



THE OCTOBER EDITION

RHODOTELLER

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RHODODENDRON SOCIETY
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2018-2019**

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COMING EVENTS

2nd October 2018-- Executive meeting

This month's meeting will be held at the home of **Dave and Noni Godfrey**. The meeting will start at **10 a.m.**

9th October 2018 -- Regular meeting

Our guest speaker this month is Susan Murray from Langley who will present "Fabulous Gardens and Unusual Gardens of Southern Africa". Please see inside for further details.

6th October 2018

Need some fun in your life on these dull rainy day? Check out the Milner Gardens website for details on the 7th Annual Mad Hatter Tea Party.

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

Time passes so quickly, I am amazed a month has gone by and here I am writing these notes for the October Newsletter!

Finally the rain came and how wonderful to see the trees and plants in our gardens recover from the drought. Speaking of drought, I had an interesting conversation with Tyler Johns, who is our liaison between the CVRG and the City of Courtenay. I had asked him how the ongoing summer drought has affected the City's trees. Sadly, since 2015 Courtenay has lost 165 trees. The parks staff is now switching their tactics in regard to tree planting, by planting small trees instead of big ones, and saving money in the process. A big tree has to have its root ball reduced substantially in the digging up and planting process, losing its ability to withstand hot dry summers. A small tree comes with a healthier untampered root system: Tyler said the small tree grows to a good size in 10 years with a much better root system able to withstand drought. We can apply this logic to our own gardening. It is very tempting to always buy a bigger plant when shopping in a nursery, but with these dry summers expected to continue the smaller plant just might prove to be the wiser choice.

With some moisture in the ground now I think it's time for me to get out in the garden dig up some more lawn (a little more disappears every year), and plant some perennials and rhodos. They have been in their pots too long. Hope their root systems are still good!

See you all at the October Meeting.

Maureen

ARS BRONZE MEDAL

presentation to

FRANCES THORNTON



It was with great pleasure that President Maureen Denny presented the American Rhododendron Society Bronze Medal to Frances Thornton on September 11, 2018. The ARS Bronze Medal is awarded for outstanding contributions to a chapter and is the highest commendation awarded by a local chapter in the American Rhododendron Society.

Fran joined the North Island Rhododendron Society in 2004 and has been an active member and volunteer throughout this time. Fran is a regular at our monthly meetings and participates in the majority of our social functions and tours. Cheerful, warm and welcoming, Fran has always been available to act as a 'gate sitter' at our Annual Mother's Day Garden Tour and to volunteer at our Rhodo Sale and Truss Display each spring. Fran has been an integral part of the core of volunteers working at, and for many years helping to coordinate, the NIRS table at the Sale.

Elected as a Director in 2014, Fran served a four year term heading the Revenue Table at our monthly meetings. With her subtle sense of humour, Fran highlighted the items for sale and was always very successful at 'moving the merchandise'! Fran's broad knowledge of plants, and her love of rhododendrons, has enabled her to be a great support to the club. We thank Fran for her contributions and congratulate her on being awarded the ARS Bronze Medal by the North Island Rhododendron Society.

The Bronze Medal was presented as part of a framed certificate stating:

"The American Rhododendron Society North Island Chapter Recognizes Frances Thornton for the Bronze Medal Award for her many years of service and continued dedication to the Society September 2018"

COMMITTEE REPORTS

MEMBERSHIP

Nadine Boudreau

The September meeting was a busy night for membership renewals, we had 32 members renew their membership for 2019. We had a new member, Marcel Bombezin join us.

Don't forget that we are having a draw to win back your membership fee, you must renew by November 30, 2018 to be entered in the draw. The winner will be announced at the December Christmas party.

The September meeting was well attended with 65 members and 4 guests.

WAYS & MEANS

Claudia Ellis

OUR RAFFLE RHODOS THIS MONTH ARE:

"Unique" 4', -20C. A rounded plant with a thick, dense mound of smooth oblong leaves. Spring flowering with buds showing bright pink and open to a beautiful, buttery cream.

"Snow Lady" 3', -21C. Soft, fuzzy green leaves. Flowers well in deep shade. Buds easily and blooms early.

OUR DOOR PRIZE IS:

"Lee's Best Purple" 6', -26C. Excellent smooth, dark and glossy foliage. Flowers deep purple.

(Photos and descriptions from ARS website)



Unique



Snow Lady



Lee's Best Purple

THE RHODO GARDEN

Maureen Denny



Our last work party was on September 13th. We had a good turnout, raked ,weeded and pruned until the gardens were looking great! One of the nicest aspects of working in the gardens are all the appreciative comments we receive from people passing by, encouraging us to keep up the good work. Nice to know our club is providing so much pleasure to others.

The next work party will be October 11th at 10am. Hopefully the weather will be good.

PROPAGATION GROUP

report by Diana Scott

The sun and warmth this summer along with adequate moisture from our crackerjack watering crew resulted in some great budding on our rhodo and azalea stock. A small group spent time selecting plants for the spring Rhodo Sale and it looks like we will have quite a few in bloom to dazzle prospective buyers!



As we did last year, the Propagation Group hosted a Member's Only Sale at the end of September which allowed our club folk to purchase plants at club/wholesale prices. It was a glorious day and we were delighted to see both members and associate members at the sale. A few of our plants decided to get a jump on spring by presenting a few blooms, but most are



behaving well and will wait for the proper time. We will be doing another inventory later in the fall and then will spend some time organizing and preparing the remaining stock for the winter.

Thanks to all the propagation members who have worked on the project over the season, and once again invite interested members to join us!

THE PROGRAMME

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Our October 9th guest speaker will be Susan Murray from Langley, who will present "Fabulous Gardens and Unusual Plants of Southern Africa".

Susan visited South Africa and Namibia last October and has wonderful images to share with us. Nine of the seventeen beautiful South African gardens she visited will be highlighted. Susan will also talk about South African flower exports, her favourite Southern African trees, and introduce the plants of the southern cape heathlands or Fynbos.

IN LYNN'S GARDEN

article and photos by Lynn Wurz

RHODODENDRON COMPANION PLANTS

Shade can be a problem for many plants, but some perennials, especially ferns and hostas which don't bloom, do surprisingly well, even in the dry shade under evergreens.

This summer with its extremely hot long dry spells was a good test of their hardiness.



Some of my favourite perennials blooming now are the hardy cyclamens which pop up now and gradually naturalize in mats of white or pink blooms, with patterned leaves appearing later.

Gentian sino-ornata 'Kingfisher', in more sun, has large blue trumpets arising from mats of needle-like foliage.

Astilbe plumosa, blooming later than other astilbes and requiring constant moisture and shade, is making a fine show of pink plumes in border by the pond.

Hardy ginger, *Asarum europum*, has shiny dark green leaves and is not bothered by slugs, requires little care and tends to naturalize gradually in shady spots.

Epimediums that put on a fine show of dainty blooms in Spring (many forms to choose from) still have interesting leaves that are tough and even survive in the drought under evergreens.

A beautiful grass for shade is *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aereola' or Japanese forest grass. It looks especially good in a big pot on the deck.

Most of the hostas are starting to look a bit bedraggled, from slugs and cooler temperatures, but the blues, especially Blue Boy, Blue Umbrellas, and *Seiboldii Elegans* are ignored by the slugs as are First Frost and Thunderbolt.



Ferns do especially well with little attention. The Soft Shield Fern, *Polystichum setiferum* 'Herrrenhausen' I've had for 20 years and it thrives even in sun (and gets babies!!). Himalayan Maidenhair Ferns, *Adiantum venusta*, make a dainty groundcover, gradually spreading under shrubs.

It'll soon be time for the garden to shut down for winter but I've still got time to plant groupings of the small bulbs that fit in under the rhodos, like fritillarias, trilliums, snowdrops, and winter aconites for an early show along with the rhodos.



Cyclamen Hederifolium



Polystichum setiferum 'Herrrenhausen'



Hardy Ginger along a stone path

Meeting Season Begins

by Dave Godfrey

With summer now officially over, another great season of Rhodo meetings has begun. On Tuesday, September 11th, we had a tremendous turnout of 67 members and 5 guests to hear **Tom Carter's** presentation on trekking in Nepal. Thanks to the generosity of our members, \$126 in donations were collected towards Tom's ongoing efforts to improve the lives of the Nepalese people as they continue to recover from recent devastating earthquakes. For those wishing more information about the people, country and trekking, please visit his website at www.moonmountainadventures.com

Following Tom's presentation, and before the refreshment break, **Fran Thornton** was invited to conduct an auction for a special rare plant from the Revenue Table. Bidding was fierce and eventually ended with a final \$20 bid by **Robert Argall**. Congratulations to Robert and a big thank you to Fran for doing a great job as our auctioneer.

Then came one of the highlights of the evening - a surprise presentation of an NIRS Bronze medal to **Frances Thornton**. Fran was overcome with emotion upon receiving this very deserving award. (*See separate article in this newsletter*) As a special joke, Fran was also presented with a 'Princess Tiara and Wand' from **Jill Gould**. There was a long story behind this presentation that is best told by Fran.

New co-chairs of the Revenue table, **Judy Walker** and **Naomi Chester**, were delighted at the many plants and items donated to the meeting. Many members bought some unusual companion plants, including rhododendrons from the Propagation Group and **Wolfgang** himself. Thanks to all for your generosity.

Be sure to attend the October 9th meeting as we welcome guest speaker **Susan Murray** from Langley. Susan visited South Africa and Namibia last October and her talk will showcase nine of the seventeen South African gardens she visited; plus an introduction to plants of the South African Fynbos biome, the Cape Floral Kingdom and Namibian desert plants. Hope to see many of you there!

THE RHODO IN THE BANNER



R. 'EUNIE'

Recently, I had the pleasure of a walk through the garden of Lynn and Paul Wurz. Quite a number of Paul's rhodos were showing a mini- preview of what to expect next Spring. So many remarkable shapes and colours but as we walked I was suddenly drawn to the flower of Rhododendron 'Eunie'. Actually, it was the pointy end of Paul's elbow jabbing me in the ribs that first got my attention but as the pain subsided I quickly understood his enthusiasm. Knowing nothing about this hybrid I, of course, "Googled" it.

The ARS site describes 'Eunie' as "4 ft (after 10 years -- Hardy to -15C -- flat leaves growing to about 5 inches -- flower openly funnel-shaped-- wavy edged-- yellow with a dark red blotch and spots. To know more about 'Eunie', maybe take a look her parents 'Diny Dee and Sierra Del Oro.

Perhaps, Paul should consider propagating 'Eunie' so others can enjoy this delightful rhododendron in their garden.

Jake

SEE YOU AT THE CHURCH 9 OCTOBER!