



THE JUNE EDITION

# RHODOTELLER

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

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## JUNE 2017

### COMING EVENTS

#### 15 June 2017

Our next work-party at the CVRG will be on Thursday, 15 June at 7 p.m. This work-party really is a party -- please see inside for details.

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#### 17 June 2017 -- June Picnic

This year's June Picnic will be held in the beautiful gardens of Robert Argall, 387 Wireless Rd, Comox. This fun event will kick-off at 4 p.m. Please bring chairs, cutlery, cups, plates and a potluck dish.

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#### 12 September 2017 -- Regular Meeting

Where the June Picnic represents the end of another wonderful NIRS season, Tuesday 12 September marks the beginning of the next chapter. A chapter full of learning, friendships and fun not to mention an exciting assortment of good food.

*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 NIRS, not only did you survive, but you thrived!

It's been non-stop festivities since the last newsletter. As Ann Chevrier put it, we know each other so well that we're living in each other's pockets.

Kudos to Nadine and her assistants for an excellent plant sale. Our speakers Jake, Al and Bernie did a stellar job of presenting and lots of members came out to help.

The weather was superb, and the clouds parted for our American friends to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the CV Rhododendron Gardens. Mayor Larry Jangula made time in his busy schedule to come and speak, as well as former mayor Ron Weber. The lovely string quartet with our 2 talented musicians Corinne and Theresa added a lovely touch of class to the event. Thanks to Dave for organizing and Noni for the tubs of red and white tulips, Maureen for her tent, Jill, Dave, Ruth and Howard for transporting chairs, Garth for the sound system, Patty, Phil and assistants for the coffee, Adrienne and Rob for hosting dinner, Paul and Lynn for hosting lunch, Brian and Barb, Ann and Rob for showcasing their gardens, and to everyone for joined us for the potluck lunch and dinner for all the goodies.

Everybody was happy. President Doug Keough of the Pilchuck chapter wrote "It was a real pleasure to meet the Rhody group to the beautiful north. We had plenty to eat, and found the hospitality wonderful. Oh, yea, the gardens were pretty nice too." His wife Donna (secretary of the chapter) wrote "We all had a wonderful time and were happy to have made some new friends. Gardens were stellar!" Plus she sent a beautiful card that I'll bring to the potluck picnic.

Then the AGM in Ann's garden which changes constantly as more and more flowers bloomed. We appreciate the work of Paul Wurz as Programme Co-ordinator, Claudia Ellis as Treasurer, and directors Ruth Fowler and Lois Clyde who will be stepping down. Dave Godfrey will be the new treasurer and hopes to hand over the webmaster duties to someone. Vice President Maureen Denny will be taking on the CV Rhododendron Gardens, as Wolfgang Hoefgen has found the propagating to be a growing concern. Phil Matthews will be the new Ways & Means Director, (ably assisted by his wife Patty) and they are leaving the kitchen behind. Antje Guertler saved the day by volunteering as Social Coordinator. If she hadn't put her hand up, we would be facing very dry meetings. She did agree that making coffee doesn't preclude her from bringing cake!

Hopefully you all had a chance to take in the Mother's Day Garden Tour. Maureen, Carolyn and Ruth did a stellar job of organizing it so thank you ladies! It was well worth the drive to Bowser to see the beautiful garden of John and June, plus the lovely guitar music. Luckily the rain held for most of the

day to see Dave & Noni's "labour of love", Adrienne and Rob's "riverbed of fish", Innisfree Farm, Ellen van Heerden's and Aundrea and Darren Kvisle. The uniqueness of the Kvisle garden is the fact that the original owner was the niece of Dot & Ken Gibson and most of the rhodos came from Tofino.

Most of you weren't aware, but our neighbours to the south, Mount Arrowsmith, brought a huge busload of 46 "Marsians" to view the gardens of Deniseger's, Godfrey's, Smith's, Wurz's, Staton's and Argall's. They were a hungry bunch and ate all the homemade treats of Noni's, and poor Lynn was so tired after feeding them coffee and goodies that she wasn't able to come and see Robert's. Then the Nanaimo bus load arrived 3 days later to view Kailey's, Ann's, Paul & Lynn's, Robert's and Dave & Noni's. So you can see how busy some of our members were showcasing their gardens and feeding the masses! Now that the good weather has set in, the work continues!

We look forward to seeing you all at Robert Argall's for our wind up summer potluck on Saturday June 17th. Remember to bring your chair, cutlery, cup, plate and potluck dish. Coffee will be on.

Cheers

*Judi*

P.S.

*The summer potluck will be held at Robert Argall's on Saturday June 17th at 4 p.m. Please remember to bring your chair, plate, cutlery and mug. Coffee/tea will be available and it will be BYOB.*

*So far we have 5 hot dishes, 5 salads and 7 desserts. For those who have not yet signed up, it's not too late. Just bring a main course. We understand that this is a busy time, with visitors, outings and what not. We hope to have some fun in the sun, with prizes for winners of the games, and some special events happening. We look forward to seeing you there.*

## CVRG Celebrates 20 Years

by Dave Godfrey

On Wednesday May 3<sup>rd</sup>, members of the North Island chapter celebrated the 20 year anniversary of the official opening for the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden (CVRG.) It was extra enjoyable to have this special event coincide with the arrival of our friends from the Whidbey Island and Pilchuk chapters, who were here to enjoy a visit to some of our members' gardens.

Although the skies were somewhat threatening, the showers held off and approximately 65 members and guests enjoyed the ceremony. NIRS members Corrine Innes and Theresa Hartwig were joined by fellow musicians Ann Baylis and Marcia Haley to form a quartet providing light classical music for the afternoon event.

Welcomed by Courtenay Mayor Larry Jangula, each of our American guests was presented with a City of Courtenay souvenir pin. Also on hand was former Mayor Ron Webber who officiated the opening of the garden in 1997. During his speech, Mayor Webber recalled the early beginnings of the garden. It was also fitting that he and NIRS 'First Lady' Gwen Wright cut the special cake for the occasion.



As our founding President Harry Wright once recalled, "The North Island Rhododendron Society, working with the city of Courtenay under the 'Partners in Parks' program, created a rhododendron garden right in the centre of a high pedestrian traffic area. The city provided soil, mulch, an irrigation system and gravel chips for pathways. While the NIRS members provided plant material, plant identification, garden signs and labour for the construction and maintenance."

It was approximately ten years after the formation of the North Island chapter of the American Rhododendron Society in 1984, that Harry followed through on a dream to build a public garden to showcase the beautiful plants for members and the public to enjoy and share. As such, the Courtenay City council agreed to the creation of the garden in the vicinity of the airpark walking path. The first bed was completed in April 1996, the second bed in September 1996 and the third bed in April 1997. It was at this time that the CVRG was officially opened by then Mayor Ron Webber in May 1997.

Subsequent beds have been developed over the years with the last one being bed #7, behind the Historic train building, containing rhododendrons of hybridizers from Vancouver Island. This bed, affectionately known as the BOVI bed (Born on Vancouver Island) was officially opened in May 2007 by then mayor Starr Winchester.

This partnership with the city continues today, with mulch and gravel supplies provided by the city to refresh the beds, as needed, and members of the society continuing to provide the manpower for maintenance and upgrades.

With its high walking traffic location, the garden is enjoyed on a daily basis by citizens and visitors alike. Many compliment the NIRS members whenever we are conducting our maintenance work parties. One passing comment about the more than 130 different varieties contained in the garden was... "Oh, I thought they only came in red!" Because of the garden and the many NIRS Members, most people now know better.

## THE RHODO GARDEN

*Maureen Denny*



On May 3rd, our beautiful CVRG had its 20th Anniversary celebration which was a great success. A work party was held shortly before that time to make sure the gardens were in tip top condition for the event, especially to show it off to our visitors from the USA. Unfortunately not many rhodos were in bloom at that time due to our cool late spring.

Our next work party will be held on the evening of June 15th at 7pm. To celebrate the beginning of our summer schedule there will be a hotdog supper with soft drinks served at 5:30 p.m. at the CVRG.

Following supper there will be lots of deadheading and general cleanup to do.

I encourage all to stop by the gardens soon, as the rhodos are now out in full bloom. Also our new plant identification signage is up, making it easy to get the right name of your favourite rhodo. See you all on the 15th!

**Maureen**

( Your new CVRG Coordinator)

**P.S.**

Thanks to Jake who has volunteered to help me with this position.



## AN INVITATION

### TO AN OPEN GARDEN

*Kailey and Nathalie Caldwell-Waluk are generously opening their garden to all NRS, MARS, and NIRS members on July 22nd from 10a.m. to 2p.m. This is an opportunity to visit a garden with an unusual variety of plants that should be a real show of foliage and texture in midsummer. It's also a chance for members of the 3 clubs to get together in midsummer, something that we don't do very often. 1464 Savary Place, Comox.*

*"Begun 5 years ago, this is a unique collector's garden with plants initially sited for growing conditions and hardiness rather than texture and color, although that is coming along too. Kailey loves growing hardy aralia family plants: Schefflera, Fatsia, Sinopanax, Metapanax, Pseudopanax, and Tetrapanax. There's a collection of more than 45 types of bamboo from all over the world, many of them rare and unusual, as well as a rhododendron collection, highlighted by large-leaved species and borderline small-leaved species. And there's more: Podophyllum, Arisaema, gingers, elephant ears, tree ferns, hardy eucalyptus..... AND a greenhouse for overwintering and propagation and even a few plants for sale."*



*Kailey and Nathalie relaxing in their winter garden 2017.*

(photo courtesy of the Comox Valley Echo)

## THE PROPAGATION GROUP

On May 27th, a meeting of the propagation group was held at the home of Garth and Sue Wedemire. The main intent of this meeting was to discuss "What's Next ?". That question was answered when we decided wholeheartedly to take more cuttings this fall and propagate them and grow them on for the benefit of the NIRS.

To this end, we would like to involve all our NIRS members in developing a comprehensive list of interesting rhodos that the Propagation Group could use for cuttings. We are trying to propagate rhodos that are different from the ones carried by our local retail outlets. Do you have a rhodo in your garden that you particularly like -- a rhodo that you would like our group to try to propagate? Please advise your particulars along with the name of the rhodo direct to me (jakeellis@shaw.ca). If everything works out, we will have a crack team of "cutting-takers" visit your garden in the fall. Trust me when I say that no rhododendrons will be harmed by our somewhat professional reproductive experts.

On 3rd of June some members of our group met again -- this time at the Smith's greenhouses. We spent a couple of hours re-potting some cuttings and doing odd jobs around our site.

Please don't forget, if you have any interest in joining the Propagation Group just e-mail Jake Ellis for further information.

## CONGRATULATIONS!

At the ARS Convention in Eureka, California in April of this year, Ken Webb, who is an Associate Member of the NIRS and the ARS Western Vice President, was awarded the ARS Silver Medal.

Well done, Ken!

Our own Garth Wedemire, who has been on the Board of the Rhododendron Species Foundation was recently appointed to the position of Secretary of the Foundation.

Keep up the good work, Garth!

## A SAD SIGN OF THINGS TO COME?

### **Glendoick Mail Order comes to an end. May 2017**

After 63 years, Glendoick Gardens is sadly discontinuing its mail order business to all but a limited number of customers whose gardens we are designing. We will continue to grow a range of material which will include the bestselling species and hybrids.

Customers will still be able to order plants to collect from our garden centre and we may be able to help societies who wish to club together to place orders of a substantial size and deliver to one address.

For over 60 years, Glendoick have introduced new plants from the wild, bred new hybrids and sought out the best plants from the best growers to introduce into the UK.

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We are incredibly grateful to all our customers over the years, many of whom have become friends and plant-hunting companions. It is amazing to see so many Glendoick plants in gardens all over the UK, Europe and further afield. We are also very grateful to our long serving staff. Happily we have managed to employ some of them in other roles at Glendoick. But sadly Jane and Chris are leaving Glendoick. We wish them the best.

### **Why is Glendoick discontinuing Mail Order?**

**1. Economics.** Brexit, economic downturn, bureaucracy, and plant selling prices are not keeping pace with increases in minimum wages and have therefore made specialist nurseries uneconomic. M&S, for example, are selling large rhododendron hybrids for £10. We can't compete. I fear that specialist rhododendron growers will be a rare breed when current nursery owners retire.

### **2. Climate Change and Pest and Disease threats**

All gardeners are suffering from the effects of climate change, particularly in S. E. England. The last time I visited the Valley Gardens at Windsor, I could see what the future of rhododendrons in this part of the world might be. We have had no rain for months and have been watering day and night to keep things going. Meanwhile, the number of pests and diseases increases year on year: soft scale, petal blight, ash die back and sudden oak death. And the chemicals used to control them are disappearing off the market, so we have nothing to turn to. Systhane, the best mildew control, has just gone off the market. Glyphosate (Roundup) looks like it may join the others on the list. The E.C. is sleepwalking to disaster, allowing plant imports of plants with soil from Asia, New Zealand and other countries. The latest pest to come from New Zealand is a mealy bug which eats *Meconopsis* roots.

### **3. *Phytophthora ramorum***

This disease is now established all over the UK, and much of Europe. It has spread around *Larix*



(larch) plantations in the UK and is clearly an airborne disease as well as a waterborne one. This means that, like Ash die back, it cannot be controlled by hygiene. In common with most UK woodland gardens and nurseries, Glendoick has had small outbreaks of this disease and have satisfied the criteria which the plant health authorities demand. This has allowed us to continue to trade. But this disease is here to stay in Europe. At present, all infected plants are destroyed without compensation. We don't want to be forced to close the nursery in the future, so are taking steps to protect ourselves from this eventuality. Having taken advice, we are discontinuing open ground production and moving to container only, and are eradicating all susceptible varieties from commercial production.

### **3. Plant Hunting**

The Nagoya Protocols, which bans plant collecting worldwide, have made plant-hunting for a nursery like ours more or less impossible. While we quite understand the reasons for this legislation, and broadly support it, the effect is likely to be counter-productive in terms of conservation, as threatened plants may become extinct, if they cannot be collected and distributed. We were lucky to have three generations of Cox plant-hunters. And we still have every intention of going looking for plants again, but perhaps not in the same way. I don't anticipate the next generation of Coxes being able to do what we did.

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### **Outstanding Orders**

We will review any orders held over from Spring 2017 and you are welcome to come and collect any plants we can supply in the Autumn. We won't be sending out any more catalogues but we will have an Excel listing of stock we can send you and we will keep the website updated with the plants we are still growing. We are hoping to be able to continue a very limited mail order service in the UK, Ireland for large orders £500 or more in value. Any orders to Europe would probably have to be collected.

This is a sad time for us at Glendoick and we are sorry for the disappointing news. Thanks once again for your support of Glendoick over the years. We hope that you will continue to visit Glendoick. We will continue to stock the largest range of rhododendrons available in any UK garden centre and we are continuing to develop new hybrids. On a more positive note We have just named 2 new evergreen azaleas Glendoick Candyfloss and Glendoick Ruffles and have selected a new double yellow azalea for testing.

## Dicentra Formosa

### (Pacific Bleeding Heart)

*Jill Gould*



*Dicentra formosa* is a perennial herb, native to moist woodland areas of the Comox Valley; as a matter of fact, it appears all the way down the Pacific coast into Northern California.

The plant is dormant in the winter, but in spring the blue-green lacy fern-like foliage appears. The pink flowers are borne in drooping panicles on leafless stalks held above the foliage. Unlike some other species of *Dicentra*, the leaves often remain after the flowers are finished. The seed pods are long green tubes, and the plant will self-seed easily, often spread by ants which find the seeds tasty.

As a matter of fact, it may self-seed too easily. If you have the plant in your garden or woodland, you will find it popping up all over. To top that, it also spreads by rhizomes. It could be considered invasive in a small garden bed, but the rhizomes are easy to pull out. It likes moist soil, but not standing water.

In a woodland setting, the plant may be left to appear at will. Before a lot of brush grows up, it will form a beautiful under story carpet. A little encouragement, and you can establish it among your Rhododendrons, as both *Dicentra* and Rhododendrons like moisture.



## THE RHODO IN THE BANNER

The Rhodo in this Month's Newsletter is *R. campylogynum*. Ours bloomed nicely this year and I just cannot get enough of those beautiful flowers. When you look at the two photos below from *hirsutum*, hopefully you will agree.



### *THE CORRECT ANSWER TO THE QUIZ IN THE MAY ISSUE.*

The Rhodo in the Banner was "Conroy"

2 Members (Lois Clyde and Maureen Denny) sent in the correct answer and will each receive a ticket for a draw of a beautiful rhododendron.

## A WEE FUNNY STORY FOR ALL OBSESSED GARDENERS

*Maureen Denny*

I was getting ready to go out to the garden the other day, gathering up my tools and looking for my work jeans. I have a special pair that I wear for a few days in a row, letting them get really dirty (especially the knees) before chucking them in the wash. However I couldn't find them hanging on their usual nail in the laundry room. I yelled out to my husband " Have you seen my gardening JEANS?" How would he know where they are I realized. He replied "Your gardening GENES have mutated!" At first I didn't get his joke, being that kind of person who can be slow on getting jokes.

Then I laughed and said " Yes I guess they have....into an extreme form!" Then I found them, hanging up right up where they should be, I just didn't see them.