



The DECEMBER Edition

RHODOTELLER

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DECEMBER 2016

Coming Events

6th December 2016 -- Executive meeting

This month's meeting will be held at the home of *Ruth Fowler*.
The meeting will start promptly *10 a.m.*

13th December 2016 -- Christmas Party

Wow! My favourite time of year is here again! And of course we get to start off the festivities with our Annual Christmas Party. See inside for complete details.

MILNER CHRISTMAS MAGIC

December 2-4, 9-11, 16-21 5-8:30 p.m.

A family oriented festival of lights and music in the Garden. Sounds like great fun. Please see the Milner Gardens website for further details.

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



PRESIDENT 'S

NOTES

The weather outside may be frightful, but for the volunteers who came out to help with the last garden clean up - we had sunshine, blue sky and Peter's apple/almond torte! Some rhodos have been moved and Parks staff also "planted" Dick Bonney's stone. The plants are now all snug in their beds, although one "pink one" is getting a head start on spring and starting to bloom.

The hard work is over, and we're looking forward to our Christmas party. For those of you who haven't yet decided what to bring to the pot luck on the 13th, email Patty Matthews at pattyandp@gmail.com or Lynn Gray at shadesofgrayart@gmail.com.

Ham will be cooked and carved by Dale, and Noni will have her hot cider. Remember to bring your own plate, mug, and cutlery. You're welcome to rinse out your mug between beverages as coffee/tea will also be available. Volunteers are needed to make table centrepieces on the 10th or 11th. Goodies will be provided. Email judimm@shaw.ca.

Stay warm and dry.

Judi





NIRS

CHRISTMAS PARTY 2016

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13th

5:00 – 6:00 PM – SOCIAL HOUR

PLEASE SIGN-IN THEN ENJOY SOME OF NONI'S APPLE CIDER WHILE MINGLING WITH FELLOW MEMBERS. IT'S A GOOD TIME TO DROP OFF CHRISTMAS HAMPER ITEMS ALSO.

6:00 – POT LUCK DINNER

ENJOY A HAM DINNER WITH AN ARRAY OF APPYS, SAVORIES AND DESSERTS BROUGHT BY MEMBERS.

PLEASE CONTACT PATTY MATHEWS (250-338-6808) WITH YOUR CHOICE OF ITEM TO BRING. THIS ALSO GIVES US AN ATTENDANCE COUNT!

6:45 ISH –JEOPARDY GAME

FUN, FUN AND MORE FUN WITH DAVE!

8:00PM - CLOSING CEREMONIES.

(CHAIR STACKING AND TABLE FOLDING AND GENERAL CLEAN-UP!)



COMMITTEE REPORTS

MEMBERSHIP

Jill Gould

I wish to thank Maureen Denny for stepping into the Membership shoes for November, and Evelyn Rawcliffe for being her assistant. Yes, New Zealand was wonderful, but a bit cooler than I expected. Memo: if going to NZ in spring, take a sweater.

We had 45 members and 6 guests at the Nov. 8 meeting, and signed up one new member. Maureen and Garth Wedemire put on a presentation at North Island College on November 22, and signed up 10 students at the special one-time-only Student rate. Please look out for these folks at subsequent meeting, and give them our warmest welcome. There are several members who haven't made the Big Decision yet. We will be looking for you in January!

We aren't perfect. One of our members handed Maureen the cash, promised to come back for her receipt and membership card, and vanished. Would she please email or phone me, so we can include her on the Membership list? Also if you got a receipt with no name on it, ditto...you are incognito, so please check your receipts and let me know who you are. (jillsnews496@gmail.com or 250-331-1859)

Don't forget, if you want to renew your membership at meetings, and you didn't bring \$35.00 cash or a cheque, you can use the Square with **your credit card**. See Claudia: Square costs only a dollar more. At our October meeting, we had 66 members including two associates, in attendance. We also had 6 guests. Eighteen more members have renewed for 2017, including one associate membership. Don't forget, if you want to renew your membership at meetings, and you didn't bring \$35.00 cash or a cheque, you can use the Square with your credit card. See Claudia: Square costs only a dollar more.

UPCOMING PROGRAMMES

Paul Wurz and Garth Wedemire

December 13, 2006 - **Christmas Party**

THE RHODO GARDEN

Wolfgang Hoefgen



What a fantastic turnout we had -- 15 very enthusiastic people came out to our last work party this year -- even the sun wanted to help. In very short order we raked, pruned and completed a general clean up. Also 2 very large rhodos were transplanted within the BOVI Bed from under the Cornus kousa.

In 2010, the NIRS awarded our late friends, Dick and Pauline Bonney, the Outstanding Service Award which at that time was an engraved rock which was displayed prominently at the Bonney residence. On Dick's passing the family gave the rock along with a rhododendron from the Bonney garden to our club with the understanding they would be on display in the CVRG. While the rhododendron is yet to be planted, the "rock" now marks the spot. Many thanks to the City of Courtenay Parks Board for their help in applying an anchor to the rock to prevent it being stolen.

Many thanks to everybody who came out to keep this garden such a beautiful place all year long. Not to forget all the cakes and cookies for our social get-togethers after a job well done. Now, we can give the garden and our volunteers a well deserved rest until next February.

Wolfgang

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Lynn Gray and Patty Matthews

Thank you very much to the members who provided those delicious goodies for our last meeting and throughout the first half of this season. Our next meeting is Special, of course -- it's the 2016 North Island Rhododendron Society Christmas Party. Full details will be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

Lynn and I are looking forward to seeing you on December 13th.

COLLECTORS and HYBRIDIZERS PART III

Jake Ellis

In October of this year, I was inspired by Mike Stewart when he spoke about "Legendary Plant Collectors and Hybridizers" and I took a book from our library entitled "The Pacific Coast Rhododendron Story -- The Hybridizers, Collectors and Gardens". Within that wonderful book I read about Mr. James Barto. I was fascinated by this man of humble beginnings and his perseverance and dedication to the growing, collecting and learning about rhododendrons. Imagine my surprise when recently I found a form of *R. augustinii* in our plants at the Smith's. Without giving away the end of the story, Dr. Phetteplace had visited the Barto home in 1944 and took home this unnamed plant and named it 'Barto Blue' -- described in this book as one of the best forms of this lovely species.

I have attached an article from the spring edition of the ARS Journal. But, hopefully, you too will become inspired to visit our library for more info on this gentleman and many, many others.

Barto Alpine



Barto Blue



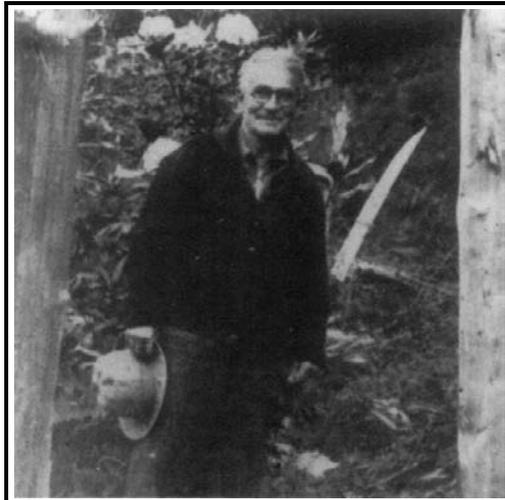
THE BARTO RHODODENDRON NURSERY

A Personal Recollection

Joseph A. Holaday

Eugene, Oregon

The many thousands of rhododendrons whose beauty glorifies residences, public buildings and business places had their origins in faraway mountains and uplands. That such plants are here is due to the vision and enterprise of a few who became fascinated by the wonders of this remarkable genus of the plant kingdom.



James Barto

No one did more to bring these prizes to Lane County, Oregon, than James Elwood Barto. When he moved his family to their new home on the High Pass Road, approximately 10 miles west of Junction City, he could not have foreseen the lasting memorial to his name and efforts as a grower-hybridizer and propagator of rhododendrons. When he moved to the site, the hillside acres of fir, alder, shrubs, and bracken were almost untouched.

James Barto was born in Philadelphia, Pa., June 14, 1881. He married Ruth Lamson in Waukegan, IL., Nov. 1, 1913. The couple's children were Merrill, born 1920, Elwood, Donald (deceased), Phillip and Pauline.

James Barto began his active life as a carpenter-specialist in a U.S. Naval shipyard and eventually was promoted to warrant officer. In 1923 he purchased the High Pass property before moving to Oregon. When he and family came to the state, he agreed to construct greenhouses for Leonard Raup, whose residence and propagating buildings were on the banks of the Willamette River opposite Skinner Butte. Raup was a pioneer grower of azaleas for the wholesale trade and well informed on these subjects. As a result of this association, Barto became interested in rhododendrons.

The Bartos moved to High Pass Road in 1925. A level space was found for the house. The small creek ran through the property at the foot of the slope. Barto began construction of his greenhouse as soon as possible. The older boys, particularly Merrill, aided to the limit of their strength. Lath houses were added. The greenhouses were heated by hot water running through pipes from the wood fired boiler. Since fire and alder were plentiful and available for the cutting, the wood was used to fire the boilers.

Barto communicated with the Royal Botanic Gardens of Edinburgh. He traded seeds of fir, alder and other native Oregon plants for the seeds of rhododendron species.

The enthusiast has the pleasure of his hobby enhanced by a knowledge of the origins of his favorites. The mountains of Western China are treasure houses of species rhododendrons. So are the towering elevations of the

small Himalayan kingdoms of Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan.

The northwest province of Szechuan, China, is rich with thousands of square miles covered by plantations of rhododendrons, with colors ranging from whites, yellows, pinks, reds, and scarlets to purples and lavenders. The province to the south, Yunnan, is as spectacular. Other regions of China - Hupeh and Tibet - have given the world seeds from their lofty meadows, where glowing rhododendron mountain sides flourish at the foot of peaks clad in eternal ice and snow.

Small wonder that such hardy plant explorers as Reginald Fortune, Frank Kingdon-Ward and others dared to search these vast spaces in spite of bandits, warlords, and crumbling civil control of disorders.

Over a period of years and through many hands, seeds of the species reached the Barto Nursery. Here they were germinated in sterile sand, packed in flats and held in the greenhouse. Years passed before they could be tested in the field. Small plants were moved to the hillside growing grounds. Certain species blossomed within three to five years; others matured slowly.

Eventually the Bartos grew and tested over 500 species of rhododendrons. A number, of which the *Maddenii* series is one, are generally considered too tender for Western Oregon. Yet these gems, found in the rain-drenched uplands of Burma, survived our Oregon winters to display their large white blossoms on the Barto hillsides.

Of these hundreds of species and thousands of plants, a complete list would be difficult. I have selected the species next described as particularly appealing for beauty of leaf, blooms, and personal association. Names, natural habitats, and color of bloom are given, as well as average and optimum size.

R. arboreum — type is blood red; Kashmir to Bhutan; 20-40 ft.; tender except for protected locations in Western Oregon (5,000-10,000 ft.).

R. augustinii — selected forms are a good blue; upright shrub 6-10 ft.; W. Hupeh and Szechuan; up to 9,330 ft.

R. barbatum — deep crimson or blood red; Sikkim and Nepal; 10,000 ft.; treelike 30-60 ft.; tender. Slow to bloom; a specimen was started by Dr. Carl Phetteplace at his home near Vida.

R. calophytum — white or rose; 15-40 ft.; Szechuan; large leaves; tender; 7,000-10,000 ft.

R. campylocarpum — 4-8 ft. rounded; clear yellow, varying; Sikkim and Nepal; 11,000 to 14,000 ft.; parent of many hybrids.

R. cinnabarinum - to 6 ft.; flowers tubular; cinnabar or brick red; Sikkim; 10,00 to 12,000 ft.

R. decorum — white to soft rose; scented; Yunnan and Szechuan; 8,000 to 11,000 ft.; 6-20 ft. tall.

R. discolor — white or pale pink; scented; to 20 ft.; Szechuan and Hupeh; 4,000 to 7,000 ft.; late; parent of many hybrids.

R. fortunei - pale lilac rose; scented; to 20 ft.; Chekiang; highly desirable for hardiness and beauty; a parent of many hybrids.

R. sinogrande — a remarkable species, tall, 20-30 ft.; creamy white or soft yellow; W. Yunnan, upper Burma; S. E. Tibet; long leaves; late to flower; 10,000 to 14,000 ft.

R. williamsianum — one of the best species; spreading; 3-5 ft.; shell pink; Szechuan; 8,000 to 10,000 ft.; parent of many hybrids.

When the young plants were still in the lath house, or considered too tender for full winter exposure, fir boughs were cut and laid over their foliage. This provided good air circulation and protection. In the spring, the falling needles added organic matter and acidity to the soil. Since lath houses, green houses and growing field were on the hillside, the air drainage was excellent, keeping the plants a little cooler in the summer and avoiding pools of cold air in the winter.

Such an enterprise requires years to develop an inventory and attract customers and patrons. The Bartos persisted.

Other lovers of rhododendrons in the Eugene area learned of James Barto. Three of these hybridizers and connoisseurs - Dr. Carl Phetteplace, Del James, and Marshall Lyons - were foremost in aiding the Bartos, although a number of others had roles. These men purchased the plants, grew them, hybridized them and conferred with Barto in selection of choice forms. A number are still found in the lists of local growers.

One of the best is 'Barto Blue', a seedling from *R. augustinii*. The color is deep blue in a tall, narrow shrub. The selection was made by Dr. Phetteplace. It is rated Superior by the American Rhododendron Society in the 1967 Yearbook.

Other Barto seedlings of merit include a *R. thompsonii* by Dr. Phetteplace, who won a first for this striking blood red form at the rhododendron show in Hendricks Park.

'Barto Rose' was chosen from the seedlings of *R. fargesii* by M. Barto, Dell James, and Dr. Phetteplace. This deep rose form is favorably mentioned in the ARS Yearbook, 1967.

'Ruth Lyons' comes from *R. davidsonianum*, chosen by M. Barto. It is a tall shrub with pink trusses - an ARS award in 1967. 'James Barto' (parentage and color not given) gained an ARS award in 1967.

I first knew the Bartos in 1944 or 1945. My interest in the genus was aroused, and when I learned of the nursery, I made the trip to the High Pass Road and found the nursery hillside colorful in the mid spring season. Various species were blooming white, red, scarlet, pink, near yellow, and purple. The plants showed many shades of these primaries.

James Barto was busy in the lath-house and left the customer service to Merrill and Donald. They helped me make a choice, and the plants were dug on order. I obtained *R. decorum*, *R. discolor*, and *R. fortunei*. These were planted and grew well for 25 years, until they were destroyed by an apartment building project.

As I developed my nursery, I purchased the same varieties and added: *R. orbiculare*, rose pink; *R. oreotrephes*, rose lavender; *R. racemosum*, clear pink; *R. ponticum*, many shades of purple; and *R. vernicosum*, pink.

While making these visits, I noticed a clump of timber bamboo planted near the creek. This exotic was at least 20 to 30 feet high and gave an oriental appearance to the overall features.

Completely unknown to me at the time were the giant lilies (*Lilium giganteum*) which were growing in the lath-house. These were 12 to 15 feet high, fragrant, white tinged with green. Truly, these unusual plants were a delight to plant lovers. They had the charm of the unfamiliar from faraway locales. Barto also had a dove tree (*Davidia involucrata*) at a time when these were only names to the Lane County horticulturist.

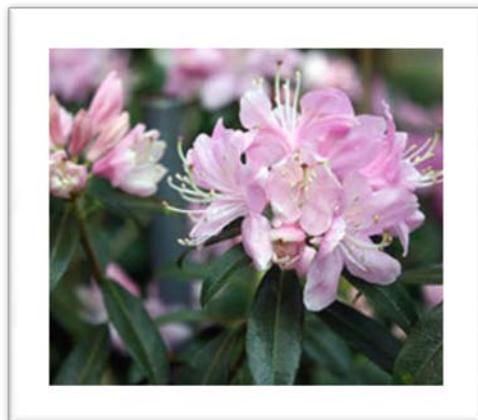
The greenhouse had burned in 1939, before my visits to the Barto's in the 1940s. A number of records were lost. But a file of the species was kept in a metal box and was rescued by Merrill, who carried it from the structure when it was so hot it burned his hands. He had the box and the file of the species as of June 1987.

Rhododendron's from Barto's are prized. A number are found in the gardens of the late Merle Saunders and his brother George and Palmer. All are species seedlings. Another specimen is located at a large residence fronting Harlow Road on the property which was once the home of Elmer Harlow.

Eugene has a number of rhododendron enthusiasts, other than those named: Harold Greer, grower and hybridizer and a past president of the ARS, and Gordon Wylie, current ARS president, whose grounds feature his own hybrid seedlings as well as late introductions. Another well known fancier is George Weyerhaeuser of Tacoma, who generously aided the establishment of the Rhododendron Species Test Gardens. All give credit to James Barto, who pioneered growing this magnificent genus.

Joseph Holaday was owner of Holaday Nursery in Eugene from 1950 to 1969 and an enthusiastic hunter of new rhododendron introductions.

R. davidsonianum 'Ruth Lyons'



PRESENTATION

TO THE LANDSCAPE HORTICULTURE STUDENTS OF NORTH ISLAND COLLEGE

Maureen Denny

On the evening of November 22nd, Garth and Maureen made a 20 minute power point presentation to the second year students enrolled in the Landscape Horticulture Program at North Island College. The wonderful power point show was prepared by our computer wizard Garth with commentary by Garth and Maureen. The goal of the presentation was to get new members for our club: normally student membership costs &10.00, but the executive decided to offer membership free for 2017 to encourage students to sign up.

The presentation started out describing the structure of the ARS. The ARS has 2,800 members worldwide and is organized into 12 districts. BC is District One and contains seven chapters. Our chapter{NIRS} has the most members in District One, approximately 85 memberships.

We gave info about our newsletter, described our yearly activities, what goes on at our monthly meetings, and showed photos of the CVRG. The show contained four separate collages: species rhodos, hybrids, vireyas, deciduous azaleas, and evergreen azaleas. We mentioned benefits of membership: NIRS Yearbook, discount at garden centers, access to the digital JARS, plant sale, garden tour, bus tours and the opportunity to connect with our knowledgeable members and last but not least the fact that we have so much fun! Much to our delight 10 students signed up. We hope to see all or some at the January meetings.

