

NORTH ISLAND RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

THE OCTOBER 2019 EDITION



THE RHODOTELLER

www.nirsrhodos.ca

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OCTOBER 2019 Coming Events

October 1st -- Executive meeting

This month's meeting will be held at the home of **Judy Walker, 146 Gage Road, Comox**. The meeting will begin at **10 a.m.**

October 8th -- Regular meeting

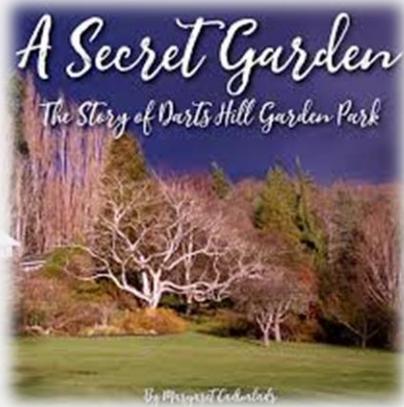
Our guest speaker for the meeting will be, Margaret Cadwaladr to give a presentation of her latest book, "A Secret Garden: The Story of Darts Hill Garden Park".



Author Margaret Cadwaladr also wrote "In Veronica's Garden: The Social History of the Milner Gardens and Woodland" A graduate of UBC (DIP. Adult Ed.MA), Margaret's interests include garden history life writing and memoir. Margaret lives in Langley with husband Jim.

Meeting begins at 7:30 pm. United Church,
250 Beach Drive. Corner of Comox Rd & Beach.

OCTOBER PROGRAMME



A SECRET GARDEN THE STORY OF DARTS HILL GARDEN PARK

Our guest speaker for the October 8th meeting will be Margaret Cadwaladr giving us a look into her latest book "A Secret Garden: The Story of Darts Hill Garden Park".

Ed and Francisca Darts took their logged, stumped covered acreage and transformed it into an internationally acclaimed garden. Francisca's keen interest in horticulture has resulted in a diverse collection of mature tree and shrub species.

The Darts donated their acreage to the City of Surrey and its citizens. The City of Surrey and the non-profit Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society work in partnership to have the garden open to the public.



PRESIDENT'S NOTES

MAUREEN DENNY

Fall has hit with an unexpected vigour. The rains have started, but I am still wanting more sun! However, I should not complain as the forests and plants in our gardens have finally received a good drink. On the bright side we don't have to fret about being in Stage 3 Water Restrictions. Mother Nature is easily taking care of any watering that needs to be done.



None the less I always start to feel a little blue at this time of year, knowing that summer is surely coming to an end. I just like being outside. Rambling around the garden when the sun is warm, and the birds are singing. Watching the garden going through all it's growth and changes. This is "Why I Garden" and what I really miss in the winter. Thanks to John Deniseger for his wonderful talk on this subject. He left us all with many ideas and insights to contemplate.

With some moisture in the ground, this is the best time to plant trees, shrubs and rhododendrons, divide and plant perennials, and seed bare patches in the lawn. Nope, we gardeners don't get our winter rest yet. I have already started a fall TO DO list.

I am also really looking forward to this month's speaker Margaret Cadwaladr. She will be talking about her new book "A Secret Garden: The Story of Dart's Hill Park". I have a bit of personal history with this park. Way back in about 1988 I was enrolled in The Master Gardener Program at VanDusen Gardens and our class was given the chance to spend a day with Francisca Darts and her husband at their property. We had a tour of the garden and then spent several hours weeding the garden beds. I remember sitting on their terrace looking down at the gardens and trees, eating our bagged lunch. Her husband gave us all a demo on sharpening secateurs. I knew I was having a chance to spend time with two very special people in a very special garden. I certainly plan on buying the book.

Maureen



OCTOBER MARKS THE CLUB'S 35TH YEAR AS A CHAPTER OF THE ARS

The late Harry Wright had a vision to form a NIRS chapter for other local Rhododendron enthusiasts. It didn't take long to get 13 others to sign up and become the founding members of the club.

They were:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Dick & Pauline Bonney | Fred & Jean Bosson |
| John & Jean Farquharson | Joanne Foster |
| Bruce & Cherylyn Helander | Garry Green |
| Doug Newson | Lloyd Franks |
| James & Elizabeth Stubbs | Harry & Heather Van Essan |
| Judy Walker | Harry & Gwen Wright |
| Andy & Sheila Zoltay | |

All these members were very knowledgeable horticulturists. The meetings started in Harry's basement, then to the Filberg Lodge. As the membership grew the lodge could no longer accommodate the numbers, the club settled into meetings at the United Church we still use today. The members did a lot of work at the Filberg Lodge Park. They prepared and planted the large rhodo beds on the east side of the park that are still highlights of the park. The Rhododendron garden was established to honor Ted and Mary Greig of Royston Nurseries. Many of the large Rhododendrons planted were from the Greig gardens.

A few years later the club thought it would be great to develop a Rhododendron garden in Courtenay. In 1997 The Mayor of Courtenay cut the ribbon to officially open the garden, that we still work to maintain in partnership with the city. The idea of the Mother's Day Garden Tour was to help with the cost

Rhodo society formed

The North Island Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society (ARS), has established itself in the Comox Valley.

The ARS is a non-profit organization whose objectives are to supply information on rhododendrons and azaleas, operate test and display gardens, register new hybrids and promote and develop interest in the growing and culture of rhododendrons and azaleas.

Much of Vancouver Island has excellent climate and conditions to grow rhododendrons and azaleas and until now the only B.C. chapters were in Vancouver and can provide guest speakers, slide shows, organized tours to gardens, access to journals and other information and contact with other enthusiasts from professional growers to just admirers of the rhodo family.

The meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month beginning Nov. 13 at 7 p.m. For further information please phone Harry Wright.

Oct. 3/84

of purchasing and maintaining the Rhododendron Garden. In 1996 the first tour raised \$1800.00! Well that was a hit, and we continue to have this wonderful event.

Our other fundraiser, the Plant Sale and Truss show began in 1987 as a truss display in the driftwood mall. There were over 90 different blooms of Rhododendrons and Azaleas on display. The club knew how to dazzle a crowd, this grew to include a plant sale that we also continue to host yearly.

The club was involved in community events back in the early days, Bernie recently told me about the parades the club entered, as well as fund raising for Filberg Lodge Park. The members were all active in the club activities.

Check out the history albums at the club's library at the next meeting, they are not only interesting, but heart warming to see the members, some gone, having a great time at our events, tours and meetings.

A big thank you to Harry and the founding members for the foresight to form a club for us Rhododendron enthusiasts to gather to exchange knowledge and enjoy each other's company.



A WORK PARTY CAN be fun too. Recently, members of the North Island Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society gathered with shovels and hooks to prepare a large new bed of rhododendrons in Filberg Park, Comox. The party of the week made great inroads in the establishment of a rhododendron bed to honor the work of Ted and Mary Greig of Royston. Many large plants originally from the Greig gardens were planted with love and care; next spring the efforts of this group will be on

display with great profusion of blossoms for the public to enjoy while strolling through the gardens at Filberg Park. It was not all work, however, as coffee and homemade muffins filled the gaps created by industrious physical efforts. Left to right are: John Dickenson, Pauline Bonney, Garry Green, Sue Sinsom, Judy Walker, Bruce Helander, Len Simmons, Dick Bonney, Dale Greene, Jo Ann Foster. Absent from photo are Harry Wright and Dutch Franks.

Rhodo tour a hit

\$1,800 raised

MAY
1996

An estimated 300 garden enthusiasts toured six private properties in support of the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden.

The North Island Rhododendron Society hosted the tour, which raised about \$1,800 over the weekend.

Located near the Tourist Bureau on Cliffe Avenue, the Rhododendron Garden is being developed by the society and the City of Courtenay.

The city approved using the land for the project. The NIRS will collect, donate, purchase, plant and maintain the rhododendrons.

"This is a low-cost, hands-on project to provide a beautiful setting for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike," says society member John Challenger.

"The funds raised will go a long way to establishing the garden."

Special thanks are due the hosts, who opened their private sanctums and shared their love of gardens and their knowledge, says Challenger.

The tour included the properties of Gloria and Bernie Guyader, Gwen and Harry Wright, Madeline and Len Simmons, Marion and Bob Lofthouse, Ann and Paul Chevrier and Pauline and Dick Bonney.

"Thanks are also due to the visitors, who were careful to respect the private properties and gardens,"



Alpine Meadows was a restful stop

Challenger adds:

"The enthusiasm of the many visitors and the positive reaction of the hosts could mean the tour may

become an annual event."

For further information on the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden, call Challenger at 339-4068.

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Antje Guertler, Chair



For the October meeting, we look forward to the tasty treats from Annie Sollberger, Diane Van Oostdam, Adrienne McNabb, Janet Campbell and Helen Stefiuk. The sign-up sheet for November will be passed around at the general meeting, Thanks for the goodies!

MEMBERSHIP

Nadine Boudreau and Cathie Arnold



*Cathie, busy
registering members*

IT'S TIME TO RENEW!

We are offering the "Register before November 30, 2019 and be entered in a draw to win your membership fee back" incentive. We like to have as many memberships renewed so we can have everyone signed up with the ARS by January 1, 2020. The cost for a membership has remained the same, regular \$35.00 and \$10.00 for an associate membership (has a regular membership with another ARS chapter).

REVENUE TABLE

Judy Walker and Naomi Chester

Over the late summer and fall, please bring interesting plants, magazines and anything garden related to add to the revenue table. The items generously donated by the members provide 100% profit for the NIRS, which we use for our activities throughout the year.

Just remember to pick up anything that doesn't sell as we can't store items for another meeting!

Thank you! Your
Revenue Table
volunteers Judy &
Naomi



LIBRARY



Zelda and Ruth are working hard at the Library during the meetings helping folks check out books and magazines. There are many specialty books on various plants and topics. There is a data base on the website or just ask the ladies and they can help you find what you are looking for.

COMOX VALLEY RHODODENDRON GARDEN

Maureen Denny, Chair

Despite another dry summer, the rhododendrons are looking good. Some were severely pruned last June, and these have flushed out with lots of new dense growth. This summer rabbits have become quite a problem digging holes throughout the beds and even exposing the roots of some rhodos. I have been talking with Tyler Johns of Courtenay Parks regarding this problem and the plan is to spray Bobbex to help deter the rabbits, when we get some dry weather.



The weather for last month's work party was rainy, but five hardy members showed up to clean up the pathways and weed, and then we were off to the café for coffee and treats.

The next work party will be held Thursday October 10 at 10am. A small load of gravel will be dropped off to spread on the pathways, so a few shovels, a wheelbarrow, and sturdy rakes will be needed. Please bring your own hand tools, leaf rake and a bucket for garden cleanup. Bring treats to share.

Hopefully the sun will be shining.

Maureen



Dave Godfrey on the ladder, and Doug Williams at a work party

One of the bunny squatters at the cvrg



COMOX VALLEY RHODODENDRON GARDEN - PROPOSED MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden (CVRG) was initiated in 1996 by the City of Courtenay and the Society under the *Partners in Parks Program*. The City owns the land which the garden is located for the purpose of public access and enjoyment. The Society maintains the rhododendron garden and the City provides mulch and debris removal.

For over 23 years, rhododendrons have been added to the garden, especially a section of “Born on Vancouver Island (BOVI) plants, including hybrids developed by Harry Wright and others, and plants from the Greig Nursery in Royston.

Many of the plants are maturing into large specimens. Some plants have ailed and died, and have been replaced; some plants were relocated and new ones added. The plants are now beginning to crowd each other, vying for light and nutrients. The paths are dark and crowded and it may be hard to appreciate the blooming season. While pruning is a partial solution to the current crowding, it is not considered a long term solution. To reduce a 15 ft. specimen down to 6’ is possible, but it becomes endless work trying to limit the size of plants, while not allowing them to express their full potential.

The NIRS Executive, in collaboration with the City of Courtenay, is considering developing a management plan for the rhododendron garden. A management plan could provide options for the long-term strategy for the assessment of the rhododendrons, and criteria for retention/relocation of some plants. To provide that expertise, Steve Hootman, Executive Director and Curator of the Rhododendron Species Foundation and the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, has agreed to assist us in assessing the plants and options for long term management.

SPECIAL PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

There will be a special presentation by Steve Hootman at our November 12th meeting. Steve is one of the foremost contemporary plant explorers, a lecturer, and author of many articles. He is the Executive Director & Curator of the Rhododendron Species Foundation and the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, in Federal Way WA. He will have recently returned from another expedition to China in October. More details on his presentation will follow in the November newsletter.



PAUL'S FAVOURITES

What does it take to be on a favourite rhodo list?

1. It must catch your immediate attention
2. Colour must be outstanding and vibrant
3. Leaves should be healthy and interesting
4. The 'truss' is likely the main feature of the plant
5. Under normal conditions flowers should last a long time
6. Plants should be well shaped, full, and look good all year round



My Five favourite Yellow flowering Rhododendrons: Not in any particular order



Horizon Lakeside

One of my most striking plants in our entire garden with large beautiful trusses, blooms profusely and plant looks extremely healthy year after year. All of Dr Ned Brockenbrough's hybrids are excellent. It may be argued that this is not a true yellow!

Hotei

An older hybrid that continues to attract attention when ever you approach it in a garden – we have 3 mature plants that put on a great show every year. A calyx adds interest to a beautiful truss.



Lemon Dream

A very compact plant in our garden, that is completely covered with flowers every year, in spite of growing in full shade. The flowers are a pale yellow, that bloom late, and last for an extended period of time. The firm, well-shaped leaves look extremely well throughout the year. A light fawn coloured indumentum adorn the leaves.



Saffron Silk

All of Frank Fujioka hybrids attract attention in the garden and Saffron Silk is no exception. The 'truss' is a very attractive soft yellow that contrasts well with dark glossy leaves - the plant is very well mannered and does well in both sun and shade.



Windsong

I could have chosen at least 4 or 5 of Jim Barlup's yellow rhodos in our garden. The truss is large, dark greenish yellow, and is surrounded by beautiful foliage. Like most of Jim's hybrids, the Windsong is compact and well mannered. Windsong in our garden is in full shade and does manage to bloom well.

Honourable Mention!!

Any on the following list could easily make the 'Favourites List' in a smaller garden:

Yellow Pages, Sunspray, Mindy's Love, Karen Triplett, Yellow Rolls Royce, Marie Starkes, Yellow Petticoats, Golden Genie, Goldstrike, & Horizon Monarch

Maybe tomorrow they might be on my favourites list!

Paul Wurz

Note: Paul Wurz is one of the club's most knowledgeable Rhododendron enthusiast. Paul has been our club's president for three terms and has been awarded the Bronze medal from the ARS. He is a propagator and hybridizer and is well connected with Rhododendron growers throughout the Pacific Northwest. Along with his wife Lynn, who is also a very knowledgeable horticulturist they opened "Hidden Acres Rhododendrons" about 25 years ago on their 8.5-acre property just north of Campbell River. The gardens contain hundreds of Rhododendrons inter-planted with Lynn's perennials. This garden and nursery should be on your must visit list.

ARS BRONZE MEDAL

Presentation to Jill Gould

North Island Rhododendron Society



President Maureen Denny presented the American Rhododendron Society Bronze Medal to Jill Gould on September 10th, 2019. 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.

Jill joined the North Island Rhododendron Society in January 2010. She quickly became an active member of the club, helping with events such as the Rhododendron Sale and Truss Show and the Mother's Day Garden Tour. In 2014, Jill became part of the Executive Board as a Director, taking on the position of Membership Chair, which she held until 2018. Jill's organization skills and friendly manner kept our Membership rolls in good order and welcoming members and guests at each meeting.

In addition to an extensive knowledge of plants, Jill has a special interest in entomology. Her contributions to our Newsletter and to the meeting educationals have been both interesting and informative. Jill is a member of the NIRS Propagation group, helping with its many activities, and volunteered at the CVRG. Jill is currently welcoming members and guests at our general meetings as the official 'Greeter'.

We thank Jill for her many contributions to the Club and congratulate her on being awarded the ARS Bronze Medal by the North Island Rhododendron Society.

WAY AND MEANS

Aubrey Ferris - Chair

Valerie Ferris - Co-Chair

Our *Raffle Rhodos* and door prize this month are:



R. Snowlady: Grows to 3 feet in 10 years. This Rhododendron flowers early, the flowers are up to 2 ½" across, pure white with brown anthers. Snow Lady will bud well in shade. The leaves are elliptic, about 1" across, the edges and upper surface are hairy, glossy, dark green. The plant has a low spreading habit. It is a lepidote, hybridized by Exbury, the parentage is leucaspis x ciliatum.

Photo by Pat Breen

R. Golden Gate: Is a dense, compact plant, with deep green glossy leaves. The flowers are funnel-shaped, reddish-pink with orange-rose edge and a pale orange throat. Bloom time is mid-season. The ARS has its height at 3 feet in 10 years, but the one I had was 5 feet in 5 years. It is an Elepidote, parentage is dichroanthum ssp scyphocalyx x unknown.



Photo by Hank Helm



Photo by Garth Wedemire

R. Mildred Amateis

Norman Todd wrote this about Mildred Amateis in 2007 ARS newsletter "perhaps not the most shapely plant...but I wouldn't be without it...'Mildred Amateis'. It is an interesting plant, as it is a cross between a toughie from the eastern U.S. and a semi-tropical Asiatic. The latter...*edgeworthii*...gives it a delightful fragrance of nutmeg. I have no 'nose' and would never make a wine taster, but 'Mildred' surely gives you a hit when walking past it in May. White flowers blushed with pink, 3"



RHODOS 101

An Introduction Species Rhododendrons

by Jake Ellis



When starting to learn about any subject, why not start at the beginning? For the purposes of this article the beginning of our relationship with the rhododendron began when the early explorers set out on their adventures to find other lands. Often these explorers were accompanied by botanists, often referred to as "the plant hunters". There are so many fascinating stories of these hunters -- you know a lot of the names from the plants in your garden that are named after them. Hooker, Douglas, Forrest, Wilson and so many more. While most rhododendrons were found in South-East Asia, many were also found in Europe and North America. None has been found in South America or Africa. Over the past few hundred years of exploration over 1,000 species of rhododendrons have been identified and the search continues. Each species rhodo has all the attributes of the genus *Rhododendron*, but is different from each other -- sometimes very subtly, but different.

The problem so many of us have with species rhodos is with the names. Not simple names like the hybrids *Rhododendron* 'Golden Torch' or *Rhododendron* 'Lisa'. No -- you run into names like *Rhododendron hirsutum*, *Rhododendron fortunei* or *R. canadense*. Or even worse it could be called *R. xanthostephanum*!! But there's a reason for these botanical names isn't there? Common names create confusion, but these botanical names describe exactly which plant we're referring to.

The first part of the botanical name is the "genus". In our case -- *Rhododendron*. The second is the "specific epithet". This will describe something specific about the plant -- shape, colour, etc., where it was discovered, or it might honour a person. Let's take a look at the examples in the paragraph above.

R. hirsutum -- This tells us that it is a rhododendron and the epithet "hirsutum" means "hairy". And that describes exactly this little species rhodo. The thing that stands out most is the hairy little leaves. *R. fortunei* is named in honour of Mr. R. Fortune, a plant collector in China in the 1800's, while *R. canadense* tells us that this species was discovered in Canada.

While you can find the meanings of many specific epithets merely by Googling, it's probably much easier to just go to your Greer's Guidebook to Rhododendrons and look up the rhodo in the listing of species rhododendrons. Those listings contain everything you need to know about any particular species rhodo (except how to pronounce it).

Please note the way I've been writing the name of a species rhodo. The first letter of the genus name is capitalized while the specific epithet is in lower case. (i.e. *Rhododendron williamsianum*). Once the genus has been determined, it is common to abbreviate by using the first letter only. (i.e. *R. williamsianum*). This is an excellent way for the novice to figure out if the rhodo is a species or a hybrid.

So now, we've looked at the botanical name, what it's made up of and how to write it correctly, but pronouncing the darn thing can be a problem at times. Especially for me. I have enough trouble with English let alone these words with Latin or Greek origins (or a combination of both). I can remember so well, standing in front of our club and trying to pronounce some name of a rhodo like *R. forrestii* or *R. yuefengense* and feeling very insecure. How do you say the "ii" or the "e" on the end of the name? It got so bad that I really tried to avoid saying them altogether. Maybe some people just might avoid species rhodos entirely? Fear not! I found the answer -- for me at least. I found a website that describes a number of conventional ways to pronounce things like the "ii" the names that end in "e", "oides" and a few others. They urge their readers to learn these few things and then to go forth and say the names just like you know what you're talking about. Please do yourself a favour and go to "jlhudsonseeds.net" (How to Pronounce Botanical Names).

In the opening paragraph of this article mention was made that there were "many species" of rhododendrons found in North America. Well that number turns out to be "at least 27".

But enough for the first lesson. Your homework assignment is a question. The references below are excellent reading but you won't find the answer there. A little imagination and basic Googling skills will lead you to the answer, though.

Which species of rhododendrons have been identified on Vancouver Island? (See your next newsletter for the answer).

Ref: Henning's Rhododendron & Azalea pages (rhodyman.net)

How To Pronounce Botanical Names (jlhudsonseeds.net)

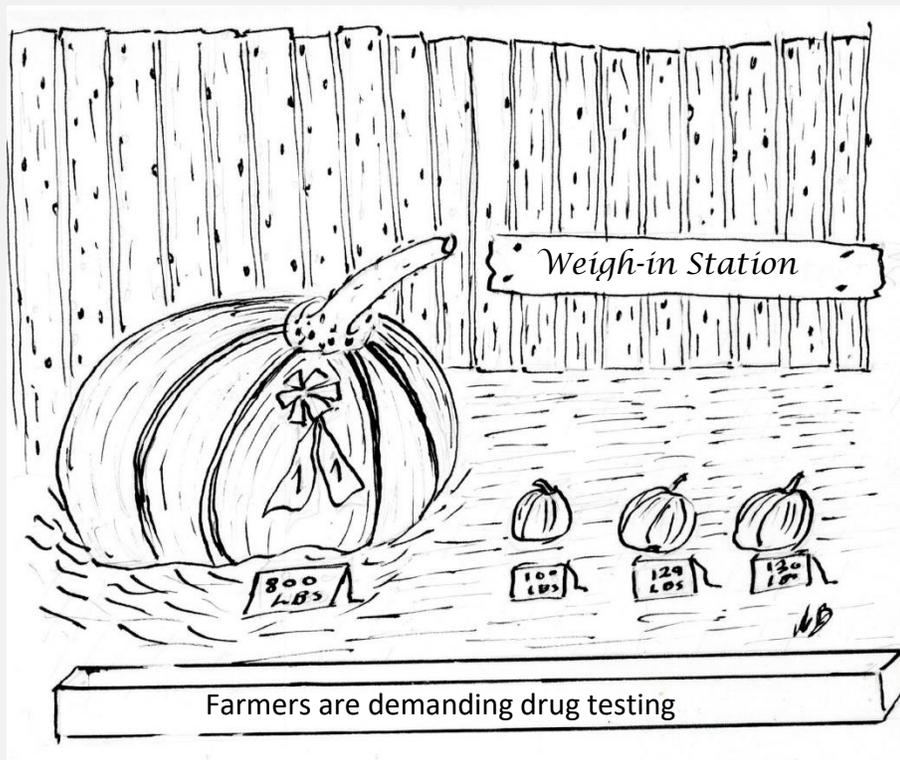


EDITORS NOTE

We had a lot of information this month, with the CVRG's exciting news with Steve Hootman coming to assist with the assessment of the gardens, our 35th year as an ARS chapter, and celebrating Jill's bronze medal award for her hard work.

I had to leave out a couple of articles that were forwarded to me, *sorry*, your articles will be in the next issue. Leaving out people's articles is the hardest part of the job. Please keep them coming as your work will be published.

Thanks Nadine



Sketch by Marcel Bombezin