



THE NOVEMBER EDITION

RHODOTELLER

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NOVEMBER 2017

COMING EVENTS

7th November 2017-- Executive meeting

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



14th November 2017 -- Regular meeting

The speaker for our November meeting will be **Mr. Douglas Justice of UBC Botanical Gardens**. Douglas will be speaking about the "Rhododendrons at UBC Gardens". Please see inside for more details.



16th November -- CVRG

Our monthly work party at the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden will be held on Thursday 16th November at 10 a.m. As you can tell by looking outside there will be plenty to do as winter rapidly approaches.



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

Hats off to our program coordinators as I've heard some really positive feedback from the community about the "calibre" of our speakers. Al Morton gave a really informative talk about mason bees last month. If you missed it, here's a video clip on Al's favourite subject: <https://youtu.be/GycdVtNIZBw> This month Doug Justice should be equally scintillating!

November already, and I trust you all turned your clocks back. Did you know that Daylight Saving Time was thought of by Englishman William Willett, not Benjamin Franklin, (who advocated for maximizing daylight hours, not changing the clocks). Germany was the first country to enact daylight saving time in 1916, and England followed two weeks later. The United States adopted it in 1918, repealed it the next year, but brought it back during WWII. There was no consistency and at one point, there were 23 different time zones in the State of Iowa, resulting in a system that Time magazine (an aptly named source) described in 1963 as "a chaos of clocks." Even in Canada not everyone follows this system, but plants don't care. Hopefully everyone has their garlic in the ground. The Farmer's Almanac has predicted a warmer than normal winter thank goodness.

I just returned from Toronto and Kansas City and had sunshine all the way, even though it was below freezing some mornings in the States. I'll be staying put till next May when I head over to Germany for the International Rhododendron Conference. Stay tuned for details of the Cowichan gardens bus tour in May, which can happen **only** if one or two of you step forward to help organize transportation from here to there. The actual logistics of the tour is already done, so it's just getting the bus and money together. Any takers????

Looking forward to seeing you at the meeting, and remember your mugs, our contribution to the environment.

Cheers!

Judi

COMMITTEE REPORTS

MEMBERSHIP

Jill Gould

Our October meeting was attended by 42 members and 3 guests. Eight more members renewed, along with four by mail (or messenger!). On top of that, Doug Kitts of MARS signed up as an Associate Member while attending (and buying) at the Propagation Group's Rhodo sale on Oct. 28. As of October 24 our list shows 38 paid up. Not quite the overwhelming response we had been anticipating, so c'mon, folks! December 31 will be here before you know it.

We are inviting our 2017 Student Members to renew if they are still in the North Island College Horticulture program, and will probably be carrying on the Student Member offer for 2018 for new students. People pursuing Horticulture as a career are thus made aware of community-based groups, like us, that promote a love of plants...and will maybe join as full members in the future.

Dave Godfrey tells me that the longest-enrolled member of the ARS in our NIRS club is Garth Wedemire, with ARS number 4475. Take a bow, Garth—that's perseverance or something (maybe love?)

THE RHODO GARDEN

Maureen Denny



Fourteen eager members showed up for the October 12th work party. We raked, weeded and pruned until the gardens were once again looking great! One rhodo, Golden Wit, which was no longer looking very good was dug out by Dan Prain. Ross Griffith Cochrane decided to take it home and see if he could nurse it back to health. The weather was sunny so we were able to have our goodies and coffee outside at the picnic table.

The next work party will be held Thursday November 16th, weather permitting. There will be lots of leaves to rake. Please bring your rake and bucket and a wheelbarrow or two would be great.

WAYS & MEANS

Paul Matthews

Our Raffle Rhodos this month are:

(photos from *hirsutum*, descriptions from *Greer's*)



"*Pacific Gold*" 4', -18c. Wavy lobes, brilliant yellow with pale yellow edges. Glossy green leaves -- new growth is mahogany green.



"*May Day*" 3', -15c. Flowers are bright orange-red with faint brown spots. Leaves dark matt green with thick tan-coloured indumentum. Straggly habit. Wider than tall.

Our Door Prize is:



"*Carmen x Ken Janek*" This photo was taken by Harry Wright in his garden in May 2007. Few details available but if you look at the parentage it should be small, hardy and beautiful.

We also have our "*Greer'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 3 left!**

Not to forget our truly coveted bumper stickers "*I Brake for Rhododendrons*". Only 2 left!! \$1 each.

Hope to see you all at the meeting!

THE PROGRAMME

November 2017

RHODODENDRONS AT UBC GARDENS

DOUGLAS JUSTICE



While many people have lives involved with plants, it might be hard to find someone who has been immersed in horticulture as totally as the North Island Rhododendron Society's (NIRS) next speaker, Douglas Justice. Douglas will center his November 14 NIRS presentation on rhododendrons—from the familiar to the rare—but his familiarity with things botanical reaches far beyond that. He is a specialist in exotic plants, integrated pest management, sustainable landscapes, plant names, trees of every sort—and that's for starters. Douglas Justice is UBC Botanical Garden Associate Director and Curator of Collections. His primary responsibility is the day-to-day operation of the garden and interpretation of the plant collections. He is also involved with public and industry

outreach, and teaches horticulture and plant identification courses for the Faculties of Land & Food Systems and Applied Sciences. Prior to joining the UBC Botanical Garden, Douglas taught horticulture at Kwantlen University College in Langley where he focused on plant identification, integrated pest management and nursery production. Douglas trained at Massot Nurseries (Richmond, BC) and has worked as a gardener in Vancouver and at Windsor Great Park, England. Douglas is a founding member and past-president of the Native Plant Society of BC, a founding member and vice-president of the North American Branch of the Maple Society and is actively involved with a number of other local, national and international botanical and horticulture organizations. Douglas holds a Bachelor's Degree in Horticulture and a Master's Degree in Botany both from UBC.



Christmas Greetings in November!

by Hamper Co-ordinator Diane Van Oostdam

It has again come time to think about the NIRS Christmas Hamper.

As in previous years, this is a totally optional initiative that many of our members join in.

What is helpful? Please bring either a non-perishable item (see the accompanying list), or a cash donation to the November or December meeting.

We usually sponsor a couple with children, but will not know the ages and gender of the children until the middle of November. We are asked to give a gift to each of the children, but of course if you wish to bring something for the parents, that is fine too. The list below is the basic list for the hamper, we are able to add extra items if so desired.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. SUGAR (2 KG.) | 13 CANNED SALMON AND TUNA |
| 2. FLOUR (2 KG.) | 14. JAM OR HONEY |
| 3. COFFEE (300 GRAMS) | 15. PEANUT BUTTER |
| 4. TEA (SMALL PACKAGE) | 16. SPAGHETTI |
| 5. JUICE (TETRA PACK -2 | 17. SPAGHETTI SAUCE |
| 6. SOUP (ASSORTMENT) | 18. SNACK TREATS |
| 7. CANNED VEGETABLES (2) | 19. RICE |
| 8. COOKIES | 20. HAND SOAP, SHAMPOO |
| 9. CRACKERS (2 BOXES) | 21. PAPER PRODUCTS. |
| 10. TURKEY STUFFING | (NAPKINS, TOILET PAPER, PAPER TOWELS) |
| 11. CRANBERRY SAUCE | |
| 12. CEREAL (2 BOXES) | |

Plus \$40 needed to cover our purchase of perishables, such as turkey, bread, buns, milk, fruit & vegetables.

I will send more information on the age and gender of the children as soon I receive it.

My Favourite Dwarf Rhododendrons

Part 1 - hybrids

By Chris Southwick

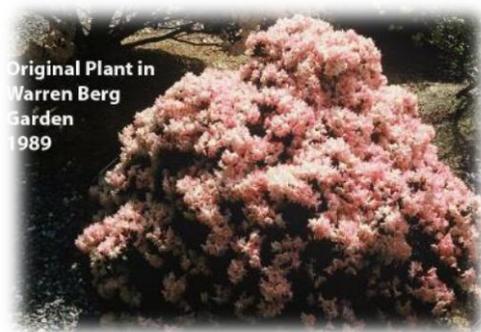
(Reprinted with permission from the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society newsletter - Sept 2017)

When asked to write an article about my three favourite dwarf rhododendrons, I thought that it would be a relatively easy task. Now that I'm actually putting fingers to the keyboard to produce the article, it has become a much more difficult assignment. There are so many interesting ones, particularly the dwarf species, and then there are those that are easy to grow and those which are more challenging. Another consideration is regarding those which are easy to find in the local nurseries and those which are only available from specialty nurseries. I've decided to write two articles, one on dwarf hybrid rhododendrons and one on dwarf species rhododendrons. This first article is about dwarf hybrids.

First of all, what is a dwarf? Technically, they are supposed to be below 1.5m (5 feet) in height on average according to my source, Peter Cox's book "The Smaller Rhododendrons" (1985). He separates them into three categories: **low** = 1 - 1.5m (3-5ft), **semi-dwarf** = 50cm - 1m (1.5-3ft.) and **dwarf** = below 50cm (1.5ft).

As with personal favourites of anything, my choices are strictly subjective. They are favourites because they are easy care, are truly compact nicely shaped plants, and with their small leaves, can be grown in the sunnier parts of my garden. They don't require pruning, they are largely disease free and are floriferous. The plants that I have selected here are all very easy to find in our local nurseries.

Two of the top plants that come to mind are hybrids from a former Washington state hybridizer, Warren Berg. He travelled the globe seeking rhododendrons in the wild and was familiar with the amazing variety of dwarf species. He, along with the Cox family from Scotland, has been in my opinion, one of the most successful at hybridizing and promoting dwarf rhododendrons for small gardens. I have chosen two of his hybrids, first R. Ginny Gee and second R. Patty Bee.



semi-dwarf.

R. Ginny Gee (*keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy' x *racemosum*) is described as white flushed pink and it was introduced in 1979. It is incredibly compact and free-flowering. On my mother's sunny and windy deck, it sometimes completely covers itself with flowers so that you cannot see any of the foliage. It is absolutely amazing to see how tough this little plant is despite the hot sun and westerly winds on that very open deck in the downtown Nanaimo harbour. In my more sheltered site, it has grown wider and a little taller in the same amount of time. Another excellent quality is that it is not only drought tolerant, but is also cold tolerant and its foliage turns a bronze colour in the winter. It is considered a

The two rhododendron species parents of Ginny Gee are quite different in stature and colour. *R. kieskei* 'Yaku Fairy' is a pale yellow but very small with a ground-hugging, creeping habit. In my garden, it has very small light green pointed leaves. *R. racemosum* is a more upright plant, with interesting reddish stems and a pink flushed white flower in my garden. The leaves are dark green with a slightly rounded shape. I'm sure that Warren admired both of these species and rightly guessed that he'd have a winner if he was successful in combining the two. It won a Superior Plant Award in 1985.



(Photo: Garth Wedemire)

R. Patty Bee (*keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy' x *fletcherianum*) is another Warren Berg hybrid that I admire very much. It is also very easily obtained from most reputable nurseries. Patty Bee is a dependable soft yellow with very large flowers for the size of the plant and leaves. It is also easily grown, floriferous, and compact in shape and size and in my experience, a care free plant. Its parent R. *fletcherianum* is an interesting species as it has beautiful bristles on the margins of its leaves. R. *fletcherianum* flowers are large and open-faced and Patty Bee gets the wavy flower margins from that parent. Patty Bee takes after its *keiskei* parent in its small stature. Patty Bee won the Award of Excellence (1984 from the ARS), Award of Garden Merit (1989 from the Royal Horticultural Society), and the Superior Plant Award in 1985 (Northwest). It is considered a true dwarf.

As you can imagine, I have found it very difficult to choose just three plants. There are also many excellent white as well as lavender plants, including many hybridized by the Cox family in Scotland. In the northwest, some of my favourite Cox dwarf hybrids are not as commonly available to us.



(Photo: Herman van Ree)

I ended up choosing as my third favourite a lovely red named R. Scarlet Wonder ('Essex Scarlet' x *forrestii* ssp. *forrestii* Repens Group).. Scarlet Wonder was hybridized in Germany by Dietrich Hobbie prior to 1960. One of Scarlet Wonder's parents, Essex Scarlet, was introduced in 1899 and its parents are unknown. The other parent is one of my favourite dwarf species R. *forrestii* ssp. *forrestii* Repens Group. (There will be more on that species in my next article!)

Both the leaves and flowers of Scarlet Wonder are consistently of high quality. I like the rounded, puckered dark green foliage and the clear bright red flowers. It takes its cue in stature from R. *forrestii* as it generally will only attain a height of two feet in ten years' time. Like the two previous plants, Scarlet Wonder is also a multiple award winner. It won the Award of Garden Merit (1960, Royal Hort. Society), Gold Medal (Boskoop, Netherlands 1961) and the Highest Commendation in England in 1970.

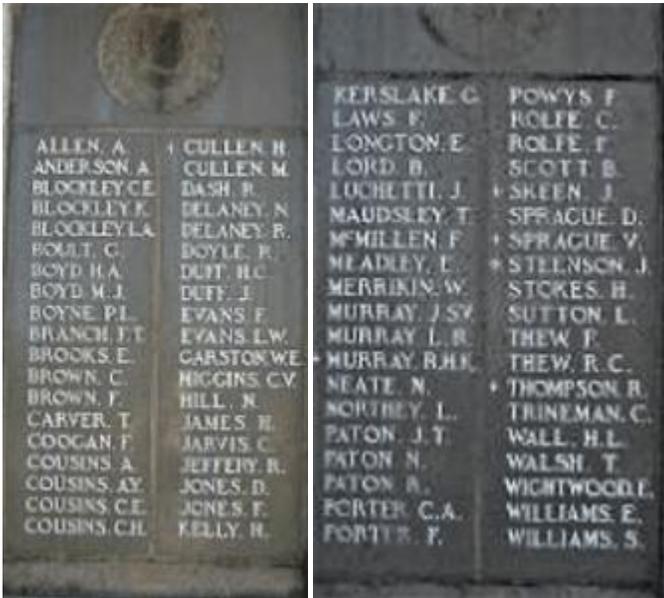
All three plants, R. Ginny Gee, R. Patty Bee, and R. Scarlet Wonder have been available in the Pacific Northwest for many years and in fact, could be found even in grocery stores in the spring. Although they are commonly found, they are still all exceptional plants and are worth growing in almost any garden.

(Editor: Thanks very much to Chris Southwick for the above article and for Part II which will be included in the December issue of the Rhodoteller).

RHODODENDRONS FOR REMEMBRANCE

(The following is re-printed from a blog by Pauline Conolly in Australia) (Paulineconolly.com)

During World War One, seventy seven men from the Blue Mountains community of Blackheath volunteered to serve. Their names are engraved on the local war memorial. Six were killed in action; H. CULLEN, R. MURRAY, J. SKEEN, D. SPRAGUE, J. STEENSON, & R. THOMPSON.



After hostilities ceased it was decided to create a park honouring those volunteers, to be named Memorial Park. Mr Green, the town clerk, organized an art union to fund the project and stated;

'We don't want the desolate-looking, bald-patched affair, with rickety seats and uninviting shrubbery which many townships exult by the name of 'parks'.....This it to be Blackheath's last effort to perpetuate in suitable manner the names and memories of fellow citizens who faced death for us.'

The site chosen was a natural drainage basin, and the site of the old golf links.

In 1923, local residents raised £1,000 for the purchase of 77 rhododendrons, to beautify the park and to create a Remembrance Walk. It was the perfect plant choice, as rhododendrons suit the cool climate of the Blue Mountains. More importantly, the peak of their blooming coincided with Remembrance Day, November 11. (They seem to flower slightly earlier now, which may be a sign of global warming.) Finally, rhododendron can live for several hundred years, creating a permanent memorial.

By 1950 the shrubs were well established. The Sydney Morning Herald published the following paragraph by a correspondent called 'Waratah';

'The Memorial Park planting has advanced far since those days of 30 odd years ago, when I remember them as gawky small plants in a rough setting. They were received with amused toleration. Now they have blossomed into belles of shrubland.'

The rhododendrons continued to thrive, until they can no longer be described as shrubs. They are now imposing trees. I am fortunate enough to live so close to the park that it is almost an extension of my own garden. My husband walks through it every morning, diligently picking up any rubbish he spots.

In October 2012 and 2014 we had very late, heavy snowfalls. Because new foliage held the snow, damage in local gardens was extensive. However Memorial Park, transformed into a fairyland, with the unusual sight of snow on the giant rhodos. Visitors were enchanted, especially very young visitors. There were soon sledders and snowboarders enjoying the slopes in idyllic surroundings.



A sight to behold in October 2012.



Winter fun in spring

2017 has been a bumper year for the rhododendrons.



Admiring the trees.



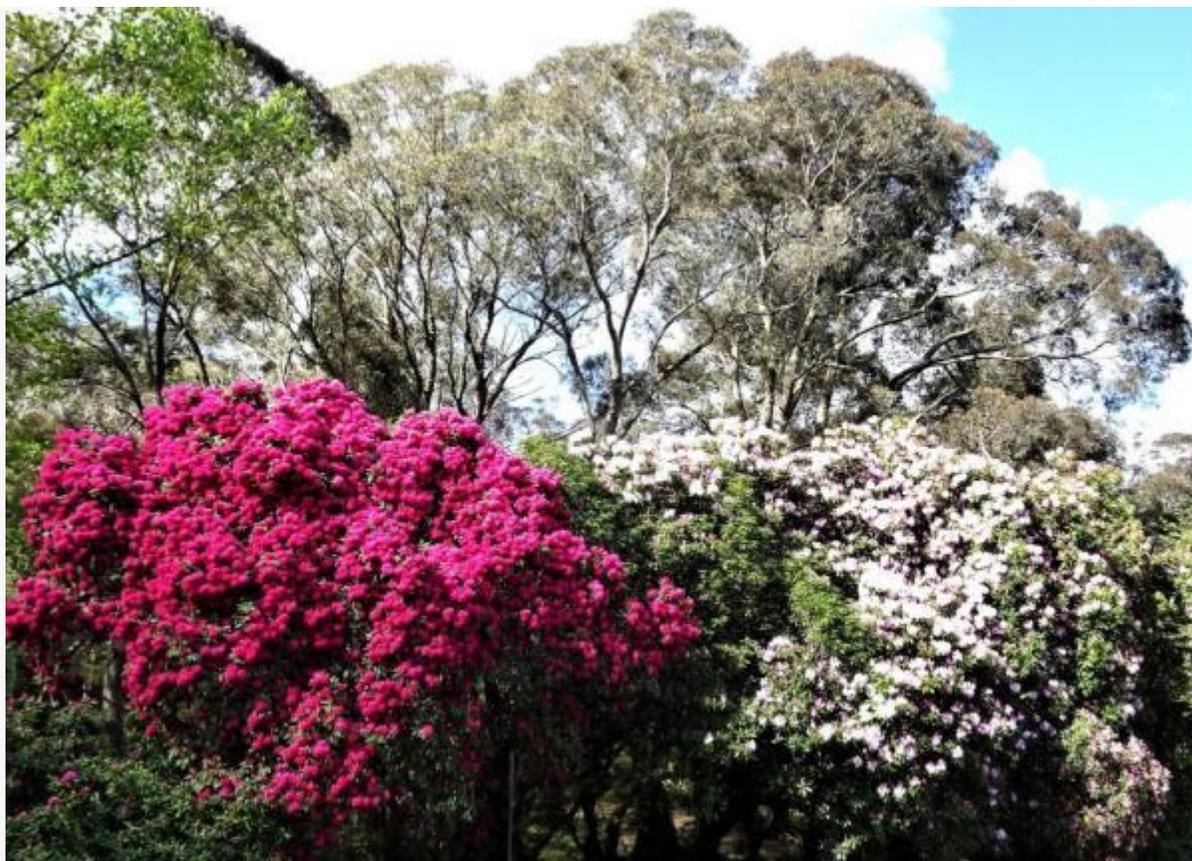
Truly in full bloom



A fine place to sit.



Late bloomers



The Remembrance Walk

The paths through the 26 acre park were named after World War One battles. As the blossoms fall they take on a beauty of their own.



A floral carpet.

Behind the swimming pool complex are the Gallipoli Steps. If you walk up, then follow the bush track, you will exit in Robertson Lane. From here (on the way to the village), there is a lovely view down into the tops of the rhodos.



Gallipoli Steps



Looking into the canopy from Robertson Lane.

What a fitting tribute to those who served not just in WWI, but in all wars. It is a classic demonstration of what can be achieved when local authorities use vision and foresight in their planning. Additionally, it is a reminder that residents themselves can play a huge role in such projects.

The flowering of the rhodos heralds the start of the annual [Rhododendron Festival](#).

THE RHODO IN THE BANNER

In honour of Remembrance Day, which is rapidly approaching, I have selected for this month's Rhodo in the Banner, Rhododendron 'Unknown Warrior'

