



THE APRIL EDITION

RHODOTELLER

www.nirsrhodos.ca

**NORTH ISLAND
RHODODENDRON SOCIETY
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2016/2017**

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APRIL 2017

COMING EVENTS

4th April 2017 -- Executive meeting

This month's meeting will be held at the home of Carolyn Chester and will start at precisely 10 a.m.

11th April 2017 -- Regular meeting

Direct from Maple Ridge we bring an outstanding speaker, Philip MacDougall. Philip's presentation is entitled, "Sea of Rhododendrons: Joseph Rock was already here". See details inside.

30th April 2017

April really is the start our season and kicks off with the NIRS PLANT SALE. You will hear all about the final preparations at our regular meeting on the 11th April.

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

"If March comes in like a lion, it will go out like a lamb."

According to the Farmers Almanac, the above saying was an idea to reflect the balance in nature. "We can only hope that if March starts off stormy it will end on a calm note, but the key word is *hope*. However, this saying seems to be more of a rhyme rather than a true weather predictor." I did look up the forecast for our coming events, and the plant sale on April 30th should be "clearing", the 20th anniversary on May 3rd should be pleasant and for the garden tour on May 14th, it will be "dry and pleasant." I'll just trust that April showers bring May flowers.

When we were working in the rhododendron garden we could see the first bud showing colour, so we'll trust that those May flowers will be in full bloom for all of our activities.

If you didn't get a chance to sign up for the April 30th sale volunteer sheet, never fear, the list will be available at our next meeting on April 11th. And remember, our garden sitters receive complimentary tickets to our Mothers Day Garden Tour. I'll be at John Deniseger's garden in Bowser, and if your memory goes back to September, he was our guest speaker. Here's a clip about the home he and June Bouchard built for their retirement. <https://youtu.be/VjmKpxBe5D8>

And last but not least, we still need a few rooms to accommodate our American rhododendron lovers on May 3rd and May 4th. All you have to provide is breakfast for 2 mornings for the couples. Please let me know what you have (queen/double bed, any pets, etc.) and we'll match you up. Remember, when we go south, they will be rolling out the carpet for us. They're coming up to help us celebrate our CV Rhododendron Garden's 20th Anniversary, so let's show them some wonderful BC hospitality.

Judi

COMMITTEE REPORTS

MEMBERSHIP

Jill Gould

We now have 90 members, with new members Graham & Mary Park from Port McNeill, a couple of renewals, and Chris Hodgson from Fraser South joining as an associate.

Attendance at the last meeting was 57 members, and 8 guests. If any members wish a name tag, please see me at the next meeting. I can order them quickly for pickup at the following meeting. The cost will vary: approx. \$12 for a pin, and \$16 for a magnetic tag. The payment is to be made to me on receipt of the name tag.

WAYS & MEANS

Lois Clyde

Our Raffle Rhodos this month are:

"Ken Janeck" Selected form of Yakushimanum. 3' plant good to -15 deg. F. Blooms in May. Heavily indumented foliage. Richly coloured pink flowers. Beautiful plant.



"Moonwax" 0 deg. F. Blooms in May. Large & fragrant 7 lobed flowers with yellow centre & light mauve edges held in large trusses. Plant is broader than tall.



Our Door Prize is:

"Rosamundi" 4' good to -5 deg. F. Blooms very early, Often confused with "Christmas Cheer" & it blooms usually a week later. Has very light pink flowers & the leaves are smoother. It is a compact plant with an attractive appearance.



We also have our "Green's Guidebooks" for sale @ \$25

"The Public Gardens of Vancouver Island" by Ian E. Efford. **ON SALE \$20!**

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. **Only 4 left!**

Not to forget our truly coveted bumper stickers " I Brake for Rhododendrons". Only 2 left!! \$1 each. We now have an additional to our table, "Cards by Dick". One set of 6 left for \$10 or individual for \$2 each. **Only 6 left!** These cards are pictures of Dick Bonney's garden. **A must have!!**

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Patty Mathews and Lynn Gray

Thank you very much to the members who provided those delicious goodies at our March meeting. This month we're looking forward to goodies from Adrienne McNabb, Noni Godfrey, Barb Staton, Claudia Ellis and Linda Ashbaugh.

THE RHODO GARDEN

Wolfgang Hoefgen



Many hands make short work. This was never more true than at our last Work Party.

With 16 people helping, five yards of mulch was spread very quickly. What an enthusiastic group we have. The fertilizing was also done and few extra Rhodos and Azaleas were planted. Many thanks to everybody who came out to help.

We need about the same amount of mulch again and another eager team of volunteers for our next work party which will be on Thursday 13th April at 10 a.m.

The selection of cake and cookies provided by the volunteers was truly amazing and very much appreciated by all.

Thanks again and hope to see you in April.

PROPAGATION GROUP

Diana Scott

Our Propagation Group members are certainly a hardy lot. We met at the Smith's on March 15th hoping for a nice work party morning after weeks of less-than-lovely weather. Despite an encouraging forecast, it rained and snowed and we were hit with tiny pellets of hail. Gardeners that we are, we laughed a lot about that 'spring' weather and got right to work! Plant tag labels were replaced where necessary and the outdoor one to three gallon plants were fertilized. Rhodos from the cool greenhouse were brought over to the potting area in preparation for repotting the following week. Noni and Dave made a valiant attempt at updating the inventory, but the clipboard papers were getting wet and the ink was running, so a partial update was taken home to complete another day. Inside the Propagation greenhouse we were delighted to see how many of the cuttings were looking so perky. A couple of azaleas even had tiny blooms which added a bit of 'cheer' to the day. Despite the weather, there was a great turnout and we were pleased with all that got accomplished!

We met again the following Saturday, dividing into an early and later group. It was chilly but sunny and everyone was dressed for the weather. After the usual walk-about to see how the plants were doing, Wolfgang assigned our tasks for the morning. The crew worked like a well-oiled machine potting up the small plants that have been housed in the cool greenhouse. We started with the plants set out the previous weekend; one group tapping them out of their pots and lining them up to be given fresh 'soil'. Several members wheel-barrowed a supply of beautiful bark material to the potting bench, and a couple of members worked at repotting. Once repotted and labeled, pots were passed on to be fertilized and then placed in our outdoor beds. With these new plants added to the bed, and the sun shining, the inventory was started again. Everything ticked along efficiently and it was a sight to behold!

It is still too cold to pot up our new cuttings but Wolfgang continues to check them for root development, and manage the heat, light, and watering. Most are rooting up beautifully with now only a few showing signs of not having rooted yet. If the weather warms up sufficiently, we hope to do the repotting in late April. We are soooooo looking forward to potting up these rooted 'babies' and watching them develop over the year!

Thank you to all those who collected and donated their 2 gallon pots for the Propagation project. We are set for the foreseeable future. Thank you!!

It is such a pleasure to be part of this group, and we invite any members who are interested to join us - even if only for one session. It is all about learning and sharing experiences with your fellow club members - and it is, indeed, quite fun!



VIU's Milner Gardens Bunny Trail April 14 to 17, 2017

Bring the children or grandchildren for a children's Easter Bunny search taking place in the Gardens. At the Welcome & Interpretive Centre, children can pick up maps for clues to spotting the bunnies, and then return the map to the Pool House Gift Shop to receive an Easter treat.

Adult admission \$8.25, Youth \$4.25. Free admission for children 12 and under accompanied by an adult, members, and current VIU students with card.

Garden open 10am to 5pm, with last entry 4:30pm

Tea Room open 1pm to 4pm for tea, scones and soup.

For more info 250-752-6153 or www.milnergardens.org

THE PROGRAMME -- APRIL 2017

"SEA OF RHODODENDRONS: JOSEPH ROCK WAS ALREADY HERE"

PHILIP MacDOUGALL



Philip at Taiping Shan

"Joseph Rock was already here.

Over the Skype connection to my partner Quan, I pointed at the Chinese tourist map of the Changshan I'd found. "What does that say?" I asked, expecting the large scroll of letters to be the mountain's name. "Sea of Rhododendrons" was his reply. That will do nicely then. And so I saw one of the world's flower spectacles, mountainsides covered in pure stands of *Rhododendron lacteum*. At the peak of the Rhododendron season my self guided tour of Yunnan continued in that fortuitous vein. Let me present the cheap and lazy plant explorers guide to Yunnan, an alternative with no huts, no ruts, no porters, no treks and especially no rats."

A PRESIDENTIAL UPDATE

by Judi

As 2017 marks both the 20th Anniversary of the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden in Courtenay, and the sesquicentennial (I had to look that up) 150th Anniversary of Canada, we decided this is the perfect time to invite the world, at least, members of ARS. The North Island Rhododendron Society formed in 1984, and I had heard that presidents didn't really like travelling that far, so enticed them with a homemade lunch. I chose a date that the District 1 Presidents could also attend a regular meeting of the NIRS. This opportunity served two purposes; 1) to meet our members and get a sense of who we are; and 2), for our members to meet representatives from the ARS and to better understand the relationship. Chris Hodgson kindly agreed to speak for a few minutes and even roped Ken Webb into speaking, since he is the Western VP and will be ARS President after the Eastern VP's term.

The meeting included a visit to the garden, (photo attached) as well as to the Smiths, where the propagating group has been diligently working on their cuttings and plants that are for sale at monthly meetings and at the upcoming Plant Sale on April 30th.



*Allen McRae (NRS Pres.), Glen Jamieson (JARS Editor), Linda Derkach (MARS Pres.), Marilyn Dawson (District Secretary), Judi Murakami (NIRS Pres.),
Chris Hodgson (District Director and VanRS Pres.), Ken Webb (ARS Western VP), Maureen Denny (NIRS VP), Barrie Agar (CVRS Pres.)*

photo by Garth Wedemire

We're very proud of our Rhododendron Garden, and do monthly work parties where we enjoy our time together cleaning, pruning (my favourite), spreading mulch and raking, and of course socializing with coffee and goodies afterwards. We're not sure if it's a trademark of all clubs, but we love our food.

Our ribbon cutting for the 20th Anniversary at the Rhododendron Garden at 2040 Cliffe Ave, right behind the Chamber of Commerce will be on Wednesday May 3rd at 4 p.m. with cake and coffee. The Whidbey Island and Pilchuck chapters are sending a delegation of 24 members who will be billeted by our members. We've had a long standing friendship with Whidbey Island, and we take turns in hosting each other with garden tours, and yes, fabulous pot lucks.

The Nanaimo and Mount Arrowsmith chapters are doing bus tours and NIRS members have kindly offered their gardens and hospitality for them. Then there is our famous Mothers Day Garden Tour happening on May 14th, to 6 gardens from Courtenay to Bowser. John Deniseger was our September speaker and he has kindly agreed to be on the tour, even though he is not a member of NIRS, but with the Nanaimo chapter.

So we are sharing our resources, our time, talents, and hospitality between American and Canadian chapters. Our bonds of friendship extend across the border, and we are better for it.

IMPORTANT STUFF

by Jake

Thank you to all who responded to the cry for help from the Propagation Group. They were in need of 2 gal pots and that need is no more. I would like to point out, however, that there is still a need for these pots by individuals who are growing on rhododendrons and need 2 gal pots. If you have some you don't need and bring them to the Revenue Table at our meeting, I know I would buy some and others would probably join me.

South Africa Garden Tour and Safari -- Sept - Oct 2017. Bill Dumont, a long time member of the Cowichan Valley Chapter is conducting this tour. If you are interested and would like further details please contact Bill at 250-743-9882 or wedumont@shaw.ca.

You will note in the Membership Report by Jill Gould that our membership now stands at 90. While I know that number might trigger concern in some of us, it should be recognized, however, that we must be doing something right. I look forward to our upcoming elections and hope to see some of our newer members becoming involved in some of the committees. The Propagation Group would welcome new members as well and I know that those members who regularly attend the work parties at the CVRG would be pleased to have more help.

NICOLAS VERONNEAU



New to the Comox Valley, Nicolas Veronneau is one NIRS member who manages to fit in as many of the club activities as he can around a steady job in horticulture. If you catch him at work, you'll see him armed to the hilt with power tools, lost in motion like a whirling dervish in a cloud of leaves and branches. While many of us, Felcos in hand, look at pruning in a slow contemplative way, Nicolas is so sure of his next cut and equipped with such awesome powered pruners that his speed is as impressive as the accuracy of his cuts. He's a veritable Edward Scissorhands.

Born in Quebec's Eastern Townships, he grew up among relatives whose interconnected traditional dairy farms also had attached sugar bushes. While his first interest was vegetables and farming in general, come sugaring time, everyone was part of the process—cousins, uncles, aunts—happily working together in every phase of the sugaring process. Ask him when he first developed an interest in horticulture he says: "I was raised in it!"

"My father was a lumberman but he always had an extensive vegetable plot to feed us. We all got involved from planting to harvesting to freezing and canning," says Nicolas. His father was a good teacher who ignited his interest in plants and also took the kids fruit picking.

In high school, Nicolas took a course in silviculture, branching out from vegetables to planting and harvesting trees. One of his first jobs was learning how to trim Christmas trees; at the time the Quebec trees were a booming export from la belle province to tropical Brazil.

The next few years were a mixed bag: he started studying as a forestry engineer then got a job with Toyota so he could buy some land. This was followed by work in carpentry and construction working in all weather conditions. "It helped me develop a work ethic," he says. "Working in sometimes barbaric conditions of extreme heat and cold taught me how to work."

While much of his now formidable knowledge about plants is self-taught, Nicolas (who is a voracious reader and researcher) also took a two-year course at a Montreal botanical garden and then more training in horticultural and green space management at Laval University in Quebec. He says: "I felt I was in the right place and was thrilled to meet people who had devoted their lives to plants." With this training under his belt, he worked at establishing vegetable gardens in a highly urban area and later a friend whose father had a vineyard led to a period as crop manager taking care of vines.

Then came the pivotal move: he decided to come west with his father on a fishing trip and that was it. "I knew I would be spending part of my life here." Going back to his job in landscape architecture back East meant returning to long hours (often into the night) in weather that somehow seemed much more grim than before. As they say in the song, "How are you going to keep the boys on the farm, once they've seen Patee?"

Nicolas still works long hours but for him living in Comox is a little like "Patee."

THE RHODO IN THE BANNER

Just a couple of days ago we dropped in to see Bernie and Gloria Guyader. After a delightful cup of tea and stimulating conversation we took a quick trip through their wonderful garden. Even in late March, coming out of an horrendous winter it still holds some pleasant surprises. Halfway through our stroll I spied a beautiful rhodo in bloom. Surprise, surprise, I didn't know what it was but Bernie was only too pleased to tell me all about it. He told me it was *Rhododendron parmulatum* and he believes it is the "ocelot" form of that species. I don't do pictures but I did look it up for you. Nothing like seeing the real deal though and I'm hoping that Bernie might speak about it at the next meeting.

R. parmulatum 'ocelot'



