



# THE RHODOTELLER

[www.nirsrhodos.ca](http://www.nirsrhodos.ca)

## NORTH ISLAND RHODODENDRON SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2015/2016

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## JANUARY 2016

### COMING EVENTS

#### 5th January 2016 -- Executive meeting

This month's meeting will be held at the home of our Membership lady **Jill Gould**. The meeting will start at **10 a.m.**

#### 12th January 2016 -- Regular meeting

The first meeting of a brand new year. Could 2016 be The Year of Change? We're working on a questionnaire - hopefully it will be out soon -- Please let your Executive know what you'd like to see changed. Go ahead -- give us a piece of your mind!

#### Rhodo in the Banner

Identify the "**RHODO IN THE BANNER**" and become the latest winner of "**The Garth**", the prestigious award for rhododendron identification. For those of you without a clue, you will find some hints and several photos towards the end of the newsletter.

*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



It's Boxing Day. All the presents have been opened and all the grandkids have gone home. Grandma Claudia and our dog Willy are left suffering from severe exhaustion and are buried deep in the blankets of our bed. I'm all alone as I watch from the window as the snow falls quietly, slowly turning our driveway from black to white. We all know that I really am a Grinch and could go on forever with strings of negatives about the modern Christmas -- but guess what? -- I found a positive -- a good thing!

We all know how all consuming life can become at times, almost overwhelming. Wouldn't it be lovely if we could just blow a whistle for a timeout, or maybe just press "pause" while we take time with our friends and family to regroup and ready ourselves for another day? Christmas means different things to different folks but one thing I think we can agree on is that it is a break -- a change from the routine. As President of the NIRS, I welcome this opportunity to take a quick look back to see where we've been, and then stop for a moment to check where we are today and where we hope to be tomorrow. Wouldn't it be exciting if 2016 turned out to be the Year of Change? It does seem at times that we get bogged down in doing some things just because that's the way we've always done them. What if we changed a few things? What if we started some regular meetings with the speaker first and then went to the business section? Actually we're going to try that one shortly. What if we were to sit in our meeting hall the other way around so we could fit in more people? Margaret Griffith-Cochrane suggested that one and she'll be checking it out in the near future. What if every month, as someone suggested, we had a guest editor for this newsletter? Ok, you're right, that was me. Then how about a change to the June Picnic -- maybe a contest involving drinking beer and pronouncing the names of species rhododendrons? Now, that sounds like fun, but, seriously, the biggest and best change of all would happen if we could just conquer our fear of the NIRS growing too big. Sure, I remember the "good old days" when 20 or so members crammed into the Filberg Lodge until, eventually, growth forced us to our present location. And now, we're very comfortable with numbers of members peaking around 70. But we're afraid. We're afraid that with success comes growth and once again we'll be forced to make a move -- one that would, undoubtedly, negatively impact our budget. We need to remember, though, that the goal of the NIRS is to learn and to teach others about the genus rhododendron. Our whole reason for being is to promote the growing of these beautiful plants within our group and our communities. Our monthly meetings, plant sales, garden tours and publicity are all intended to encourage people to become involved. If we do our job well, this club will grow and we need to be prepared to embrace that growth.

Thanks to everyone, especially those on the Board of Directors for the successes we enjoyed throughout 2015.

But now it's time for a New Year -- 2016 -- not a re-run -- A Year of Change!

Bring it on -- FULL SPEED AHEAD AND DAMN THE TORPEDOES! (whatever that means).

See you at the Church on the 12th January 2016.

Jake

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

*In order to cut some time from the business section of our meetings and make that time available to the Speaker of the evening, we are including the following information from the NIRS Committees. Your feedback on every one of our programmes is encouraged and each idea will be thoughtfully considered.*

### MEMBERSHIP

*Jill Gould*

As of the end of December 2015 we have 63 paid-up members including 2 associate members. We are extending the "grace" period to January 15, 2016, with the assistance of Dave Godfrey, who is making up the NIRS member booklet for 2016. That's his deadline.

For those of you who prefer to mail your membership dues (still a bargain at \$35.00!) you will find the club's mailing address at the bottom of each page of your newsletters, where Jake has so cunningly hidden it, as well as the first page of your membership booklets. Using our box number speeds up the processing of the information.

On a different subject, Bernie Guyader is usually the "Keeper of the Soil pH Tester". At the moment I have possession of it, and will bring it to the next meeting. If you wish to borrow it—it belongs to the Club, so it's available to all—see me at the meeting. It is easy to use, and gave me good information on my greenhouse soil. Since I am gardening in virgin native BC coastal rain forest soil, the outdoors held no surprises! Rhodos should do fine here!

### WAYS AND MEANS

*Lois Clyde*

Our Raffle Rhodos this month are "Van Nes Sensation" & "Trewithen Orange"

"Van Nes Sensation" 5 footer & is a great rating in Greer's. A beautiful fragrant pink rhodo which is easy to grow with attractive foliage. It will not be as big as the Loderi rhodos & is much more compact. Blooms early, one of Paul Wurz' favourite rhodos.

"Trewithen Orange" 4 footer good to -5 F. Pendulous flowers of deep orange-brown in loose clusters mid season. Branches are erect & plant is narrow & tall.

Our Raffle Prize is "Winsome"

"Winsome" is a 3 footer, good to 0 degrees & has a good rating. It is compact with small pointed foliage. Attractive reddish brown buds, flowers extremely heavily with rosy cerise flowers.

We also have our "Greer's Guidebooks" for sale @ \$25  
"The Public Gardens of Vancouver Island" by Ian E. Efford. \$25  
Plant tags @ \$12 a box  
Fundamentals for Growing Rhododendrons @ \$3, great for beginners.  
Lovely bags @ \$14 in a variety of colours, very handy for shopping, meetings & travel.  
Not to forget our truly coveted bumper stickers "I Brake for Rhododendrons". Only 2 left!!

Happy New Gardening Year, hope you will be at the meeting!



Van Nes Sensation



Trewithen Orange



Winsome

## REVENUE TABLE

Fran Thornton

The support shown by our membership this season has been nothing short of terrific! This a beautiful process -- members donate, other members buy and it all goes directly to the NIRS.

As you know, we are now selling our donated items only at the break and that worked very well at our last meeting. Time for you to browse and time for us to set up.

Please remember to tag and price the articles prior to leaving them with us and to pick up any unsold items at the end of the meeting.

## THE PROGRAMME

Co-ordinator Paul Wurz

If you can't be in the South Seas in January, second best would be to have a superb speaker and photographer like our own Garth Wedemire relive the trip of a lifetime with you. In 2014 Garth and Sue attended the 70th Jubilee International New Zealand Rhododendron Conference which was held in Dunedin. We caught a glimpse of their trip in a presentation last spring. With Garth's knowledge of rhododendrons and his superior photographing skills this presentation should certainly be labeled "**DO NOT MISS**".

## UPCOMING PROGRAMMES

*Paul Wurz*

Jan 12.....Garth Wedemire "Convention Tour in New Zealand".

Feb 9.....Peter Guertler "England Garden Tour".

Mar 8.....Sean Rafferty "Rhodo Searching in Tibet"

Apr 12.....Terry Richmond and Allen Murray "Rhododendrons and Our Changing Climate."

## THE

## SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Judi Murakami

Hungry? Not now I'm sure but by the 12th January everyone will be ready again. A little reminder that our voluntary goodie contributors for January are Connie Prain, Helen Stefiuk, Gail Abel, Barb Staton, Lynn Wurz and Joanne Williams.

## A GOOD and BAD NEWS STORY

First, the bad news. On 11th Dec our friend and Ways and Means Lady, Lois Clyde, took a serious fall while cycling across the Oyster River wooden bridge. Unfortunately, she suffered a fractured hip and after several days in the Campbell River Hospital, Lois is now recuperating at home. The good news is that she is making slow but steady progress and we're hoping to see her at one of our meetings in the very near future. Did you notice Lois still managed to file her Ways and Means column? I understand it was typed while sitting on a shower stool while balancing her laptop. What can I say? Deadlines are deadlines! Get Well Lois -- we miss you!



Our Educational for December was the Christmas Party; it taught us how much fun we have when we all get together!

I'd like to thank Claudia Ellis, Judi Murakami and Maureen Denny for being the main partners of the Christmas Party Committee with me. Others that made the party a success included Ruth Fowler for helping us with the centerpieces and gift wrapping. Lois Clyde for making and donating the beautiful natural greens wreath and Wolfgang Hoefgen for making and donating Advent Wreath, both were raffled off. Thanks to Dale Patterson for helping set up the hall and for carving the ham and serving it to us at the end of the buffet table! Thanks Noni Godfrey for making the apple cider, a delicious treat and thanks also to our bean counter, actually jelly bean counter, Corrine Innes for our guessing game.

Special thanks to Dave Godfrey for hosting and producing the Jeopardy game, we know it comes with a lot of heckling...all in fun of course!

Big thanks to all who attended, bringing all the wonderful, tasty appies, savories, and desserts. All of those who helped set up and clear the hall....and most of all thanks for the good laughs and joy we all shared.

Nadine Boudreau

## CHRISTMAS PARTY 2015 by Dave Godfrey

Wow, wasn't that a party? The apple cider was delicious, the food was scrumptious and the trivia game was lots of fun... once the technical glitch was resolved!

The executive committee did another wonderful job of decorating the hall, setting up the tables and chairs and making sure everything was ready for PM. *Noni Godfrey* had the cider *Murakami* and *Maureen* tables. Although a few could only stay were 58 members who enjoyed the always an amazing variety of dishes to was provided by the club and *Dale* to do the carving and serving. tasty delights and there was still some who brought their favourite dish to share.



the arrival of members at 5 brewing, while *Judi Denny* prepared the banquet for the dinner portion, there potluck meal. There is savor. Once again, the ham *Patterson* was kind enough Everyone had a plateful of leftover. Thank you to all



With the tables cleared, it was time to share some wonderful gifts provided by the club. Each individual and/or couple was drawn for a gift, even those who had to leave a little early. In the end, there were a few gifts left over and these were continued to be drawn until the table was clear. Also, this year, we had draws for not one but two wreath door prizes made and donated by *Lois Clyde* and *Wolfgang Hoefgen*. Congratulations to *Don Law* who won the door wreath made by Lois and to *Christine Aldred* who won the 'Advent' wreath made by Wolfgang.

Last year's winners and the keepers of "Miss Piggy" were *Antje & Peter Guertler*. And as luck would have it, they were the ones to have the surprise certificate in their gift again this year. Not wanting to 'hog' the enjoyment of displaying Miss Piggy in their garden for two years, they chose to re-gift it to another member. Miss Piggy was then added to the door prize draws, and an excited *Noni Godfrey* had her ticket drawn.

*Corrine Innes* once again had two jars of assorted jelly beans for the guessing game, and to mix it up a bit both the large and the small candies who think they turned out, *Dale* large jar with his actual) and the small jar with As the winners members broke Birthday" song to actual birthday



small jars had a mixture of large adding an extra challenge to those can calculate a close guess. As it *Patterson* was the closest for the estimate of 112 (there was 114 birthday girl *Fran Thornton* won her guess of 137 (there were 138.) claimed their prizes, all the out in a rousing "Happy wish Fran much happiness on her and many more to come!

With all the gifts and prizes awarded, it was time to form the teams for the annual trivia faceoff! There were 8 teams of 6 or 7 players with a good mix of knowledge on each team. The team of "Golden Ones" (*Jill Gould, Connie Prain, Arlene Hooper, Dorothy Law, Dave Doubek and Brian Bennett*) were the eventual winners with a total 32 out of a possible 40 points. Each received a one gallon Rhodo of their choosing. This year, for the first time, the lowest scoring team (*Jake Ellis, Garth Wedemire, Gloria Guyader, Gwen Wright, Harris Chester, Antje Guertler and Joanne Williams*) each received one of the table centerpieces as a consolation prize. Congratulations to all the winners, and losers - everyone had a load of laughs. Hope to see you at the party next year! (Photos of the party have been posted to our website's photo gallery.)



## THE RHODO IN THE BANNER

Win "**The Garth**" -- a fun, and hopefully educational contest to determine your ability to identify rhododendrons. You might know this one just by the photo but don't forget this contest is all about using whatever resources are available to you

All entrants e-mailed to [jakeellis@shaw.ca](mailto:jakeellis@shaw.ca) with the correct answer will be entered in a draw which will take place at the next meeting.

**PRIZE! PRIZE! PRIZE!**

### The Clues

1. This species rhodo can be found on Vancouver Island in Paradise Meadows.



**WHO AM I ?**

### A Traveling Tid-Bit

Bill Dumont of the Cowichan Valley R.S. is presently putting together a New Zealand Garden and Country Tour Oct 23- Nov13. For further info please contact Bill at 250-743-9882 or 250-709-5542



## A Native Alternative:

by Jill Gould

*Malus fusca*: Pacific Crab Apple

Some time ago, Glen Jamieson gave a presentation on how Rhododendrons used to be distributed worldwide across temperate zones—probably when all land masses were one. Well, apples (members of the huge *Rosaceae* family) have the same type of ancestry. Apples which were native to North America did not survive glaciation. The current theory is that apples re-colonized North America from Asia, appearing only along coastal areas. On the Pacific Coast, our only native apple is *Malus fusca*, known as the Pacific Crab Apple or Oregon Crab Apple.

*Malus fusca* is a tree of coastal Oregon, Washington and BC, extending north to Alaska. It is a species, breeding true from seed, and rarely crosses with domestic apples.

**Pacific Crab Apple** is a fringe species, appearing at the forest edge or along coastlines, where the forest canopy is sparse. A spindly, lanky or shrub-like tree, it can form thickets. Branches drooping to the ground may root. In the open, the tree is more erect and compact, but semi-dwarf.

*M. fusca* prefers acid soil, and can withstand boggy or saturated areas. Small, scented white flowers in spring mature to tiny apples, small than a cherry, with a high tannic acid content. The fruit is edible but acrid. It is prized by birds, which spread the seed. Consequently, *M. fusca* will appear randomly in disturbed ground.

Many who wish crab apple trees or "flowering crabs" for the garden will opt for hybrids of Korean or Japanese origin, with large showy flowers. *M. fusca* provides a native alternative to the imports, blending well in a West Coast Rhododendron garden. It makes an attractive landscape tree. Like all fruit trees, it is browsed by deer, so will need protection where deer are present. It is probably not available commercially, but is common in the wild on Vancouver Island, including the Comox Valley. Keep your eyes open for the shy white blossoms in spring and the tiny fruit in late summer or early fall. Pacific Crab Apple will grow readily from collected seed, which needs stratification in order to germinate. In a favourable environment, the tree will blossom in five to ten years.



*Malus fusca* blossom



*Malus fusca* fruit

## ***Species Rhododendrons: Year Round Beauties***

*With many thanks this beautiful article is being re-printed with permission of the author Linda Derkach*

Many gardeners strive for a four-season garden - one with something of interest and beauty in every month of the year.

Here are just a few of the many hundreds of species rhododendrons that have hairy leaves, unique buds or colourful indumentum - thus attracting much-deserved attention even when not in bloom...and contributing to garden interest all year round.



The moment I laid eyes on the amazing blue foliage and fawn indumentum of *Rhododendron campanulatum* var. *aeruginosum* at Haida Gold, the garden of the late and much-respected Harry Wright in Courtenay, I was hooked. Greer calls it "...the Rolls Royce of foliage..." and I heartily agree. Sadly I have not yet found one for my garden.



The deciduous leaves of *Rhododendron nudipes* turn reddish purple before dropping in fall. Young leaves, shoots and flowers are covered with brown hairs, and are found at the end of the branchlets



Popular *Rhododendron quinquefolium* is a slow-growing deciduous shrub. In spring, leaf margins are edged with red. The bell-shaped white flowers are almost unnecessary for many devotees.



In bloom, *Rhododendron excellens* is a show-stopper. But in the run-up to the big show, the leaves are much admired.





In the dwarf category, none can beat *Rhododendron megeratum* for a proliferation of shiny, hairy dark green leaves that persist all year and seem immune to bugs and diseases. Grow in a raised bed or tree stump.



More tender, *Rhododendron edgeworthii* possesses crinkled leaves and fragrant pinky white flowers. While some brave souls have planted outside – albeit in a protected spot – many specimens are given some winter protection in a cool greenhouse or covered porch. *R. edgeworthii* was found practically around every corner on our recent tour of New Zealand gardens.



At Finnerty Gardens in Victoria, *Rhododendron monstrosum* pushes new growth upward. Growing also in Caerhays in Cornwall, England, apparently it is not readily available or grown here.



At Milner Gardens in Qualicum Beach, *Rhododendron fortunei* ssp. *discolor* is caught by the sun's rays, making it both garden and photo- worthy. Heat tolerant with fragrant flowers of pink to white, *R. fortunei* is a much-admired shrub for the larger garden. Greer states that "... flowers are beautifully formed, falling and brimming over the entire plant, making a springtime display that is unequalled." I love it in or out of bloom.





In the Rutherford Conservatory at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden near Seattle, *Rhododendron boothii* garners much attention for its reddish, hairy new growth. Recently re-introduced from Arunachal Pradesh, it may be for the serious rhodoholic.



*Rhododendron williamsianum* is one of the most available and beautiful species, whether in bloom, breaking new bronze leaves or later in summer. A dwarf, compact grower, this exceptional species is used extensively in hybridization. *R. 'Linda'*, *'Karen'*, *'April Glow'* and *'Maureen'* are all very

beautiful hybrids of *R. williamsianum*. This plant's size, beauty and ease of cultivation make it one that should be in every garden. And below...



Here is *Rhododendron 'Linda'*, all floriferous, healthy and easy to grow.



*Rhododendron clementinae* grows happily in the garden of Bill Stipe on Whidbey Island near Seattle. This hardy shrub has nicely shaped, smooth leaves with a coating of silky indumentum underneath.

**Story and photos: Linda Derkach**

