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THE RHODOTELLER

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DECEMBER 2019

Coming Events

December 3rd – Executive meeting

This month's meeting will be held at the home of **Judi Murakami, 565 19th Street in Courtenay**. The meeting will begin at **10 a.m.**

December 10th – Christmas Party



DECEMBER

CHRISTMAS PARTY

On Tuesday, December 10th our chapter will be holding its annual Christmas dinner party for our members and guests. If you didn't make the November meeting, and missed the signup sheet for the party and would like to attend, you are asked to RSVP by Dec 3rd, to Antje Guertler, to ensure there is enough turkey and ham for all. Let Antje know the dish you will be bringing. (approx. for 8-10 servings)

Please bring your own cutlery, plates and drinking vessels. Loonies for the Heads and Tails game.

Social hour starts at 5:00 pm with the dinner served at 6 pm.

Pictures from 2018



Hot apple cider



Jeopardy



Delicious food



Guessing game



Heads or Tails



*Share
a
laugh*



*See what we will do for a chance to win
a few loonies*

Come join us

PRESIDENT'S NOTES, *Maureen Denny*



Today the chilly winds of winter have arrived, and Christmas is just starting to peek out to liven things up. My zeal to garden is slowly going into dormancy. If I do go out, I wear two layers of gardening gloves and blue latex ones on top of those to keep out the cold and damp. Getting old?

It is a good time to look back on the recent and wonderful visit by Steve Hootman. He was here to advise our club on the maintenance and long term planning of the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden, and give a presentation at our General Meeting. On the morning of November 12th a small CVRG Committee comprised of several club members, met at the garden with Steve, and Dave Snider from the Courtenay Parks Department. We received some excellent advice from Steve. This advice will eventually be drawn up into a Master Plan and Implementation Plan for the gardens.

One point that Steve mentioned during his consultation is that the CVRG represents the NIRS and the genus Rhododendron to the public; all those people who pass through the park and admire the gardens in full bloom every spring. I liked this idea very much. Keeping this garden healthy and beautiful may hopefully inspire others to become gardeners and Rhododendron lovers like ourselves!

After lunch the group ventured south down to Royston to tour the site of the former home and nursery of Ted and Mary Greig. Ted and Mary were pioneers in the growing of species Rhododendrons on the west coast. Royston Nursery operated from 1936 to 1954.

The original home still stands and has just been purchased by a young family who plan to renovate the house. Many of the original plants, trees, shrubs and rhodos are still there as well. In the garden, the rockery that Ted built, to grow precious and rare alpine plants has survived, now carpeted with drifts of beautiful and unusual cyclamen. The foundation of the original greenhouse is there as well.

However, in my mind, the most impressive testament to survive is the large, old and beautifully formed Acer griseum, or Paperbark Maple with it's wonderful peeling orange/brown bark. This tree dominates a portion of the back yard.

Our day with Steve was not over yet. Next, we were over to Comox to show him the Filberg Park. We were joined by Trina, head gardener for the park and Dany Fortin, gardener for the Town of Comox. They gave us a tour of the many large trees and pointed out where original Rhododendrons from the Greig property were planted after the nursery was closed. These are located in garden beds on the upper parts of the park on the southeast and north west sides of the park.

This very full day was topped off by Steve's great presentation to our club on hunting Species Rhodos in China. This special event was coordinated and planned by Judy Walker. Thanks Judy!

I hope you can all come enjoy the Christmas party, it is one of our main events, lovely dinner and lots of fun with the games.

Merry Christmas to all,

Maureen

CHRISTMAS HAMPER

Diane Van Oostdam, Organizer

Christmas Greetings. Once again time for 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 our Christmas potluck (Dec 10). You can also drop this off at my house (1740 Linden Ave., Comox).

We are sponsoring a couple with three children, a boy 16 years, and two girls 14 and 17 years. 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 can add extra items if so desired.

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. SUGAR (2 KG.) | 13. CANNED SALMON OR 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. PERSONAL - TOOTHPASTE, HANDSOAP, SHAMPOO |
| 9. CRACKERS (2 BOXES) | 21. PAPER PRODUCTS (NAPKINS, TOILET PAPER, PAPER TOWELS) |
| 10. STUFFING MIX | |
| 11. CRANBERRY SAUCE | |
| 12. CEREAL (2 BOXES) | |

If you have any questions, please give me a call. Diane Van Oostdam 250-650-0437.

MEMBERSHIP

Nadine Boudreau

The winner for the 'Win back your membership fee' will be drawn at the Christmas party. Good Luck!



PAUL'S FAVOURITES

My Five Favourite Red Rhododendrons

By Paul Wurz

Paul sent me the following 5 red favourite Rhodos pictures back in September. I asked him if I could save them for the December issue. Unfortunately, Paul has been very busy and was unable to write about these beauties, so I am just giving you the basic information about them from the ARS website and Greer's Guidebook. We can be sure that if Paul picked these from all the red rhodos he has, they are worth seeking out.



Rhododendron smithii:

Young growth on this plant with purplish bark is very bristly and sticky. Oblanceolate leaves, to 6" x 2", are glabrous and dark glossy green above, with a patchy, loose, greyish white, woolly indumentum and a few hairs underneath. Tubular-bell-shaped flowers to 2" long, are scarlet to blood red, waxy, with darker blotched nectar pouches. They are held in compact trusses of 10-16. Very similar to *R. barbatum* but has under leaf indumentum.

R. Clayquot Warrior:

Flower tubular funnel-shaped, 2½" across, wavy-edged, vivid red throughout, with faint, dark reddish-brown spotting on dorsal lobe. Dome-shaped truss has 14-16 flowers. Early Midseason bloomer. Leaves narrowly oblong, convex, acuminate apex, cuneate base, 7" long; dull green, with tan hairs below aging to reddish brown hairs on midrib. Open growth habit growing to 5' in 10 years. Parentage (Seed Parent x Pollen Parent): *strigillosum* x *Essex Scarlet*. It is an Elepidote, hybridized by Larson.





R. Double Winner:

A long blooming variety that opens a few buds at a time. Long foliage with a light indumentum, and bright red flowers in tight trusses distinguish this hybrid. Grows to 5' in 10 years. It is a strigillosum hybrid by Larson.

R. Lord Roberts:

Flower funnel-shaped, 2½" to 3⅛" across, dark red with a v-shaped black marking on dorsal lobes. Held in ball-shaped truss holds 12-22 flowers. Late Midseason bloomer. Leaves very rippled, heavy texture, glossy. Vigorous growing. Upright, rounded habit. Height 5' in 10 years. parentage (Seed Parent x Pollen Parent): catawbiense x unknown. It is an Elepidote, and was hybridized by Mason.



R. Taurus:

Flower campanulate, 3½" across, vivid and strong red with darker throat and black spots on dorsal lobe. Held in ball-shaped trusses of 16 flowers. Deep red winter buds. Early-Mid season bloom time. Leaves elliptic, acute apex, rounded base, about 7" long, dark green, retained 3 years. Afternoon sun protection works best for this plant. Height 6' in 10 years. The parentage is The Honourable Jean Marie de Montague x strigillosum. It is an Elepidote.



POINSETTIA

...by Nadine Boudreau

As December arrives and the holiday season is upon us, we start to see the most popular Christmas plant - the Poinsettia. The botanical name is 'Euphorbia pulcherrima', meaning "very beautiful". As with many plants of the Euphorbiaceae family, it has a milky sap.

Poinsettias are native to Mexico; the Aztec people called them 'Cuetlaxochitl'. During the 14th to 16th centuries the sap was used to control fevers, while the bracts (colored modified leaves) were used to make a reddish dye. In the 1820's, Joel Roberts Poinsett was the first United States Ambassador to Mexico. He had a keen interest in botany and wandered the countryside looking for new plant species. In 1828 he found a beautiful shrub with large red flowers growing next to the road. He took cuttings from the plant and brought them back to his greenhouse in South Carolina; thus, introducing the Euphorbia to the USA.

As the Euphorbia pulcherrima became more popular, William Prescott a historian/horticulturist was asked to give the plant a new name, so he named it Poinsettia in honor of Joel Poinsett's discovery. John Bartram is credited with being the first nurseryman to sell Poinsettias. The Ecke family from Southern California started growing Poinsettias in the early 1900's, at first as outdoor landscape plants and cut flowers. Later they started greenhouse production. Today, they are the largest producers of the plant and are credited with having 90% of the world's Poinsettias getting their start at the Ecke Family Ranch.

Selection and Care. Now that we know some history, lets look at choosing and caring for it. This year, I plan on really focusing on these aspects, as many years my plants barely make it to Christmas before dropping half their leaves! There are many types and colors available, from traditional reds to whites, pinks and corals. Whichever one catches your interest, here's some points to look for:

- A plant with dark green foliage down to the soil line.
- Check the plants maturity, true flowers at the centre of the colored bracts. These should be green or red tipped tight little buttons and fresh looking. They will last longer than if yellow pollen is covering the flower.
- Bracts (the modified coloured leaf) should be completely coloured- no green on the edges.
- Plant should be full, good on all sides, balanced and approx. ½ times taller than container.
- No wilting, drooping or yellowing of leaves
- Check that soil is not soggy, as this could lead to root rot.
- Do not purchase plants displayed near entranceways where they are exposed to drafts.
- Do have your plant sleeved, or even better placed in a large paper bag, to protect it from sudden temperature fluctuations or drafts when transporting it home.

At home

Now that you have your Poinsettia home, treat it well. Here are some guidelines to remember:

- Remove the plastic sleeve.
- Pick a spot away from door drafts, vents, fireplace, or TV.
- They would like about 6 hours of indirect sunlight a day, but don't let them touch cold windows.
- Temperature should range from 20 to 22 degrees C during the day, and between 16 to 18 degrees C at night.
- Allow your Poinsettia to dry out slightly between watering; soil feels dry to touch. Water just enough for water to come through the drainage holes. Don't overwater or let it sit in water. If the plant is in foil or decorative container, make sure you remove plant when watering.
- No fertilizer is needed when in bloom.

Following these guidelines, your Poinsettia can reward you with its beauty for many months, often from November until March. The milky sap can cause skin irritation, but there is a misunderstanding that they are poisonous. There have been many studies. However, the Ohio State University showed that a 50-pound child would have to eat more than 1¼ pounds of Poinsettia bracts (500-600 leaves) to exceed the doses that found toxicity. Of course, we all discourage the eating of ornamental plants!!



THE COMOX VALLEY RHODODENDRON GARDEN

Maureen Denny, Chair

Thanks to all who have helped since last February to keep the CVRG looking beautiful and healthy for all to enjoy. These get togethers have been so much fun! The highlight of the year was Steve Hootman's visit on November 12 to advise us on the management of the garden. Steve will be sending us a plan, and a CVRG Committee has been formed, and along with input and help from The City of Courtenay we will work together to implement his recommendations. The NIRS currently is part of "The Partners in Parks Program" with the City. More information can be found about this partnership by googling Partners in Parks Courtenay.

Work parties will begin again in February and are held the Thursday following the General Meeting weather permitting.

Maureen



After touring the CVRG with Steve Hootman, some of us carried on visiting the old Greig property. The new owners were gracious in allowing us to tour their garden.

Greig Rhododendron Species Garden Update – *by John Deniseger*

The Greig Rhododendron Species Garden at Milner continues to thrive and move forward. In July, the project received a grant from the ARS to support the acquisition of more rhododendrons for the garden. A small committee fine-tuned the “wish list” of plants needed to help fill in the garden. In early November, Paul Wurz and I, (on behalf of Milner and the five Vancouver Island rhododendron clubs) went down to the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden in Federal Way, Washington. Working with Steve Hootman, the RSBG’s executive director, we returned with fifty rhododendrons for the collection as well as a number of companion trees, shrubs and smaller plants. Many of the new rhododendrons are rare and unusual or endangered in the wild. Some are found on only one or two hillsides in China or North Vietnam and are just becoming available for cultivation. Special thanks to Steve Hootman for all his help and support!

Volunteers from NRS and MARS have placed, planted and mulched the new additions. Further plans are being made to add more companion plants and rhododendrons next spring. Be sure to take some time to explore the garden next year – there should be lots in bloom. The garden has come a long way in only a few years!



Some of the new plants at the RSBG – (from left to right) John Deniseger, Steve Hootman, Paul Wurz.



One of many hoop houses at the RSBG - so many plants to choose from and difficult decisions to make.

Poet's Corner

After Steve Hootman's very interesting presentation and his ability to roll off the most complicated of the Rhododendron species names, I thought I'd practice some Latin names through botanical Latin pronunciation sites. While searching, I came across this poem:

I tried to wax botanical,
But they made a nasty fuss,
When I called my vine clem-AH-tis,
Instead of CLEM-a-tis.

I've been speaking well
Since I was five and riding on my trike,
But when it comes to flower names,
It seems my tongue's on strike.

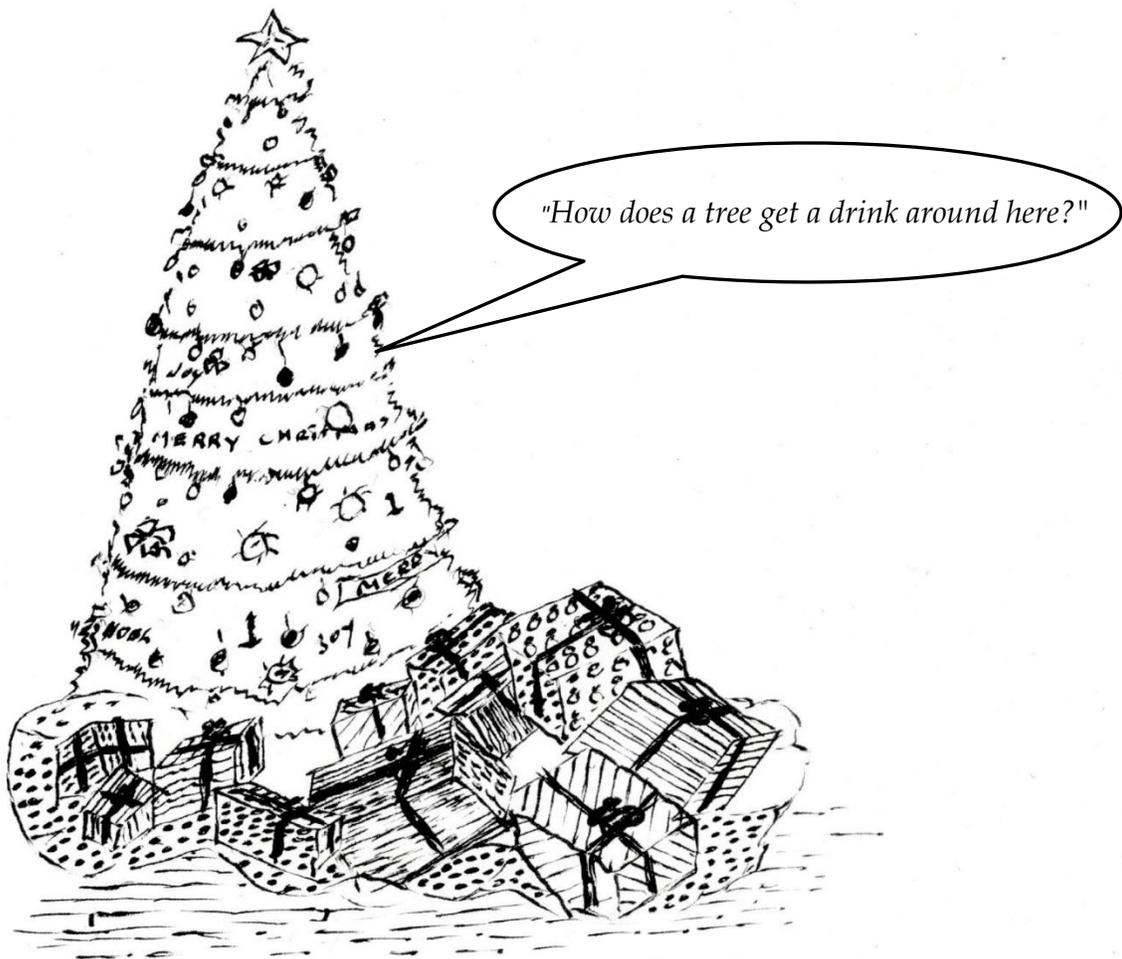
If I say: 'How tall my DAY-lia's grown,'
They'll gasp: "You mean your DAW-lia!"
I don't say African violet now,
Instead I say Saint-PAUL-ee-a.

In grandma's time,
"bluebell" was fine,
Now it's a conversation -killer.
"Bluebell?" they'll say,
"Oh, nay, nay nay! It's Hyacinthoides or
Scillia."

Linguistically speaking,
I'm just a dolt
But I'm learning on the job.
And soon - like Homer's Virgil,
I'll be a Latin snob.

By Janet Davis

Meanwhile at the local pub, a tree sat in the corner....



HAPPY HOLIDAYS EVERYONE,

Nadine Boudreau and Marcel Bombezin



Walk through twinkling trees glowing with dazzling lights,
listen to live music and visit Santa.

Storytelling and refreshments onsite.

DEC 6-8, 13-15 & 18-22, 2019

5-8:30 PM (LAST ENTRY 8 PM)

For more info, visit milnergardens.org or call **250.752.6153**

2179 W. Island Highway, Qualicum Beach

