

NORTH ISLAND RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

THE FEBRUARY EDITION

THE RHODOTELLER



www.nirsrhodos.ca

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February 2020

Coming Events

February 4 – Executive Meeting

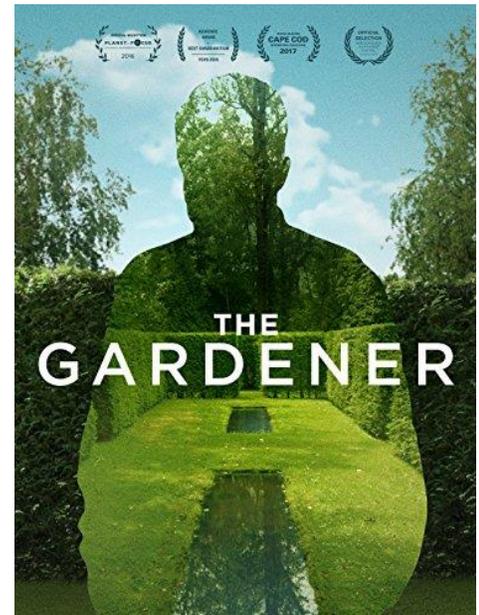
This month's meeting will be held at the home of **Joanne and Doug Williams**, 614 Jubilee Court, Courtenay. The meeting will begin at **10 a.m.**

February 11 - General Meeting

'THE GARDENER'

This month we are having a movie night, featuring "The Gardener" a film about Frank Cabot and his private garden in Quebec.

Doors open at 7:00 pm with the meeting beginning at 7:30.



FEBRUARY

‘THE GARDENER’

A Sebastien Chabot documentary

For our February 11th meeting, we will be featuring a showing of the acclaimed movie “The Gardener”. This documentary film recounts the quest of gardener and horticulturalist Frank Cabot to build “Les Quatre Vents” - his 26-acre English style garden and summer estate in Charlevoix County, Quebec.



A horticultural masterpiece, it is a place of beauty and surprise with riotous blossoms, lakes, streams and bridges. An English-style garden, it is the work of three generations of the Cabot family and the summer estate of Frank Cabot who guides us through his treasured garden.



PRESIDENT'S NOTES, *Maureen Denny*

It seems the weather of February 2019 might replicate itself for February 2020. Not too good. I read last years Notes that I wrote for the February Newsletter and I could almost just copy it for this year. The hellebores are blooming. The snowdrops are blooming, and the winter Jasmine is blooming. Same as last year! And guess what! Lurking on the horizon of the nasty Weather Network is a report that shows dropping temperatures for the week of February 2nd. As long as it doesn't snow.



Maybe this cold weather won't happen. Today however was warm for this time of year and I could not resist getting out into the garden and getting a little clean up done. I removed all last years leaves from the roses, and from the ground below them. Hopefully this will help counteract diseases and bugs for the coming summer. Also spread some compost around the rhubarb which is already popping up.

This is definitely the time for gardeners to practice restraint, not too much pruning, (except fruit trees) or clean up. Just have patience and wait, not an easy thing to do!

Today's fine weather also inspired me to take a walk in the Filberg Park in Comox. Spring is certainly coming along quite nicely there. The flowers of *Petasites japonicus*, or Japanese Butterbur are blooming. They emerge on short stalks on their own before the big round leaves. Just starting up is the park's spectacular early display of winter aconite. *Hamamelis*, maybe the cultivar 'Jelena', is out with it's bronze coloured spicy scented flowers beside sweet smelling *Viburnum 'Dawn'*. It is also well worth visiting the Filberg in the winter months just to look up and appreciate the fabulous branch structures of some of the very large trees. Of special note is an amazing Oak, situated beside the pathway just after entering the Park from Comox Ave. Down by the water and to the right of the house are two fantastic London Plane trees, *Platanus x acerfolia*. The bark on these trees is very colourful, with patches of colour in rust, gold, browns and dull green. Where the trunk goes into the ground reminds me of elephant feet and at these feet are clumps of snowdrops blooming.

So maybe spring really is coming. My walk in the park certainly cheered me up and maybe even made my green thumbs itch. Just must keep waiting.

See you at the next Meeting, February 11, for Movie Night.

Maureen



THE COMOX VALLEY RHODODENDRON GARDEN

Maureen Denny, Chair

I did a quick tour of the gardens two days after the heavy snowfall we had recently and all the rhodos were fine, showing no damage from the snow. Did another tour today, January 27, lots of branch litter on the ground from overhead trees and unfortunately many rabbit holes. These critters are an ongoing problem, mostly a concern for the appearance of the gardens, more than anything else. I will be mentioning this issue to the parks Dept. again.

I am so happy to announce our first work party of the year, Thursday February 13, at 10am, weather permitting. Please bring your tools and a bucket, and a couple of wheelbarrows are appreciated. Does this mean spring is on the way?

Maureen

REVENUE TABLE NEWS



Spring will soon be here - really! This is the time to check out your garden for possible plants to pot up for the revenue table. It's a fun way to share plants with friends and the revenue supports many activities by the NIRS members. As well as plants, any gardening related items are always welcome.

And while you are out there digging and potting up, think ahead to our plant sale in April- it's best to pot up the plants early so they are well established and healthy by the sale.

Thank you from Naomi & Judy



Ways and Means: Raffle and Door Prizes February Meeting

Aubrey Ferris



'Kluis Sensation' is a compact evergreen shrub to 2.2m tall, with dark foliage and rounded trusses of slightly frilled, crimson-scarlet flowers, paler within and spotted with dark red, in late spring and early summer.



"Medusa": This evergreen shrub is a real showstopper in spring when it is loaded with vibrantly colored salmon-orange flowers over a long period in spring. Attracts Bees and Butterflies, Compact, Deer Resistant, Dwarf Plant, Long Blooming, Low Maintenance, Year-round Interest 30" - 48" tall x 30" - 48" wide: Flower Color: Orange: Blooms in May, Jun, Spring: Flower Shape: Pendant

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"County Fair": Was hard to find information on this Rhodo, but with research from Garth, we believe the plant has leaves and low growth habit like most *R. williamsianum* hybrids and the white colour of the other plant (taller growing, larger, fragrant flowers) would make the colour of 'County Fair' a light pink with larger more open flowers compared to the normal bell shape of *R. williamsianum* hybrids.

Goodies and Popcorn

Antje Guertler

We look forward to the goodies that Connie Prain, Diane van Oostdam, Louise Casson, Aji Fliss and Dan Ryan have volunteered to bring to the February meeting. Thank you! We will be offering popcorn for movie night, just like the theatres! Please, No throwing any at the people in the front rows. Thank you to Kevin and Trish Dol for making the popcorn for us.

Witch Hazels in Our Garden – January 28, 2020

By Garth Wedemire

What a charming deciduous shrub is the ‘Witch Hazel’ (*Hamamelis*). In autumn, these plants exhibit an amazing variety of coloured leaves that rival any other garden plant.



For centuries, the leaves and bark of *Hamamelis mollis* in China, *Hamamelis japonica* in Japan and *Hamamelis virginiana* in North America have all been used medicinally. The common name “witch hazel” is not in reference to mystical practitioners of magic. Rather, “witch” is from the Old English word ‘wice’, meaning bendable or pliant. Beyond its etymology, witch hazel is fascinating for its many usages: treatment of skin inflammation, bruises, burns, itching and more.

Hamamelis x intermedia hybrids are crosses between Japanese witch hazel (*H. japonica*) and Chinese witch hazel (*H. mollis*). They are somewhat coarse, loosely-branched, medium to large, deciduous shrubs that typically grow 12-20’ tall. They are particularly noted for their spidery, often fragrant, mid to late winter flowers which appear before the spring foliage emerges.

We grow four different varieties of *Hamamelis* in our garden because they bloom through the dull winter months of December, January and February - months where the winter garden is unattractive and often too cold and rainy to spend much time outside

The four varieties of *Hamamelis x intermedia* that we have planted in our Comox garden are listed in order of their blooming time. First is ‘**Jelena**’ (bronze); followed by ‘**Pallida**’ (yellow) and then the last two - ‘**Diane**’ (red) and ‘**Arnold Promise**’ (yellow).

'Jelena' is long lasting in bloom. It was in bloom before the January snowfalls and -5°C weather and rebounded to its previous glory once the heavy downpours and strong winds returned in late January. The clone that we are growing is called 'Copper Beauty'. It flowers best when grown in full sun. Shrubs are easy to grow in well-drained soils and even have some tolerance for clay. Leaf scorch may occur during periods of summer drought and may need supplemental watering on those hot sunny days of July and August.



'Pallida' is quite free flowering, has attractive foliage and pleasant fall colours. It is one of the most popular hybrid witch hazels and one of the best winter-flowering shrubs. Each flower consists of four narrow, crinkled, strap-shaped petals with red-purple calyces.

Flowers of 'Diane' are fragrant and copper-red in colour, occurring in mid to late winter. Her green leaves change into attractive shades of yellow, orange and red in the autumn.



Our 'Arnold Promise' hasn't done well for the past two years but now seems to be recovering. We hope that it doesn't need to be replaced, since a five-gallon size plant is fairly expensive - usually in the \$80 range. Choice Hamamelis plants in garden centres are all grafted onto a vigorous understock like *H. virginiana*.

Care in pruning out the shoots of the understock is very important and will prevent the lesser attractive rootstock from sending shoots skyward from below the graft union. If the shoots are left to grow unattended, the understock will overtake the choice grafted scion which could eventually die out. Prune Hamamelis in spring after flowering to control shape and size.

Special Contest

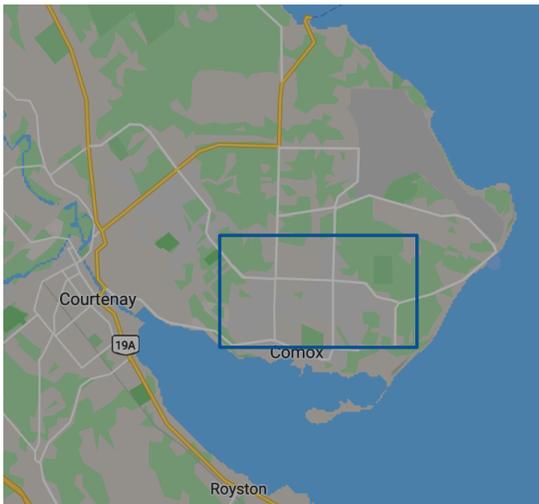
Treasure Hunt: Where is 'Jelena'

- Entry Deadline -

Sunday February 9, 2020

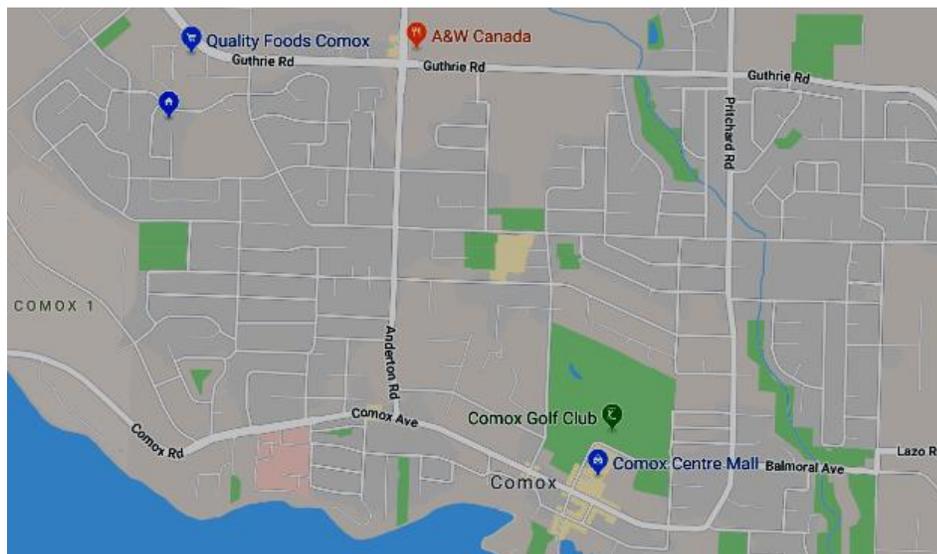
NIRS members! There are at least six *Hammamelis x intermedia* 'Jelena' that I have found growing within the rectangular blue area on the map of Comox shown below.

Treasure Hunt: Where is 'Jelena'.



Find as many plants as you can. When you find 'Jelena' plants growing within the blue rectangular area on the map, send the location/address by email to (gwedemire@gmail.com). The NIRS member who finds the most correct locations of the plant 'Jelena' growing in the rectangular region will be awarded a plant and bragging rights at our February meeting.

The entry deadline is Sunday February 9, 2020. This will give us time to check locations that we do not already know. The plant of 'Jelena' must be visible from the road so that contestants don't have to enter the property where the plant is growing. Apologies to NIRS members not living in Comox. You will need to schedule an exploration (walking/driving) tour of the small area of Comox in order to enter the contest.



FRAGRANT RHODODENDRONS

EVERYONE'S FAVOURITES: Part 1

By Paul Wurz

If there was a single group of rhodos that rhodo enthusiasts are searching for it would probably be fragrant rhododendrons. In my small nursery I probably have far more inquiries about rhododendrons that have a scent than all others combined.

There seems to be a feeling in the rhododendron world that the only scented rhododendrons are the Loderis - more specifically Loderi King George. The purpose of this article is to introduce many other hybrids, and later in Part 2, species that are very fragrant and very beautiful! Unfortunately, many of these plants are not available for various reasons, although "rhodo nuts" are still searching for them.

There are very few scented rhodos sold in nurseries as most of them are very difficult to propagate; they are usually vigorous growers that make them a bit unattractive when small; and usually require more time to produce flowers. In this article I will not discuss each plant individually as most of them have similar characteristics. (although definitely are different). Except for a few, most are pink to white with many with significant blotches. The leaves are generally much larger than medium sized rhodo varieties although most can tolerate a fair amount of sun. The majority of these rhodos are very vigorous growers and grow quite large - some bloom very early and others very late. The common denominator is that they are all exceptionally beautiful and their fragrance will brighten up your whole garden when in bloom!

In **Part 1** I will include approximately one half of the scented rhodos we have in our garden - scented species rhodos, and more hybrids, will be included in Part 2. There are many other scented rhodos that I do not have in my garden including probably at least a half dozen of different Loderi rhododendrons. Once again if you want more info on the rhodos mentioned you can refer to Greer's Guidebook or the Hirsutum website.



Angelo



Avalanche



Babylon



Fageters Favourite



Hidden Acres



Lorderi Pretty Polly



Lorderi King George



Mary Drennen



Lorderi Venus



Misty Moonlight



Mrs. Josephine Firth



Mrs. Water De La Mare



Newcombe "Sweetheart"



Pudget Sound

Upcoming Programmes

At our March 10th meeting, Judi Murakami will once again attempt to present her colourful tour of the Gardens of Bremen Germany. Some may recall that technical difficulties prevented Judi from providing this program last April. Hopefully, we will be able to enjoy the full program this time around.

Then on April 14th, we will be meeting at the *Florence Filberg Centre* in Courtenay to enjoy a special presentation by international speaker, Lionel de Rothschild. His presentation will feature his family's beautiful 'Exbury Gardens' in England. The public will be invited to attend with an admission price of \$5.00 for non-NIRS members. No doubt there will be a great deal of interest in this special presentation.



On Tuesday, May 12th, the NIRS will hold its 35th Annual General Meeting in the garden of Adrienne & Robert McNabb in Royston. Members will have an opportunity to tour the garden prior to the meeting.

To conclude our season of meetings, on Saturday, June 13th, we will once again enjoy our annual summer picnic. This year Carolyn, Naomi and Harris Chester will graciously open their garden for this event. More details will be forthcoming as we get closer to the dates provided.

Need a ride to a Meeting?

Call Sue at 250-331-1013 or email
grant.sk@gmail.com



**Actual ride car may not be the car pictured!*

JUST A REMINDER:

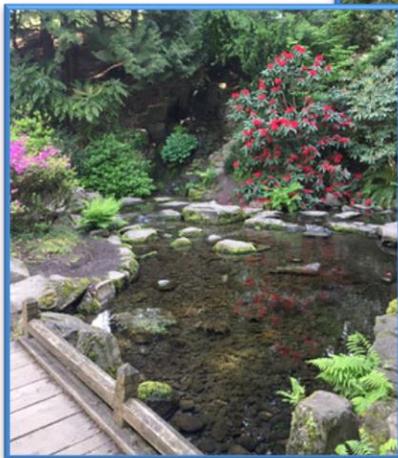
2020 ARS ANNUAL CONVENTION

You're invited to the celebration!

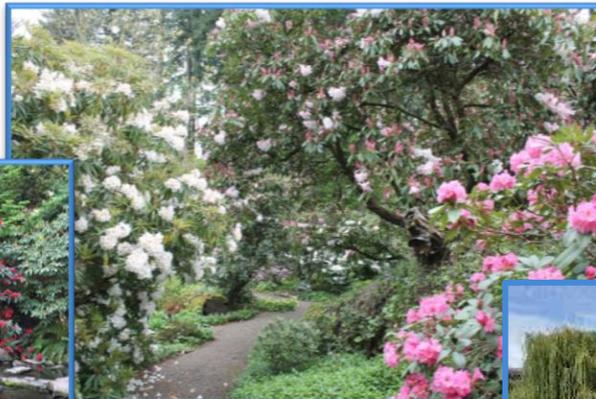


The six chapters of ARS District 4 will host the 75th anniversary Convention, titled "2020 Vision, Looking Forward Reflecting Back" to be held at the Heathman Lodge in Vancouver, WA on April 29 to May 3, 2020, with optional pre-tour, April 27-28 and post-tour, May 3-5. Informative guest speakers include Jens Nielsen, Kenneth Cox, Lionel de Rothschild and Steve Hootman. Outstanding garden tours are planned to the Crystal Springs Garden, the Cecil and Molly Smith Garden and the Lan Su Chinese Garden. Put this event on your calendars.

For more information and registration go to ars75.org



Crystal Springs



Cecil & Molly Smith Garden



Lan Su Chinese Garden