



THE JANUARY EDITION

RHODOTELLER

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NORTH ISLAND RHODODENDRON SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2017-2018

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JANUARY 2018

COMING EVENTS

2nd January 2018-- Executive meeting

This month's meeting will be held at the home of our **Membership Chairperson, Jill Gould, 5151 Stapley Road in Courtenay.** The meeting will start **promptly at 10 a.m.**



9th January 2018 -- Regular Meeting

Feeling a little depressed as the Festive Season winds down? Maybe a slight case of the blues? Well the party continues on the 9th of January -- surround yourself with all your gardening friends, a soothing cupp'a, a few goodies and a Panel of Experts to address all your gardening concerns. Please see inside for details of the panel.



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



HAPPY NEW YEAR EVERYONE



What a great part of the world where we live - sunshine, blue sky, mild temperatures, and if it's foggy, just head up to Mt. Washington and get a beautiful view above the clouds. Everyone looks so happy and healthy up there! I even bought some snowshoes.

NIRS has had quite a year, and our wrap up party was delightful, with lots of laughs, great food, and Helena was very surprised with her well deserved Bronze Star award. Kudos to the hard working executive who arrived early to set up and decorate, to Noni who prepped the ribbons, cones and ornaments for the centrepieces and the cider, to Diane for hosting the work bee and Lois for providing the lovely raffle of wreath and centrepiece.

If you've read the paper, you'll have seen some of our members names', with Brian Staton winning 9 gold medals at the BC Senior Games, and a "bouquet" to Nicolas Veronneau for his artistic landscaping. We've missed you at our meetings, but realize you're busy.

The boomer generation is showing its age, with members having hip replacements, downsizing, etc. but change is inevitable. I looked at my horoscope for 2018, and it predicts big changes ahead.

However you bring in the new year, may you enjoy good health, happiness and prosperity.

Cheers!

Judi

COMMITTEE REPORTS

MEMBERSHIP

Jill Gould

The NIRS final 2017 list shows 97 members and associates. We know that not everyone chooses to renew; at the moment we have received 65 full membership renewals and four Associate memberships for 2018. Now, if you **think** you renewed, but are not sure, please check, or ask me. Maybe you thought your spouse sent the cheque but it may not have happened....

At any rate, we do have a healthy happy club and we have a good time. I sure do, anyway. I want to let you all know that in May my term as Membership director will expire. I have put in four years (2 terms) and am ready to move on to other challenges. When the Directors start asking for people to step up to fill positions on the Executive, consider helping out.

The membership position is not onerous, and would be ideally suited to a team. I usually draft my husband to help me at busy times, but two friends could certainly do it—that way, if one is away, the other can stand in at meetings. I'll tell you one big plus to the job: you get to know everyone. When I started, I was looking at folks and saying, "Are you a member or a guest?" Now I know most of you! Sure meet some nice people too.

THE RHODO GARDEN

Maureen Denny

Many thanks to all who volunteered at the work parties throughout 2017.

Our next work party will be in February 2018.

PROPAGATION GROUP

by Jake

The Propagation Group will be holding a meeting at Garth and Sue Wedemire's place on Saturday 20th January at 10 a.m. Essentially, this is a planning meeting -- we need to talk -- we need to make sure our plans are in place for the year ahead. And we just need to talk -- it's been awhile. This would also be a fine time for those who have been wondering about this group, what we've been up to and what we're all about--to drop by and hear us out or, if you like, give me a call at 250-337-8516 and I'd be more than happy to tell you all about it.

WAYS & MEANS

Paul Matthews

Our Raffle Rhodos this month are:

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



photo by Susan Lightburn

"Cream Crest", 3ft, Hardy to -18c, compact, likes the sun, vigorous with alluring bright creamy yellow flowers.



photo by Jeannie and Calvin Parsons

"Black Sport", 5ft, Hardy to -20c, stiffly upright, unique foliage and flower colour. Rich purple-red with deep black-red blotch on upper lobe.

Our Door Prize is:



photo by John Weagle

"Isola Bella" 5' Hardy to -21c, opening very pale purple and aging to yellowish-white with faint blush at lobe centers and faint yellow to green spotting.

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 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

January 2018

Our January 9th meeting will feature the ever popular 'Panel of Experts'.

The Moderator for this segment will be our V.P. Maureen Denny

Three members will speak on their area of expertise and answer questions from the audience. Our presenters will be, Judith Walker on 'Trees & Rhodos in Landscaping', Bernie Guyader on 'Alpine plants and dwarf rhodos' and Dany Fortin on 'Crevice Gardens.'

ARS BRONZE MEDAL

Presentation to Helena Stewart Zukowski

North Island Rhododendron Society

December, 2017

It was with great pleasure that President Judi Murakami presented the American Rhododendron Society Bronze Medal to Helen Stewart Zukowski on December 12, 2017. The ARS Bronze Medal is awarded for outstanding contributions to a Chapter and is the highest commendation awarded by a local Chapter in the Society.



Helena joined the NIRS in January 2010 and was soon an active participant, showing interest in and curiosity about the club and its workings. With a background in writing and publishing, the membership was delighted when Helena agreed to become the Publicity Chair in September 2010, a position she has held since that time. In this role Helena has been the liaison with the public and has ably promoted our club in the local media. Newspaper submissions about upcoming speakers have been so engaging that the club has welcomed new people to our meetings, many of whom have become club members.

Helena's engaging articles promoting our Spring Rhododendron Sale and our Annual Mother's Day Garden Tour have been very well received by the public and contributed greatly to the success of our two main fundraisers. In addition, Helena has submitted many interesting, well researched, and often humorous articles for our club newsletter The Rhodoteller. A thoughtful and reflective person, Helena has been a valuable resource on the Executive.

In 2011, Helena and Roy hosted our June picnic in their beautiful garden and Helena continues to share her garden and home whenever needed. Helena held the NIRS Propagation Group's initial meeting in January 2015, and remains an active member of the group. Participating fully in meetings, activities, and events, Helena continues to be a significant asset and valued member of the club.

It is with great pleasure that we thank Helena for her contributions to the club and congratulate her on being awarded the ARS Bronze Medal by the North Island Rhododendron Society.

THE 2017 NIRS CHRISTMAS PARTY

by Dave Godfrey

Our chapter's annual Christmas party held at the church hall on Tuesday, December 12th, was a lot of fun and another great success. Unfortunately, due to a variety of reasons some of our long standing members were unable to attend.

For those 45 members who did attend, there were many delicious dishes provided for our dinner, with a lot of fun games to be played before and after. It was especially nice to see so many new members attend to enjoy the party this year.

Once again, the executive committee setup and decorated the hall with festive table cloths, beautiful centerpieces and Christmas music. Members started to arrive around 5 pm and immediately began socializing with others, as they attempted to guess the number of Jelly Beans and Smarties in the jars. **Noni Godfrey** had the usual spiced apple cider ready to be served, as well as prepared sheets of scrambled names for members to try to figure out.



Before we began the dinner at 6 PM, **President Judi Murakami** took the opportunity to surprise **Helena Stewart Zukowski** by presenting her with our club's Bronze medal award. A well deserved award to a very special member.

(For complete details of the award, see a separate article in this newsletter.)

With formalities out of the way, it was time for dinner. The delicious meal was topped off with so many dessert choices that left everybody fed up!

Unfortunately, technical difficulties with the hall's projector delayed the start of the Trivia Game. But fortunately, we did have our club's projector to get the game rolling. It was an entertaining and challenging game, interspersed with several fun rounds of 'Heads or Tails' organized by **Garth Wedemire** and **Sue Grant**. With most members playing, the winning pots repaid the five lucky winners their membership dues for the coming year.

The 'Heads or Tails' winners were **Adrienne McNabb, Valerie Ferris, Shane Tillapaugh, Cheryl Bennett** and **Joanne Williams**; each receiving an average of \$34 in the pot. Garth also provided additional incentives by have a small secondary prize for each winner.

When the Trivia game ended and the totals were tallied, it was the "High Hopes" team that were declared winners with 29 points out of a possible 40 total points. Each member of the winning team received a small Rhododendron provided by our Propagation group. There were three teams tied for second place with 26 points, so we had to have a tie breaking question. The team of "Rhododumdums" were the eventual winners of a small second place prize.

The winner of the Jelly Bean count was **Bernie Guyader** (238 - one more than the number in the jar) and **Ann Chevrier** won the Smarties with a guess of 460 (443 in the jar.) Draws were then made for the beautiful wreath and table bouquet crafted and donated by **Lois Clyde**. Congratulations to **Cheryl Bennett** for winning the wreath, and to her hubby **Brian** as winner of the bouquet. Draws continued for the beautiful centrepieces made by **Maureen Denny, Carolyn Chester, Judi Murakami, Antje Guertler, Noni Godfrey** and **Diane Van Oostdam**.

The lucky winners of the centerpieces were **Dale Patterson, Nadine Boudreau, Aji Fliss, Shane Tillapaugh, Bernie Guyader, Gerry Boudreau, Helena Stewart Zukowski, Helen Stefiuk** and **Corrine Inness**. Congratulations to all our winners.



One last draw was made for the wrapped present and **Adrianne McNabb** is the lucky keeper of Miss Piggy; a tradition for the past 20 plus years that requires the winner to prominently display her in their garden throughout the coming year.

In closing, the executive committee would like to thank **Dave** and **Noni Godfrey** for creating and running the Trivia Game again this year, **Garth Wedemire** and **Sue Grant** for

organizing the Heads or Tails game. With special thanks to **Lois Clyde** for the lovely wreath and bouquet used as our door prizes. And a big thank you to all those members who contributed to our Christmas hamper project organized by **Diane Van Oostdam**. Thank you all, and to all a good night! (Photos of the party are posted to our website's Photo gallery.)

Spring Sundays at VIU's Milner Gardens & Woodland

Sundays February 4th to March 25th
Enjoy the early Spring bulbs.

Garden open 11:00am to 3:30pm, last entry 3:00pm.
Tea Room open 11:00am for tea, soup and scones with last seating 3:00pm.

Admission adults \$6, youth \$4 includes tax. Children 12 and under accompanied by an adult, Milner Gardens members and current VIU students with card free admission.

MAHONIA (Oregon Grape Holly)

by Jill Gould

Mahonia, which is a member of the Barberry (*Berberis*) family, is sometimes referred to as a *Berberis*. There are three native species of *Mahonia* in BC. *Mahonia repens* is a low-growing plant, found in the Interior east of the Cascades and in the Rocky mountains, as far south as California. *Mahonia nervosa* grows to three feet high, and is common in woodlands of the Comox Valley. *Mahonia aquifolium* (Tall Oregon Grape) is also found in the Comox Valley, but at slightly higher elevations.

All three are plants with glossy holly-like leaves, bearing blue-black berries with a slightly frosted appearance. The evergreen leaves often turn red in fall and winter. The plant is very hardy, and makes a good garden shrub in area where one isn't likely to brush against it, such as against a fence or wall, or at the back of a bed. Since it spreads by stolons (which can be removed), it may need room. A woodland area with moist acidic soil and dappled sunlight will suit it.

Although native *Mahonias* surround us, you will find that the Asian species or hybrids are most often used in landscape applications. *Mahonia x media* 'Charity' is a Great Plant Pick. Its floral displays are large, lovely and exotic. However, I would like to put in a plug for *M. aquifolium*. It may not look as "exotic" but it belongs to us. It will grow to six feet tall, and makes a fine specimen plant. Deer will not browse it.

M. aquifolium blooms in April with bright yellow racemes of small scented flowers, which attract bees. In early August the berries appear. Native Indians used these, mixed with Salal berries, as a food. The berries are extremely tart. However, here's the secret: They make wonderful jelly, since they have a high pectin content. The jelly is very good served with meats. As a matter of fact, all *Mahonia* berries can be used for jelly, even those of the imported landscape beauties. I speak from experience!



Mahonia flowers



Mahonia berries



Mahonia leaf

THE RHODO IN THE BANNER

We're officially into winter now and just to prove it we have 3 or 4 inches of snow covering the gardens. So, like all of you, I'm sure, I sit and wait for the early-blooming rhodos to throw a dash of colour into this black and white world. Cilpinense, Christmas Cheer, Lee's Scarlet and Snow Lady come to my mind. All beautiful rhodos and I long to see them once again but I will definitely save some ooh's and aaah's for that lovely lady named :

"Olive".



photo by Barbara Kulla Feb 2010



photo by Garth Wedemire Feb 2010



photo by Hank Helm 2 March 2008

Flower/Truss Description: Flower broadly funnel-shaped, about 1½" across, vivid reddish-purple with darker spots scattered over the base of the upper lobe. Truss has 1-2 flowers.

Fragrant: No

Bloom Time: Very Early

Foliage Description / Plant Habit: Leaves elliptic, about 1" long, dark green. Upright, rather leggy, sparse habit.

Height: 4 feet in 10 years.

Cold Hardiness Temp: -15°F (-26°C)

Parentage (Seed Parent x Pollen Parent): moupinense x dauricum

Elepidote (E) or Lepidote (L): L

Hybridized or Selected by: Stirling-Maxwell

**HAPPY NEW YEAR
EVERYONE!**