



THE SEPTEMBER EDITION
RHODOTELLER

www.nirsrhodos.ca

**North Island
Rhododendron Society**
2018-2019

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SEPTEMBER 2018

Coming Events

4th September 2018-- Executive meeting

This month's meeting will be held at the home of **President Maureen Denny**. The meeting will start at **10 a.m.**

11th September 2018 -- Regular meeting

Our guest speaker this month is mountaineer and trek organizer, **Tom Carter**, This presentation will focus on his travels to Nepal. Please see inside for further details.

29th and 30th September 2018

VIU's Milner Gardens & Woodland Fall Plant Sale

10am to 4pm. Take home a piece of this Heritage Garden, choosing from a variety of propagated specimens. Great discounts; come early for best selection! Website: milnergardens.viu.ca
Gardens close 5pm.

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

Another HOT and DRY summer! It seems with climate change this is the new normal. According to recent news, I heard climatologists predict this type of summer will continue. Some rhodos are suffering. I have just noticed that in the last week a twenty year old Unique rhodo in the garden is getting a sunburn. In the past this plant has been fine. Just too much sun.

Other plants in my garden have grown like crazy. A *Thalictrum* plant (meadow rue) that is normally five feet tall shot up to approximately ten feet, going right up into the clothesline, making hanging out the laundry a challenge. The beans are producing at a fantastic rate and the basil is growing like it's on steroids.

Fortunately, September is coming quickly and, hopefully, so will cooler weather and the rain. I hope everyone has had a good summer and your gardens have done well despite the heat. Thanks to those members who opened up their gardens this summer for a tour. Seeing each other's gardens is such an inspiration and is such a good way to get to know each other better.

On Sept 4th, the Executive will meet to take care of business and start planning a new year of wonderful events for the club. Our regular meeting will be on September 11th at 7 p.m. Our speaker, Tom Carter, will speak on, "Nepal - Travels and Rhodos". Tom is very involved with the Nepalese people of the village of Gran, who are still in recovery from the devastating earthquake of 2015. There will be a donation box, so please bring some extra money to support his work.

A reminder, also, about the One Day Mini Conference that MARS is hosting in Parksville on Oct 28th. Dany Fortin, from our club, will speak on Crevice Gardens. If you have not heard his fabulous presentation this is your chance. For more info google marsrhodos.ca2018 mini.

Well, that's it for this month. I look forward to my new role as President and seeing all your friendly faces on September 11th.

Maureen

MEET OUR NEW PRESIDENT

by Helena Zukowski



In the movie, *Sliding Doors*, the destiny of the heroine is altered because she missed a subway car and took a later one—just a filmic example of how our lives can unexpectedly pivot on a decision we make. With Maureen Denny upon returning to Canada after a lengthy trip to Europe she decided to find accommodation in a communal living situation. The handsome young man who opened the door when she knocked was Preston whom she describes as first “just a friend” and later her husband. Later, in 1985, she decided to take her two young children to visit family in Toronto, but being economical she booked a partial leg of an Atlantic-crossing flight. Much unbeknownst to Maureen, loaded on to the flight along with her luggage was a lethal timed bomb. Maureen and the kids disembarked in Toronto and the flight continued on to London. Just outside Ireland, Air India Flight #182

blew up killing all 329 on board. Whether it is simply luck or a guardian angel, Maureen has had a few close calls starting from her birth. As a premature twin, she was only two and a half pounds at birth, but managed to survive.

One way or another, plants were always a part of her life. She grew up on a large rural property with the usual exposure and caretaking responsibilities “country kids” have. Then in 1988, after school and foreign travel, she decided to take the Master Gardener’s course at Van Dusen Gardens. The voluntary work tied in with earning that certification put her in touch with a lot of ideas and helped refine her specialties which turned out to be trees, shrubs and perennials. For the next 5 years, she worked at a garden center in Surrey and then after moving to the Island she spent the next ten years on staff at Anderton Nursery in Courtenay. Ever keen to build on her knowledge base, she took a garden design course at North Island College and continued to build on a growing horticultural self-improvement base by tucking into garden books at home. “I was completely obsessed,” she says.

Typical to what seems her nature, Maureen kept a quiet profile initially when she started attending NIRS meetings, getting to know people. “I went to the meetings, on and off, but waited to make a commitment until retirement,” she said. Like a lot of members, what attracted her to NIRS was the warm, friendly atmosphere around the membership, so different from larger horticultural groups.

On a guided tour of her city-lot size garden, you quickly realize that while the garden is not exactly Butchart in scope, the care and knowledge that has gone into the placement of each and every plant is impressive. Like the friends they are, Maureen details a history for each plant and despite the drought, it's obvious that each plant is loved, watered and cared for. There are certainly rhododendrons in her garden but also rare and unusual specimens that have been gifts or come from other gardens--and each plant has its own history.

Welcome to the presidency, Maureen—we look forward to your two years as our leader.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

MEMBERSHIP

Nadine Boudreau

FREE MEMBERSHIP!!!!

Did I get your attention...yes you could win a free membership if you renew or join before November 30th, 2018. We will refund the lucky winner at the December meeting/Christmas party.

We are offering this incentive to get our members to renew early. Though officially our membership ends December 31, 2018, we send our dues to the ARS and include all the membership info and as well Dave Godfrey likes to compile members info for our little contact booklet. All this inputting takes time.

I like to think of September as the beginning of our Rhododendron club year. We are all gathering after our long hot summer, exchanging garden triumphs and, well, 'challenges' including everything in between. Excitement is in the air with new speakers and fun meetings ahead.

Membership cost is still \$35.00 per couple or single. There will be sign-up sheets for name tags and also a sheet to sign if you would like to discontinue receiving your paper copy of the ARS Journal. You can sign up to receive the on-line copy of the journal through the ARS website.

Our membership stands at 85 members including 8 associates.

WAYS & MEANS

Claudia Ellis

Our Raffle Rhodos this month are:

"Daphnoides" 4', -26C. Rolled, glossy leaves, tightly spaced. Great looking plant with its unusual, deep green leaves. Small, pom-pom trusses are deep purple. A variant of *R. ponticum*.

"Isola Bella" 5', -21C. Broadly funnel shaped flower. Opens very pale purple and ages to yellowish-white with faint pink blush at lobe centers and faint yellow to green spotting.

Our Door Prize is:

"Dora Amateis" 3', -26C. Pure white flowers. Deep green, dense foliage highlighted with bronze tones. Prettiest when grown in full sun. Scented.

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!**



Daphnoides



Isola Bella



Dora Amateis

PROPAGATION GROUP

Report by Diana Scott

As we move toward autumn, we know our little rhodies will be happy to have a bit of respite from some of the heat we experienced this summer. Lots of sun makes for good blooms next year, but the long stretches of hot weather certainly kept the Watering Team on their toes! In addition to the very welcome automatic watering provided at Smith Gardens, a big 'Thank You' goes out to the small group who provided additional watering on a regular basis to keep our precious plants alive.



Ongoing maintenance, weeding, and general care took many hours over the summer months. Thanks once again to Charlie who kept an eye on the automatic sprinkling system and made any necessary adjustments!



Our spring rhodo sales were very successful so happily our original stock has been pared down. With the 'new' cuttings developing into saleable plants and our smaller plants potted up, we took time in the late spring to reorganize the outside beds. In August Noni and Dave did a complete inventory of our stock so we are well prepared for future sales.

Our group continues to enjoy getting together to learn new skills, practice what we have learned in the past, and share experiences. In mid August Wolfgang prepared and presented a grafting workshop for interested members. Using Cunningham's White as rootstock, participants brought scions from home or selected ones that had been brought in for the session. Wolfgang demonstrated the technique and then the group 'gave it a go'.



There is just something about getting those elastic grafting bands in the right place that takes a bit of concentration! With instruction, guidance, and some patience, a number of newly grafted plants were taken home to be nurtured along. Sue Klapwijk joined us for the grafting session, having recently moved from the Lower Mainland to beautiful Black Creek. We welcome Sue and look forward to seeing her at our upcoming meetings. As always, we invite our NIRS members to join the Propagation Group at any time!

THE PROGRAMME

SEPTEMBER 2018



Starting off our regular meeting on September 11, 2018, we are pleased to welcome guest speaker **Mr. Tom Carter of Parksville**. Through his company, *'Moon Mountain Adventures'*, Tom conducts annual treks to the Nepal Region of Asia, the origin of many rhododendron species. In his presentation, Tom will update us on the country's attempts to recover from the recent devastating earthquakes with a focus on his Sherpa's small village of Gran. In order to financially assist him in his humanitarian efforts, members will be provided an opportunity to make a cash donation by way of a donation box available at the meeting. So we encourage all members to attend this first meeting of the season, enjoy an interesting presentation on Nepal and assist in the efforts to rebuild this tiny country.

Doors open at 7 PM with the presentation commencing at 7:30 PM. Following the presentation, there will be a short refreshment break before the business portion of the meeting.

THE RHODO GARDEN

Maureen Denny



The Garden has made it through this very dry summer and the plants are generally healthy with good bud set for next spring.

We had three good evening work parties this summer. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped to keep our garden in great shape.

Our next Work Party will be held in the **MORNING of September 13th at 10 am**. For any new members wanting to join the fun, the garden is located on Cliffe Ave. by The Chamber of Commerce Building and the entrance to the Airpark walk way (park behind the Kayak Rentals). The best part, of course, is the social moment after the work party with coffee and goodies.

Hope to see you on 13th September. Don't forget the rakes, buckets, brooms and whatever.



... by Dave Godfrey

Well, it has been a long, hot summer and needless to say, a long time in getting all the summer event photos posted to our website's 'Photographs' page.

While some photos have been added to the CVRG work parties and the Propagation Group activities as they occurred throughout the summer; others such as our May 3rd

bus trip to the Cowichan Valley have only just recently been added.

Our regular event albums can be found on the drop-down list under "Yearly Gallery"; whereas, the Propagation Group and Bus Tour albums can be found under the "Special Gallery." Many older albums dating back to 2006 can be found in the 'Archives' for each gallery.

For those members who attended the bus tour to the lovely gardens of the Cowichan Valley, viewing the 200 plus photos will bring back great memories. While those who did not attend the tour, you can see what you missed! Many thanks to *Diana Scott* for sharing some of her photos; as well as to *Sue Grant & Garth Wedemire* for organizing the tour.

For members new to the various photo galleries on the website, here are some simple instructions to follow...

To open an album, simply click on the small thumbnail photo. Some albums contain many photos and may take time to load. It is important to let all photos load before opening the viewer. Once the album is loaded, you can either manually view the photos by clicking on the first one, then selecting other photos with the "next" or "previous" buttons; or click on "start slideshow" at the bottom left. The slideshow can be paused at any time by clicking on this same button. BUT, you must remember to click "stop slideshow" and then the "CLOSE" button (lower right) when finished viewing the album.

On our 'Links' page, there are a number of Rhododendron and garden related links to other web pages. Unfortunately, the rhododendron database 'Hirsutum' has been off and on most of this year and therefore, the link currently does not work. Owner/operator Herman van Ree in Holland is trying to resolve the problem and hopefully will have it available again soon.

As always, past and present copies of the club's 'Rhodoteller' can be found on the 'Newsletter' page. Whether on a computer, an iPad, iPhone or other mobile device, members can access our website at www.nirsrhodos.ca. I hope you enjoy the added new photo albums and information.

SIDALCEA HENDERSONII

by Jill Gould (story and photos)

Hollyhock Flats on Comox (Dyke) Road got its name from Henderson's Checker Mallow, a native plant which grows along the Estuary. This plant is blue-listed in BC, and considered rare. It occurs sporadically in coastal areas of Oregon, Washington and BC, preferring tidal marshes and meadows.

Back in 2010, Frank Hovenden of Comox Valley Nature wrote an article for the Comox Valley Record on this plant, which someone had thought was Purple Loosestrife. I went looking for it. When in bloom, which is usually in July, it was easy to spot. I collected some seed, and grew the plant at home. I found it was a very pretty and well-behaved garden addition!

Henderson's Checker Mallow is a perennial which produces spikes of racemes of medium pink flowers on stems about two feet tall. When you see the flowers, you will recognize the relationship to the Mallow (hollyhock) family, *Malvaceae*. It is, quite simply, beautiful. Stem leaves are palmate with rounded lobes, while basal leaves are more heart-shaped, with long petioles.

In winter, the plant dies down into an inconspicuous clump. The clump will enlarge with time, but is not invasive. It does not appear to be fussy as to soil: I have it in two locations, a garden bed and a fairly dry site among raspberry canes. It tolerates wet soil in winter. While not exactly a Rhododendron companion plant (being tall), it could definitely be grown in the same acid-soil areas.

Seed from my plants has been collected and will be on the Revenue table, for anyone who would like to grow it. It will take a year or two to reach flowering size. We should do our best to perpetuate this lovely plant, since its native environments are endangered.



Sidalcea hendersonii



September Song

I love September! I love everything about it. The kids go back to school, those hot summer days fade to more liveable temperatures and the colours of those fall-blooming plants in your garden just seem so intense. Unfortunately, R. 'September Song' doesn't bloom in September, but just the name grabbed my attention and, of course, those colours.

'September Song' was actually bred by Dr. Phetteplace, but was raised and introduced by Harold Greer.

According to *Greer's Guide*, this rhodo's "Magnificent orange trusses cover this hybrid with a colour rarely seen in rhododendrons. It buds young and freely, and has great foliage that is olive green, medium sized --a good compact plant which will grow wider than tall".

A compact rhodo, reaching 4 feet after 10 years -- a rhodo that takes lightly filtered sun --a plant with large trusses of trumpet flowers -- all this with those orange-yellow-peachy colours!

Hopefully, 'September Song' grabbed your attention also, and you consider this rhodo for your garden.

Good Gardening and I'll see you at the Church Hall on 11 September.