



THE OCTOBER EDITION
RHODOTELLER

www.nirsrhodos.ca

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 RHODODENDRON SOCIETY
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 2016/2017**

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OCTOBER 2016

COMING EVENTS

4th October 2016 -- Executive meeting

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

11th October 2016 -- Regular meeting

Another exciting speaker this month! The President of the Rhododendron Species Foundation, **Mr. Mike Stewart**, will deliver a presentation entitled "Contributions of Legendary Plant Collectors and Hybridizers and their Lasting Legacy".

14th October 2016

Our own **Judith Walker** will be giving a reading from her book "**A Garden for Life -- Mary Greig and the Royston Rhododendrons**". Judith will answer questions and have books for sale. All this will happen at **Art Knapps in Courtenay Friday 14th Oct. at 11 a.m.**

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

Well,

Jake is such an efficient newsletter editor that I'm writing this on the fly. Time is just zipping by.

What a great Indian summer we're having, and such an excellent turnout at the last work party!

Our 2017 plant sale now has 2 experienced coordinators, Nadine Boudreau and Margaret Griffith-Cochrane, so we know the 2017 sale will be a good one.

Fran has agreed to be the point person for the Mother's Day Garden Tour, so she will liaison between the board and the coordinators. Fran has the reputation of being a sweetheart, so we know it will be smooth sailing. Have I paved the way for interested parties? I certainly hope so, as it's one of our biggest money makers, and we'd love to provide a free bus tour for members with some of the profits.

2017 will be a special year, as it's the 20th anniversary of the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden. We can certainly take pride as it's one of the nicest in District 1.

I've invited the presidents of District 1 to meet here next year, and they've agreed! And the Whidbey Island group will be coming to visit as well. It will be fun to showcase our beautiful gardens.

Thanks everyone for stepping up and volunteering, I really appreciate your help.

Enjoy the sunshine

Judi

COMMITTEE REPORTS

MEMBERSHIP *Jill Gould*

Up to our September meeting, we have renewed 23 NIRS memberships for 2017. Fifty-eight to go! We had a wonderful, noisy September meeting, with 51 members and 3 guests. Nicolas Veronneau is our newest member.

If any of your personal information (address, phone, email etc.) has changed please let us know when you renew, or notify the Membership person (that's me) by email: jillgnews@gmail.com. As you renew, your information will appear in our Yearbook. The book is issued every January to all our current members. If you don't renew your membership, you won't be in it. Maureen Denny will be assisting me this month, as I will be away in November.

Your Treasurer has offered the use of the Square reader for paying for memberships. It will accept Visa or MasterCard. The fee is one dollar, so you will pay \$36.00 instead of \$35.00. Otherwise, it's cash or cheque for

\$35.00. A new category has been added: Student memberships for \$10.00; access to ARS Journal on-line only. Students must prove enrolment in an educational institution.

Name tags are available through me. They are ordered through a local contractor; therefore prices are subject to change without notice. I order, pick up and pay for the tags, and then you repay me on receipt.

WAYS & MEANS *Lois Clyde*

Our Raffle Rhodos this month are *R. Edgworthii* & "*Clayoquot Warrior*".

R. edgworthii is 4' good only to 15 deg F (-9C). This species will need winter protection. Interesting foliage, having a puckered affect. Dark shiny leaves with heavily indumented undersides. Flowers are fragrant & vary in colour from white through pink or pink blushed deep red outside.

"*Clayoquot Warrior*" is a 6-8' in 10 years. Blooms in May, hardy rhododendron. Flowers are tubular, funnel shaped, dark red, leaves long & narrow. Open upright plant.

Our Door Prize, *R. burmanicum*, is a 4 footer. This species will also need winter protection as it will only survive 15 deg F. Blooms early, open upright plant. Medium size lance shaped leaves are scaly on both sides, lending a golden brown effect. Sweetly scented flowers are tubular bell shaped, yellow to greenish yellow.

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!!

We now have an additional to our table, "*Cards by Dick*".

Sets of 6 for \$10 & individual for \$2 each.

These cards are pictures of Dick Bonney's garden. **A must have!!**

Hope to see you all at the meeting !

(photos from Hirsutum.info)



"*R. edgworthii*"



"*R. burmanicum*"



"*Clayoquot Warrior*"

THE REVENUE TABLE

Fran Thornton

The Revenue Table is such an important and exciting feature of our club. It affords our members the opportunity to share gardening tools, books, and plants from their gardens with other members. Members give and others purchase and the profits go directly to the NIRS to help with covering our operating costs. Our first meeting brought in an outstanding \$253.85. Thank you all!

PROPAGATION GROUP

Report and photos by Diana Scott

September has been an exciting month for the Propagation Group as we moved from caring for our very good-looking donated plants, to starting our own new cuttings. Wolfgang and his team have been working tirelessly behind the scenes to prepare the greenhouse and the 'bed' graciously loaned to us by the Smiths. On September 10th our group started mixing the potting medium and filling our new pots in preparation for cuttings. Two sizes of pots were ordered, one set slightly deeper to accommodate plants with thicker stems and larger leaves. Wolfgang ensured that the bed was set with a gravel base over heating cables, misters overhead, and timers ready to regulate heat, light, and humidity. A plastic cover was at the ready to enclose the bed once we began filling the pots with cuttings.



On September 17th we started our propagation in earnest. Garth and team had gathered and labeled a variety of plant material, and Wolfgang instructed the mostly 'newbie' propagators. With great care and concentration, we trimmed and cut the leaves, made an angle cut to the end and a thin slice to the cambium along the side of the stem, dipped it into the rooting hormone and tapped off the excess, then put the cutting into a small hole 'dibbed' into the potting medium to make sure the rooting hormone was not rubbed off while inserting into the pot. Pressing a bit to make sure it was

secure and had no air holes, we labeled the pot, standing back to admire our work. We are attempting 4 cuttings per variety of plant and our fingers are crossed! As flats were filled, they were transferred to the prepared bed and watered in. It was difficult to work too fast, because we were having such fun checking out the plant material and wishing we had one of everything in our gardens! We are hopeful that our club members and the public will be as excited about these plant varieties as we are, and will be waiting with baited breath for them to appear at our Sale.





We worked on more cuttings September 24th, and had the opportunity to do a few for ourselves. Once again the plant material was outstanding and it was difficult not to want one of each! Our bed is full. Now to care for them and hope that they root!! We continue to nurture our donated plants, weed and tidy the outdoor beds, and make sure the labels are in good shape. Plants are being selected for our meetings and the upcoming Sale, and the inventory which now includes our new cuttings is adjusted accordingly.

The Group is evolving, and members have assumed responsibilities and offered to head up aspects of the operation as we go along. We all participate and help out with 'whatever', but after discussion it was confirmed that a few members of the group will take charge of certain areas. This may change, but we are delighted to know that Wolfgang, Garth, Jake, and Paul will continue to guide us, Wolfgang will direct the maintenance of the 'stock', Noni will attend to inventory, Nadine and Maureen will organize sales, Jake will continue with communications, Dave will take photos and put them on the website, and I will take notes and do brief write-ups for the Newsletter. That said – everyone helps everyone!

We continue to emphasize that this is an open group, and we welcome any NIRS members who would like to join us. It is never too late to jump in and participate! When it comes to 'rhodos' – this is a wonderful opportunity to learn as well as share skills and knowledge. We encourage you to check out the photo section of our website to see what we've been doing, and join us if you wish!

THE EDUCATIONAL

Maureen Denny

For the educational segment of September's meeting we were treated to a lively and informative presentation of "Tool Talk" by Judith Walker. Her top two favourite tools seemed to be a long handled garden hook with about four prongs, curving downward like a claw. She uses this tool to move rocks, grade and loosen soil, available at Top Shelf Feed in Courtenay. Next was the mean sounding hand tool - a "Hori Hori" Knife. Not just any trowel, this is a cross between a knife and a trowel with a serrated edge on one side. Good for slicing through root infested soil and deeply rooted weeds. I looked this tool up in The Lee Valley catalogue on page 41. The word "hori" means digging in Japanese.

Every gardener wants a Felco secateur. You don't want to lose these but that's what happened to Judith. She put them down on the hood of her car and drove off. Ouch! I hope a lucky gardener found them! Judith recommended a plastic tool caddy to carry all the useful stuff any gardener might need once out in the yard. Keeping all this stuff in a handy carrier also makes it easy to dash the stuff under cover in case of rain. Judith had these indispensable items in her tote.

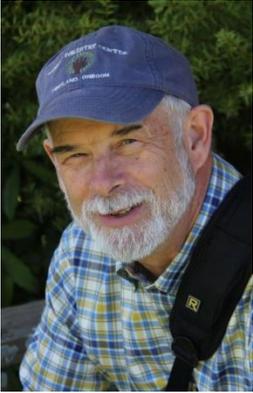
Plant Labels and marker, secateurs, Fiskars plastic trowel, Felco small folding pruning saw, UV plastic tape from Lee Valley for mending row covers, disposable blue surgical gloves, twine, and seeds.

Other tools she raved about included a stainless steel transplant spade and a deluxe Dramm watering wand with a thumb shut off valve. She showed us her small soil sieve made with a wooden frame and also talked about how important it is to protect your eyes from tops of bamboo canes. Wine corks or tiny clay pots perched on top of canes work to prevent eye poking. For gardeners who grow their own carrots she recommended a better quality row cover which is called "Protect Net" which is available from Russel Nursery in Saanich

Thanks Judith!

THE PROGRAMME OCTOBER 2016

"Contributions of Legendary Plant Collectors and Hybridizers And their Lasting Legacies"



Our October guest speaker is Mr. Mike Stewart. Mike is a past President of the American Rhododendron Society and is the current President of the Rhododendron Species Foundation in Federal Way, Washington.

Mike and his wife Maria own Dover Nursery, an exclusive rhododendron nursery. They propagate and grow over 1200 different hybrid and species rhododendrons and ship some 40,000 plants each spring to garden centers throughout the U.S. and Canada. Mike has received the ARS's highest award, the Gold Medal, for his many contributions in the areas of rhododendron cultivation, preservation, and for the information that he provides to the public.

UPCOMING PROGRAMMES

Paul Wurz and Garth Wedemire

October 11, 2016 - Mike Stewart

Topic: "Contributions of legendary plant collectors and hybridizers, and their lasting legacies"

November 8, 2016 - Dennis Bottemiller

Topic: "Rhododendron Propagation"

December 13, 2006 - **Christmas Party**

THE RHODO GARDEN

Wolfgang Hoefgen



Unfortunately, at our last work party I had a bad cold and was unable to stay very long. I don't know for sure who or how many attended but I do know they did a fine job of weeding and generally cleaning up. And if I've learned anything from past work parties, I know they had a good time doing it. Thanks to everyone for your help.

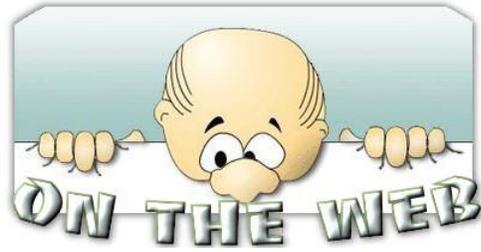
Our next work party will be Oct 13th at 10 a.m.

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Lynn Gray and Patty Matthews

Thank you very much to the members of the Board who provided those delicious goodies for our last meeting. This month we're looking forward to goodies from Adela Smith, Michele Spender, Theresa Hartwig, Bernice Morrison and Linda Ashbaugh.

Please don't forget that although we don't charge for the coffee/tea/goodies, we do accept donations. Last month we received just over \$35.00 in the jar. If we could build on that it would go a long way in helping to keep our costs down.



By Dave Godfrey

I hope that members and other visitors are enjoying the new look and features of our website. Additional features will add to your online enjoyment and allow you to find important information easily. Members can access the site the same as previously at www.nirsrhodos.ca

Past and present copies of the club's 'Rhodoteller' can be found on the 'Newsletter' page. Photograph albums of the various NIRS events and activities are available on the 'Photographs' page and are currently up to date. For those new to the various photo galleries on the website, here are some simple instructions to follow.

To open an album, simply click on the small thumbnail photo. Some albums contain many photos and may take time to load. It is important to let all photos load before opening the viewer. Once the album is loaded, you can either manually view the photos by clicking on the first one, then selecting other photos with the "next" or "previous" buttons; or click on "start slideshow" at the bottom left. You can pause the slideshow at any time by clicking on this same button. BUT, you must remember to click "stop slideshow" and the "CLOSE" button (lower right) when finished viewing the album.

On our 'Links' page, there are a number of Rhododendron and garden related links to other web pages. One of particular interest to our members would be the link to our 'District One' website. There is a lot of valuable information posted by Garth Wedemire on this site, including links to other chapters.

Also on this page there is a direct link to the ARS Store, where orders for items provide a percentage fee to the ARS organization. This helps to fund the operation of our parent organization. Something to keep in mind, if you are planning to do some Christmas shopping on line.

THE LOST IS FOUND

After "disappearing" briefly, the pH meter came home to roost, and has been put back in circulation. Louise Casson has kindly offered to be the custodian and run a sign-out sheet. So, if anyone wants to borrow the Club's pH meter, Louise has it--contact her through phone or e-mail.



We are into another month of newsletter and meetings. Where does the time go? Last month's guest speaker, John Deniseger, did a marvelous job of showcasing the Milner garden and the current expansion of a species garden there. As I mentioned at that meeting, our library has a copy of "In Veronica's Garden" by Margaret Cadwaladr. An excellent book if anyone is interested in the history of Veronica Milner's garden. Our library reference number is #10-14. I have done a book review of this book and it should be in the October Rhodoteller, if all goes well.

The Library doesn't always have a lot of new information to pass on so I thought I'd start highlighting some of our books for members to appreciate at certain times of the year.

Our rhododendrons are on their way to winter hibernation and most have their buds on for the upcoming spring show. In the mean time, October and November are prime months for planting bulbs and splitting of perennials. A great way to increase our own stock or to share with others is to split those perennials now. A few of the library books that delve into these areas are as follows:

"Bulbs in the Basement, Geraniums on the Windowsill" #40-02

"Taylor Guide to Bulbs" #40-04

"Plant Propagation" #40-22

"Creative Propagation" #40-07

"The Plant Propagator's Bible" #40-24



In closing, I remind all that only current NIRS members may sign out books and magazines. Please make sure to sign and leave the card, or the yellow magazine slip, for the librarian. Also, please remember to bring back any books or magazines signed out at the September meeting.

"A good day is one where I can at least browse through a book and look at the pretty pictures of flowers and gardens."

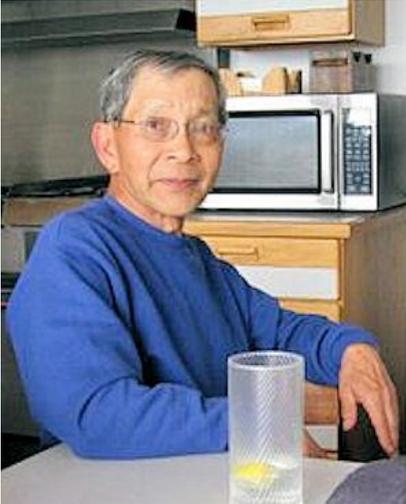
Respectfully submitted

Noni Godfrey, Librarian



My Favorite Hybridizer - Frank Fujioka!

By Paul Wurz



If you are ever in the market for the most elusive beautiful rhododendron you might want to do a bit of web searching and check out some of the well known hybridizers. Over the years I became very interested on who created some of those special rhodos in our garden, and rhodos on my "wish" list. The name of some hybridizers frequently came to the surface. Halfdam Lem, Davis, Greer, Thompson, Jack Lofthouse, Jim Barlup, Dr. Ned Brockenbrough, Harold Greer, and Frank Fujioka are to mention some of the most prolific.

From the preceding list my favorite would have to be Frank Fujioka for many reasons. Aside from producing some of the most beautiful rhododendrons, Frank is also one of the most generous, caring individuals in the rhodo world. The youngest of 10 children, Frank was born in Hawaii and later graduated from the University of Oregon and pursued a career in teaching. At this time Frank states that he "couldn't tell the difference between a dandelion and a rose"! Frank moved to his current residence on Rhodie Lane Freeland, WA (Whidbey Island) 27 years ago after retirement. I don't know which came first, Rhodie Lane or Frank - I guess I could have asked him!

Frank basically learned his skill from reading books, researching and eventually practicing. His first hybrid which he developed, at the age of 27, was Vibrant Violet, a *R. augustinii* hybrid which continues to be one of my favorite plants. Fifty two years later Frank has put together a list of approximately 35 registered rhododendrons. This list could very easily be quadrupled, if he wasn't so particular and fussy in registering his plants. Apparently the two nicest gardens on Whidbey Island are Frank's garden and Frank's discard pile! Of his list of 35, I think I have all but 2 in my garden with the exception of Golden Pleasure, and his latest, Chicken Little. I also have another 3-4 that he has not named or registered.

I asked Frank what his favorite creation was, but he did not give me an answer. Of all his rhododendron hybrids I would select Seaview Sunset as one of the most perfect rhododendrons, which would include truss, foliage and habit. His most outstanding foliage plant would have to be Chemainus (it also has a very attractive truss). I will include some pictures of some of his outstanding plants - the others can be viewed on the Hirsutum website.

Although Frank no longer hybridizes he continues to evaluate some of his un-named hybrids in his gorgeous garden. Although Frank says he is slowing down his garden is as beautiful as ever!

THE PHOTO ALBUM

A Display of only a few of Paul`s Favourite Fujioka Rhododendrons

(all photos from hirsutum)



Top Row: Saffron Silk, Vibrant Violet, Pink Pinwheels **Centre:** Seaview Sunset

Bottom Row: Jim`s Blue Berry Jam, Pomegranate Splash