 7:30 PM; however, members are encouraged to arrive by 7 PM in order to enjoy a walk- about of Pauline & Bob's garden.



In addition to our many upcoming May activities, 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 have placed in it, be sure to pass along your preferred time and date to our communications officer *Noni Godfrey*, who will then advise our members via email notices.



#### **NIRS Annual Rhodo Sale & Show**

Sun. May 5th - 10 AM - 1PM  
Komox Band Hall  
3320 Comox Rd (Dyke Road)



#### **NIRS Annual Mother's Day Garden Tour**

Sun. May 12th - 10 AM - 4 PM



#### **Glacier Grannies Plant Sale**

Sat. May 25th - 10 AM - 2 PM.  
Comox United Church  
Beach RD., Comox  
FMI - Jan Harding



#### **C V HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY**

##### **Annual "Gardens In Bloom" Tour**

Sat. June 22 & Sun. June 23 - 10AM - 4PM



#### **Nanaimo Rhododendron Society (NRS)**

Plant Sale and Rhodo Show  
Date: Saturday, May 11, 2013  
Time: 10:00am to 2:00pm  
Place: Beban Park - Centennial Building  
FMI- Paul at 250-933-4959



#### **Goodies for the May AGM at Pauline Thompson's:**



Sheila Medori, Olive Hagar and Claudia Ellis



# **Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team**...by Jill Gould

It's a bit of a mouthful, but they also go by the acronym GOERT. GOERT is a non-profit organization based in Victoria, dedicated to the recovery of Garry oak and associated ecosystems in Canada, and the species at risk that inhabit them. Their funding comes from memberships and donations.

Their mandate is to protect, enhance and restore existing Garry oak environments, and to help people living in Garry oak areas learn how to select and grow native plants for their gardens. That's us.

Garry oak ecosystems once covered large portions of Vancouver Island from the Comox Valley south to Victoria. Due to agricultural, residential and other development, most of this has been lost. For instance, in 1870 there was an ecosystem in place of 12 square kilometres of Garry oak savannah, stretching from the Courtenay River Estuary up the Tsolum River valley. GOERT estimates that only 3% of the original Garry oak ecosystem still exists on Vancouver Island and only 1% in the Comox Valley.

You can help. While not everyone wants to plant a Garry oak (they are big trees!), the associated native plants make good garden plants. Most of these plants are drought-tolerant once established. GOERT has provided an excellent series of rack cards entitled "Native Plants for Your Garden". Each card gives the name, description and needs of one of these plants. In order to support their mandate to promote use of native plants which grow in a Garry oak environment, GOERT has asked groups like Comox Valley Nature and many gardening clubs to help get the information out into the community, by displaying and distributing the cards. If you are interested in growing any of these plants, please take the descriptive card. I will try to have some available for the next Rhodo Club meeting.

Please note that seed is not readily available in retail stores! A check of GOERT's website ([www.goert.ca](http://www.goert.ca)) will give you sources.

Loys Maingon ([aardscanltd@gmail.com](mailto:aardscanltd@gmail.com)) of Comox Valley Nature does have some potted Garry oak trees for planting in appropriate sites, and hopes that a supply of Camas seed will soon be available locally. Once I have this information I will get it out to our members.

(information courtesy Garry Oak Gardener's Handbook)



## THE LODERI STORY PART 9

...by John M. Hammond. (This is the conclusion)



In September, 1918 Sir Edmund compiled a list of the *Rhododendron* species at Leonardslee, and the list of 208 species was published in *The Rhododendron Society Notes* Vol. I., No.4., in 1918. His daughter Patience (Mrs. W. Otter) described in some notes how the garden that had been his delight in the sunshine of youth became his refuge in the last storm of life:

*"The years slipped by and after a time Father came to realize that he was not quite so strong as he had been. He had a pony 'Toby' to ride about the Garden, up and down the hills.*

*Toby had to wear a net muzzle—someone asked the reason why—"He eats the shrubs," Father said. ' But does that matter much? There seem to be a good many,' asked his friend. '*

*' No,' answered Father, laughing, 'it wouldn't, only Toby always chooses the rare ones.'*

*The Garden was really his greatest interest, and during those terrible years of war, when the blow fell which broke his heart it was to his garden he went for comfort and found it, I think, and strength as well to take up life again and to face the world like so many fathers who had given their best."*

And so it falls to Sir Alfred Pease, Sir Edmund's hunting and fishing friend, to bring this story to a close:

"Some time before the outbreak of the Great War, Sir Edmund wrote to me saying that he was troubled with his heart and asking me whom I had consulted about mine in London. I told him he could with confidence go to Sir James Mackenzie. He wrote again to me and gave me the opinion and results of the diagnosis—how that his was an incurable case and that he would have to go slow and avoid worry and physical exertion. In March 1920 he went to the Tay, as he had done for several years, for the only form of sport that was still within the limits of his strength, salmon fishing and harling [trolling] from a boat. But even this was now too much for him. He became ill, and accompanied by a nurse he arrived once more at Leonardslee. He walked into the house and went straight into his little room near the entrance hall to see his letters, exactly in the same old way. Lady Loder suggested to him that after his long journey he had better leave his pile of papers and correspondence and come upstairs. He "supposed he had better"—and in his own room and in his own home he passed the last weeks of his life. He suffered discomfort but not much actual pain, and then without a struggle on Wednesday night, April 14th, 1920, the wonderful light went out of those eyes, the clever nervous hands had done all they had to do and he left the body behind him which had served him so well for more than seventy years. On April 19th, without pomp but in the company of many mourners, his body was carried in a moss-lined farm wagon drawn by four horses to the old parish church at Lower Beeding. On the coffin rested a full-length cross of the beautiful rhododendron 'Glory of Leonardslee'; lovely blooms of the same plant were massed beneath the memorial window to his boy Robin."

### In Conclusion:

It is a tragedy for the parents when a son or daughter's life is suddenly taken away whilst they are still relatively young, and its impact can sometimes spread well beyond the immediate family. Being an only child, Robin's death had taken away the heir to the Leonardslee Estate, and so it was Robin's only son, Giles, who inherited his grandfather's mantle at the age of five. His mother, Muriel, ran the estate until Sir Giles came of age, whilst his uncle, Sir Gerald W.E. Loder, cared for the garden.

Our story began with a testimony by John G. Millais who, like Sir Edmund, had a razor-sharp mind, a photographic memory, an abiding interest in zoology and botany, and had been Sir Edmund's close companion and confidant for around 30 years. It would seem appropriate that this narrative should finish as it started, and the following observations are taken from two articles written in *Country Life*, May 22, 1920 and the *Rhododendron Society Notes* Vol. III, No. II, 1926.

"He studied astronomy. When he took up zoology and botany he did it first by acquiring a great library and then reading every book on the subject before beginning to propound his own new theories. His memory and analytical powers were extraordinary and he seemed almost incapable of making mistakes. One wet day we sat in the library at Leonardslee and I gave him a new book on Africa I had brought with me. He kept turning the pages at such a rate that he did not seem to be reading it at all, and when he threw it down after an hour, I asked him what he thought of it. Then he began: 'You will see the author says on page 22'—then followed an analysis of the writer's views, which he proved were completely wrong, as was the case. 'On page 35' — a further long quotation from the book, almost word for word, and his own reason for disagreement. And so on throughout the whole volume, examining every error and praising every good point, as if he knew the whole of it by heart. I confess it amazed me, and though I had read the book twice very carefully, Edmund Loder had read and digested the whole matter in one hour, and what is more, could remember all about it afterwards."

It takes many years before a man's work can be seen or judged, because the majority of hybrids, especially those from Himalayan parents, do not flower until they have reached from 6 to 15 years of age. In fact some of the Loderis already over twenty years of age have not flowered yet. Nevertheless at least fifteen to twenty of Sir E. Loder's hybrids have flowered out of some 200 yet to bloom, and the majority of these are exceptional rhododendrons, which are great





additions to our gardens.

He achieved no outstanding hybrids amongst the dwarf or the large-leaved sections, and did not appreciate the Chinese species at their true value. In consequence, the collection at Leonardslee of the latter is only a small one, and he did not use them in hybridization.

Considered as a whole, Sir Edmund Loder achieved a high percentage of successes by his efforts, and gardeners will always owe him a great debt for the series of splendid hybrids he has given us to enrich our gardens."

**Ed. Note: This concludes our nine part series. Many comments have been received indicating the interest in this facet of rhododendron history. We are very grateful for the generous author, John Hammond, for sharing the Loderi story with our newsletter.**



## Around Stonetree ...with Becci Russell



R. Racedmosum



Camellia 'Jury's Yellow'



Sophora japonica 'Sun King'



Plieone



R. Conroy



R. Auriculata



R. Festivo







# Member Profile

## Heather MacKenzie

Like many aficionados, new member Heather MacKenzie's affair with rhododendrons started innocently enough when a house she bought in North Vancouver introduced her to rhodo addiction. It had a wall of rhododendrons on the street side that was twenty feet high.

"I didn't know a lot about rhododendrons but I just fell in love with them," she says.

Born in Moncton, New Brunswick, Heather began moving westwards first to different parts of the Maritimes and then to Brampton, Ontario. She acquired a degree in agriculture at the University of Guelph—with expertise in wheat and barley, she says with a chuckle. She next earned an MBA at McGill in high tech and moved to Vancouver in 1992 to set up a marketing and business development company. When the business disbanded, Heather and her husband Stuart, found themselves at a crossroads in 2007 rethinking the next phase of their lives.

With their shared love for sailing, they explored the coastline of Vancouver Island and were impressed with all the "charming little communities" they saw—the Comox Valley most of all. "Here people are so involved," she says. "It's so inspiring."

Besides growing vegetables on their Comox property, Heather has a long list of hobbies: she swims, is a snowboarder and loves her rescue retired sled dog that is "learning how to be a human companion." A special passion is working with the Stephen Lewis Foundation on a project called Grandmothers to Grandmothers that raise funding for women and families in Africa.

In addition to all this, she has another project with a big future in mind. With only three rhododendrons in her Comox garden at the moment, she's keen to become more rhodo savvy and start building "walls of rhodos" in her new garden.

## NIRS Member Discounts

Once again a reminder that NIRS membership brings discounts at many garden nurseries and retailers. Those businesses providing discounts for 2012-2013 include:

*Arrowsmith Nursery in Qualicum*  
*Art Knapp's Plantland, Courtenay*  
*Bees and Blooms Nursery in Courtenay*  
*Black Creek Farm & Feed Supply*  
*Campbell River Garden Center (not seeds or bulbs)*  
*CV Ornamental Concrete on Knight Rd. Comox*  
*Growing Concern in Black Creek (seasonal opening)*  
*Hidden Acres Nursery, Campbell River*  
*Paradise Plants, Courtenay*  
*River Meadows Farms, Courtenay*  
*Serendipity, Campbell River (garden ornaments only)*  
*Shar-Kare - both Courtenay and Campbell River*  
*The Plant Collector Nursery and Gardens*

If any member wishes to have other businesses considered for discounts to our members please bring them to the attention of our Ways & Means chair, Nadine Boudreau. Discounts can help save the price of your membership.



## NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the North Island Rhododendron Society will be held on Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2013 at 7:30 pm The meeting will be held at the home of Pauline Thompson and Robert Eberle 350 Torrence Road, Comox.

