



The February Edition

RHODOTELLER

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February 2017

COMING EVENTS

7th February 2017 -- Executive meeting

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

14th February 2017 -- Regular meeting

On a trip back to England in the fall of 2014 Summer Joy and Jim Webb attended the amazing RHS's Malvern Autumn Show and would like to share this delightful experience with our members. See inside for further details.

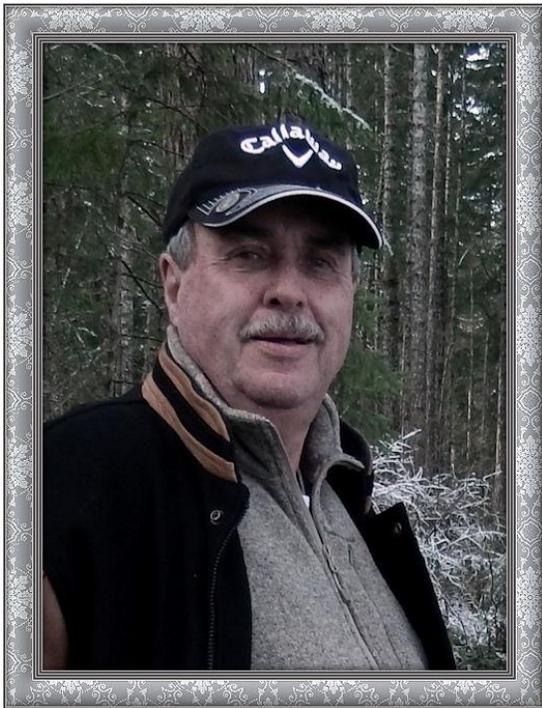
14th March 2017 - District 1 President's Meeting

On the 14th of March, the Presidents of the chapters of District 1 will meet at President Judi's home at 11:30. The participants have been invited to attend the monthly NIRS meeting in the evening. Some billets may be required.

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.

Remembering Peter Guertler

By Noni Godfrey



Our club is feeling a profound sense of loss with the passing on January 14th, 2017, of long time NIRS member, and friend to all, Peter Guertler.

Peter's dream to move from the Bavarian area of Germany to the Comox Valley was to come true in 1993, when he and Antje finally arrived in Canada.

Peter worked with T-Mar Industries in Campbell River, a logging equipment design, manufacturing and repair company, until a work related injury 8 years ago sidelined him. After 2 surgeries on his shoulder, he was unable to go back to work and went into early retirement. I believe it was around this time that Peter decided to keep our Rhodo club in good Bavarian style baked goods at most of our regular meetings, and especially at any picnics or gatherings.

Peter was actually given a special "Baker's Award" of a glass serving platter at our June picnic in 2010 for all his delicious contributions to the social committee for meetings and special events.

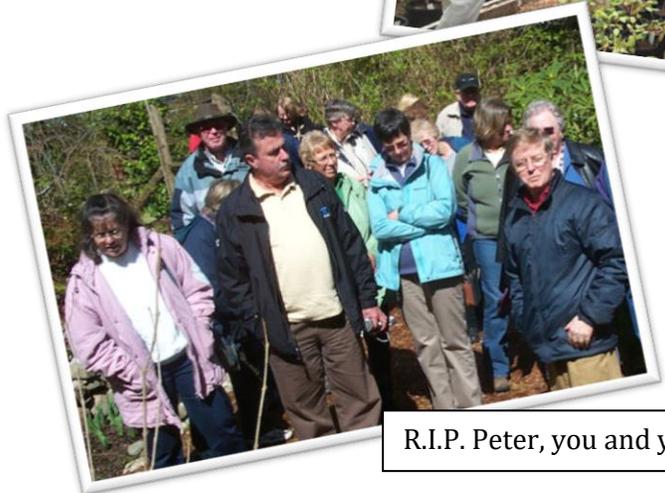
Peter and Antje joined NIRS in April 2006 and have been very active in most club activities. They have both been very visible and helpful at the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden, Plant Sales, Garden Tours and most recently with the club's Propagation Group. They have had their garden on our Mother's Day Garden tour several times and also on special visitors' and club tours.

Peter and Antje travelled extensively and went on several Rhododendron themed and organized garden tours in the UK and Europe, as well as to conferences in BC and the US. They also hosted and participated in our ongoing Whidbey Island Chapter member visits.

Peter gave a presentation to our club last February, "The Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Flower Show, and 15 National Trust and private gardens of England". This presentation was based on the garden tours they went on in May of 2015.

I present you with a display in pictures of Peter's time with the North Island Rhododendron Society.





R.I.P. Peter, you and your smile will be missed by all!

PRESIDENT'S

NOTES

Our weather has certainly been fickle lately, just like my computer. Just when we get complacent and think everything is fine, wham, we get a surprise. Certainly keeps us on our toes.

Maureen Denny will be chairing the meetings in February (both executive and general), and not because I'm slacking off, or letting Maureen stretch her wings, but in my other life, I'm a Licensed Unity Teacher so am on the road speaking and teaching in White Rock, Victoria and Nanaimo. These are "paying gigs", which I enjoy.

Not only is this year Canada's 150th birthday, but it is also the 20th Anniversary of the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden (CVRG). We're so proud that we've invited our friends from Whidbey Island and the Pilchuk ARS Chapter to help us celebrate on May 3rd. The mayor will be there, we'll have live music, cake and the media. It's our way of fostering positive Canadian/American relationships. Enjoy your easy chair now, because we'll be starting to work on getting everything in tip top shape.

On March 14th the ARS District 1 Presidents will be convening at my place for the spring meeting, and will be visiting the CVRG. Hopefully they will stay for the general meeting in the evening. In May, we also have the Mt. Arrowsmith chapter coming on a bus tour, as well as the Nanaimo chapter coming to tour. Several of our members have graciously agreed to showcase their gardens for our friends in the south.

April 30th is the Plant Sale and May 14th is the Mothers Day Garden Tour. We have 5 gardens lined up, so the coordinator(s) just need 1 more garden and can share in recruiting volunteers for that day. There's lots of help so please don't let inexperience stand in your way. It's a great way to meet new people, and gardeners are always so nice.

Spring is just around the corner.

Judi

The Rhodo in the Banner

This month's rhododendron in the banner on the front page is a photo sent to this Editor from Patty and Phil Matthews on the 10th of January. The rhodo in the banner is Lee's Scarlet just starting to break into colour at their place in East Courtenay. We're now into February and have a fresh dump of snow. Do you have any photos of early rhodos in your garden? I'd be pleased to display them for you.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

MEMBERSHIP

Jill Gould

We have started 2017 well. Renewals went smoothly. The current membership stands at 84 which include 10 Student memberships, 3 Associate memberships, and one Honourary membership. Despite the January blahs, we had a great attendance at our last meeting of 55 members and 4 guests. The 2017 NIRS Roster booklet should be available at the February meeting.

One thing I should mention again: The Executive thought that many of us might have Rhodo questions that could be answered by some of our more experienced members. So we made up a little form, "**I would like to know...**" It will be on the Membership table. You can ask your questions and hand it in to any Executive member at a meeting. That way, we can give the information right away, or perhaps plan an education session around your question. You can choose to remain anonymous!

WAYS & MEANS

Lois Clyde

Our Raffle Rhodos this month are: "Brocade" & "Mary's Favorite".

"Brocade" grows 3' high to 5' wide. Good to 0 deg. F. This is a Williamsianum hybrid. It has peachy pink flowers with ruffled edges from carmine buds. Has an open compact habit.



"Mary's Favorite" grows to 5' in 10 years. Bell shaped flowers held in a loose truss. A petite tree form rhododendron with abundant peachy apricot flowers & fragrance.



Our Door Prize is:

"Saint Tudy" - parents are *R. impeditum* & *R. augustinii*. Blooms early. Violet blue flowers, paler in throat with slightly wavy margins. Vigorous upright compact free flowering plant.



We also have our "Green'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!!

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Lynn Gray and Patty Matthews

Thank you very much to the members who provided those delicious goodies at our January meeting. This month we're looking forward to goodies from Joanne Williams, Louise Casson, Noni Godfrey, Gwen Wright and Maureen Denny.

Please don't forget that although we don't charge for the coffee/tea/goodies, we do accept donations. Last month we received \$38.50. Thank you -- those dollars are very helpful and much appreciated!

THE PROGRAMME - FEBRUARY 2017

A DAY AT THE RHS MALVERN AUTUMN SHOW

SUMMER JOY and JIM WEBB

Avid Merville gardeners Summer Joy and Jim Webb moved to the Island from England in 2010, Summer coming home, and Jim emigrating. They returned to England for a month in the Autumn of 2014. Amongst the various adventures they indulged in while in the land and culture that is so famous for its gardens, they attended the Royal Horticultural Society's Malvern Autumn Show. There are a number of huge RHS show events, all with long histories, held across England throughout the year, with the best known probably being the Chelsea Flower Show. The RHS holds a Spring and an Autumn show at the big Three Counties Show Grounds in the Malvern Hills, with the autumn event focussing on fruit, vegetables and flowers of the season. Summer and Jim invite you to come along with them and spend a really fun and full day at the RHS Malvern Autumn Show.

It is hard for people here to imagine the vast scope and size of this sort of horticultural event -- it is truly enormous, jam-packed with fantastic displays and competitions, and also includes numerous vendors for just about everything related to plants, gardening and growing, including the fabulous food and drink produced from these endeavors. Besides vast quantities of flowers, plants, fruit and veg, arranged in the most artistic and beautiful exhibits, displays also include everything garden-related, including handmade tools both new and old, along with all types of garden ornaments, handcrafts of all kinds, and displays of antique machinery. One part of the slide show presentation which people particularly enjoy features the amazing giant vegetables competition.

If you have an interest in seeing what goes on in the gardening world in England, be prepared for a fun and entertaining evening!

THE RHODO GARDEN

Wolfgang Hoefgen



It looks and feels like spring is not too far away (hee hee) and we need to start planning to get the Rhodo Garden back in shape. At our first work party of 2017 we need to do some pruning and do a real good general clean-up to be ready for mulching and fertilizing in March. Don't forget that this is our big anniversary year for the CVRG. Hopefully we can get full participation by our membership to ensure the garden is in top form for the celebration on 3rd May.

Our next work party will be Feb 16th at 10 a.m.

An Evening of Firsts

...by Dave Godfrey

Following the adoption of the first revisions to our NIRS Constitution and Bylaws at our first meeting of 2017, we had another “first.” The Board of Directors were pleased to award the first ‘Honorary’ membership to the First Lady of the chapter, Gwendolyn ‘Gwen’ Wright.

Gwen was one of the first to join the North Island chapter when it was formed back in October 1984. Alongside her husband, our foundering member - the late Harry Wright, Gwen was always supportive of our chapter’s purpose and activities right from the beginning.



In 1997, Gwen received a Bronze medal award - the highest ARS award that a chapter can present. At that time, she was recognized as *“assisting in the organizing and running of the annual shows and sales in Courtenay and Campbell River, gets involved in work parties for our rhododendron display garden, helps with phoning committees, and has hosted a number of chapter functions at her home and garden.”*

Although she will be the first to tell you she has slowed down in recent years, Gwen is always there when called upon to help where she can. It is very fitting that Gwen was rewarded for her many years of devotion to the chapter by

receiving an ‘Honorary’ NIRS Lifetime membership.

Congratulations Gwen!

A MEMBER IN PROFILE

... by Helena Zukowski

JILL GOULD



Ask NIRS members why they enjoy the club and the most common response is “because everyone is so welcoming and friendly.” This is really no exaggeration—it starts from the minute you walk in the door and see the smiling face behind the desk of Membership Chairman Jill Gould who encourages you to sign the attendance sheet. It’s not for your report card—signing the attendance sheet makes you eligible for the night’s door prize. (Honestly folks! we give out the best, the greatest, the most fantastic door prizes....)

While Jill only embraced rhododendrons seven or eight years ago, her interest in gardening stretches back to childhood. Born in London,

England, Jill and her family emigrated to Canada in 1953 and settled in Delta, BC. “My mother literally fed us out of the garden,” Jill says. “I knew the names of all the native plants because I was interested.” After finishing school, she started with general office work, moving up job by job working for Crown Zellerbach until she saw a newspaper ad for a job on Vancouver Island in payroll in Holberg, north of Port Hardy. In the late ‘70s, she met her husband-to-be, Dave, a forestry engineer and the pair were moved to a fly-in camp in the then-Queen Charlotte Islands.

“Adaptable” is an adjective that suits Jill —each new location presented her with new challenges. From working on payroll, she learned to drive a gravel truck and later at a 100-Mile-House posting, she worked for the ambulance service and got her First Aid ticket. When she was settled for a longer period in Kamloops, she took a 3-year respiratory therapist course at Kamloops Cariboo College. “Thought I should get a steady job,” she says. It turned out to be just that, with lengthy stints at the Squamish Hospital and at St. Paul’s Hospital in Vancouver working in Emergency, Intensive and Coronary Care. Back in Kamloops, it was time for another career shift—she returned to Cariboo College for a horticultural course.

During their various postings on Vancouver Island, Jill and Dave always knew that this was where they wanted to be after Dave retired; so in 1984 they bought their 10-acre property in Merville. It was just trees, trees and more trees which were slowly cleared away during frequent visits. In 2009, they left Kamloops in a motor home stuffed with plants. “I just took everything I liked the looks of out of my Kamloops garden —we looked like a mobile Art Knapp’s,” she says.

Jill joined NIRS in 2010 and confesses “I didn’t know much about rhodos when I joined. The club has taught me all I know.”

STARTING OFF THE YEAR IN BLOOMS

...by Nadine Boudreau

HAMAMELIS



As cold snap that we have endured through December and part of January has finally passed, leaving us with our usual wet west coast weather. I finally ventured out to the garden to see how it fared through the snow and ice; I was pleased and awed at the way nature just forges on. My Helleborus niger 'Coseh' that was flowering in November still in full bloom, primulas with buds swelling, snowdrops with their cute little nodding flowers, all so exciting. As I continued on my stroll, before I could see it, I could smell the sweet fragrance of my Hamamelis x mollis 'Boskoop' commonly called witch hazel. These shrubs are often the first shrub to bloom in the garden. It is in full bloom now while my Viburnum bodnantense 'Pink Dawn' is just beginning to open.

Hamamelis are valued for their early, unusual spidery-like flower clusters appearing along the branches. Flower colours range from yellows, oranges to reds. These deciduous shrubs to small trees also provide great fall colour, leaves turn yellow or red depending on type.

Though slower growing many varieties can reach to 15 feet or more, and can become quite broad. There is a nice specimen at the top of the Comox hill shrub border (entrance to Comox via Dyke road). You can get an idea of size and spread.

This is a great shrub to use in a low growing Rhododendron garden, it adds not only interest during the rhodos 'off' season, but makes a great leaf contrast, provides drabbed shade, adds height dimension, has compatible requirements and are low maintenance shrubs. Pruning should be light and kept to removing poorly positioned branches and suckers, and maybe a branch or two cut for a vase indoors to



enjoy the flowers and scent indoors. As many varieties are grafted, keep an eye out for any growth below graft and cut them out.

The most common Hamamelis to find at local nurseries are H. x intermedia. This group of hybrids are crossed with H. mollis and H. japonica. Look for 'Arnold Promise' - bright yellow flowers, 'Allgold' - deep yellow flowers, 'Diane' - dark red flowers turning orange and 'Magic Fire' - coppery orange to name a few. Hamamelis mollis commonly called Chinese witch hazel is a smaller shrub reaching 8-10 ft. tall and wide with gold flowers that are sweetly fragrant, look for the variety 'Coombe Wood' that is known for being a heavy bloomer with exceptional fragrance. Hamamelis japonica or Japanese witch hazel is more erect and tree like, up to 20 ft. having smaller, lightly scented yellow flowers.

If possible, purchase your plant when it is flowering to ensure the colour and fragrance is to your liking. When it comes to fragrance it's like the perfume counters at the store, some scents are not always to your liking.

Make sure you have a great spot for your Hamamelis, not just room for its ultimate size, but since we are not in our gardens as much this time of year, choose a spot near a walkway or driveway to appreciate the scent and flower, or at least where you can look out the window and see the flowers at this time of year.

The shrubs thrive in deep, well-drained soil, preferable a sandy loam enriched with leaf mould or compost. They grow well in a light woodland, but will be fine in full sun if ample moisture is provided during the growing season.

A great shrub to start the New Year, these early blooms brings anticipation of what's ahead in the coming months in the garden.

A THANK YOU NOTE TO OUR MEMBERS

I would like to thank everybody for the emails, cards, flowers and condolences for me and my family. We were very impressed, how many people showed up in my open house and my family could not believe how many people cared about Peter. It was so comforting and I appreciate all the offers I got if I need help. Most of my family has left now, only Maya is still here and she will leave very soon. My 3rd sister phoned me today and let me know, that she will be here in April and stay for 4 weeks.

Thank you so much again!

Antje and family

Welcome to the 2017 Rhododendron Species Symposium

Friday April 7th – Saturday April 8th
Friday Noon - 8pm Saturday 8am - 9:30pm



Held at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden and at the Best Western Plus Federal Way

The second annual **Rhododendron Species Symposium** will be held on **April 7th and 8th** in Federal Way, Washington. Enjoy visiting local gardens on your own on April 9th. Rhododendron enthusiasts, serious gardeners and horticulturists will discover up-to-the-minute information on species from Europe, Russia and beyond.

There will be an emphasis on educational time and tours in the RSBG and its facilities during the rhododendron species flowering season, meeting with staff and other delegates in what has become an internationally renowned botanical garden, containing the most comprehensive collection of natural rhododendron species in the world.

From year to year the annual **Rhododendron Species Symposium** will occur at differing times during the spring blooming season. Last year the May flowering species and intriguing new growth of those that bloom in early spring were the focus. In 2017 the early April blooming species will be studied, while in 2018 a late April Symposium is planned.



From the Field Laboratory Horticulture Classes to the lively discussion at the Species Symposium to the casual conversations with other *Rhododendron* enthusiasts, the Symposium is educational, inspiring, motivating and just plain fun!

Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden
2525 S 336th St Federal Way, WA 98001
Location Map:

Everyone Welcome!

Lodging & meetings will be at the **BEST WESTERN PLUS Evergreen Inn & Suites, Federal Way**, features complimentary amenities like free parking, free Wi-Fi, shuttle service, and complimentary deluxe hot breakfast.

Schedule

Symposium registration is now open. Cost to attend the entire Symposium weekend, including all sessions, speakers, classes plus Saturday lunch and Saturday evening banquet will be only \$125 US if registered before February 10th (\$110 US for Canadians registrants). Late registration of \$145 US begins February 11th (\$130 US for Canadians).

All events take place at the Evergreen Inn & Suites Best Western Plus or at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden. This schedule is subject to change.

Friday, April 7 – Cascade meeting room

- Noon – 1pm Registration Open, Register for Saturday Field Laboratory Horticulture Classes
1:00 – 3:30pm RSF Annual meeting
3:00 – 3:30pm Break, Snack & Chat
3:30 – 4:30pm “The Rhododendron Gardens of Europe” with Hartwig Schepker.
Hartwig will show images and discuss some of the finest gardens in Europe, specifically those that feature outstanding collections of rhododendrons. He will take us on a journey through the United Kingdom and into continental Europe including Italy, Denmark and Germany among others. This will be a lavishly illustrated and very enjoyable insider’s look at some of the most beautiful gardens in the world.
4:30 – 5:00pm Species ID Contest and Student Poster Session
6:00-8:00pm Dinner on your own – local restaurants with staff and speakers⁸Optional after dinner Meet & Mingle at hotel bar

Saturday, April 8 – Cascade meeting room

- 8:00-8:30am Registration Open, Register for Saturday Field Laboratory Horticulture Classes
8:30 – 9:15am “Elucidating the tropical diversification of rhododendrons and the genetic basis for changes in floral shape using genomic data” with Valerie Soza.
Vireya rhododendrons are a group of about 320 species that occur primarily in Southeast Asian islands with diverse floral shapes suitable for birds, bees, butterflies, and/or moths. Valerie will discuss the wide range of their floral morphology.
9:15 – 10:15am Establishment of the Rutherford Conservatory with Dennis Bottemiller
10:15 – 10:30 am Break, Snack & Chat
10:30 – 12:00 Species Symposium with moderator, Chip Mueller
Panel: Hartwig Schepker, Mike Stewart, Valerie Soza, Steve Hootman, Dennis Bottemiller, Atsuko Gibson
12:00- 1:00 pm Lunch, served in the Cascade meeting room

Shuttle to Garden provided by Best Western Plus or Carpool

- 1:30 – 4:00 pm Field Laboratory Horticulture Classes at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden
Enjoy time on your own in the Garden
6:30pm – 9:30 Banquet and lecture at the Evergreen Inn and Suites, Best Western
Cash bar
Speaker – Hartwig Schepker, “The “Other Rhododendron Species” – the rhododendrons of Kamchatka, the Russian Altai and beyond”

Sunday, April 9

Optional local attractions and garden visits

Speakers

Saturday Morning - 8:30 – 9:15 am

Valerie Soza - “Elucidating the tropical diversification of rhododendrons and the genetic basis for changes in floral shape using genomic data”

Vireya rhododendrons are unusual from the majority of temperate rhododendrons for their tropical distribution and wide range of floral morphology. Vireyas are a group of about 320 species that occur primarily in Southeast Asian islands with diverse floral shapes suitable for birds, bees, butterflies, and/or moths. Their present-day distribution, combined with sampling throughout their genomes, has allowed us to infer ancestral ranges and estimate the direction and timing of dispersal across these islands. In addition, we observe changes in floral shape and stamen arrangement in vireyas as they moved east, which are most likely due to changes in flower symmetry genes. This has prompted us to examine flower symmetry genes from across rhododendrons to look for evidence of gene duplication associated with flower symmetry changes.



After Valerie Soza completed her undergraduate studies in Environmental Studies and Anthropology, she served as Botanical Field Studies Coordinator and Herbarium Curatorial Assistant at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden in Claremont where she managed a variety of conservation projects focused on California plants. Valerie received her Ph.D. in Biology in 2010 and completed her postdoctoral research in 2014 at the University of Washington, examining the evolutionary history and development of flowers and sexual systems in a variety of plant groups. She is currently a Research Scientist in Ben Hall’s Lab at UW and is using genomic data to understand rhododendron evolution.

Saturday afternoon - Field Laboratory Horticulture Classes at the RSBG:

Featuring RSBG Staff

“Big-leaf Rhododendrons” with Steve Hootman, Executive Director and Curator

Steve will lead a tour of the big-leaf collection to examine and compare all of the species in cultivation including several so new that they have yet to be named! He will discuss specific identification traits and the best cultivation methods for each species; a detailed handout will be provided.

“Secrets of species propagation” with Dennis Bottemiller, Nursery Manager and Propagator

Dennis will lead a detailed discussion with demonstrations of the best and latest techniques in *Rhododendron* species propagation. A full and in-depth tour of the entire nursery facility is included.

“Successful cultivation of rhododendrons – the RSBG way” with Atsuko Gibson, Assistant Curator and Ben Meersman, Gardener

Join RSBG’s expert horticulturists Atsuko and Ben in the garden to learn the best techniques for the successful cultivation of *Rhododendron* species as well as Himalayan Blue Poppies and *Cardiocrinum* (Giant Lilies). Watering, soil prep and pest and disease issues will be highlighted.

Saturday Evening – 6:30pm – 9:30 (after the Banquet)

Featured Speaker: Hartwig Schepker, Scientific Director of the Botanic Garden and Rhododendron-Park Bremen

“The “other Rhododendron species” – the rhododendrons of Kamchatka, the Russian Altai and beyond”



Join Dr. Hartwig Schepker as he discusses and shows images of the “other” rhododendrons of the world. Hartwig will be informing us about those Eurasian species which are often overlooked in favor of their Himalayan and Chinese relatives. These include the species native to the European Alps to as far away as the Russian Far East and including the ornamental species of the Caucasus Mountains and even Spain and Portugal. This will be an incredible introduction to some of the least known rhododendron-regions on the planet and you will not want to miss this exciting opportunity.

Dr. Hartwig Schepker is the Scientific Director of the Botanic Garden and Rhododendron-Park Bremen, home of one of the largest Rhododendron collections in the world, including hardy and non-hardy species and hybrids. He is also the Secretary of the German Rhododendron Society and co-editor of the society’s publication “Rhododendron und Immergrüne”. Hartwig has been on several rhododendron trips in South East Asia and North America, including four journeys to Arunachal Pradesh between 2005 and 2012. His main objectives are to promote the important ecological functions of Rhododendrons in their native habitats and to point out the long and important role of rhododendrons in the history of gardening in Germany.

