

THE RHODOTELLER



R. sutchuenense at the RSBG - taken Feb. 28, 2002 by Garth Wedemire

President's View

Here we are in the "dead of winter" and, as I write this, the view from my window is one of large white flakes coming down and beginning to settle in the gardens. Hopefully, it will only last a few days and we can resume some of our winter garden chores.

Unfortunately, the executive had to cancel the January meeting due to Island Health's higher Covid19 restrictions. Fortunately, most members of the executive are now capable of using Zoom technology and we will be holding our February 2nd executive meeting using this technology. It won't be business as usual, but at least we will be keeping up with the monthly business at hand.

Garth Wedemire has been a tremendous help in getting some members set up with the Zoom technology and how it works. As mentioned by Garth, "*We are using Zoom to allow us to have meetings and presentations during this time of the Covid19 epidemic, since we may not meet in*

person and in groups. All of us are learning how to use this program as we proceed through these difficult times! “

With over 30 NIRS members now capable of accessing Zoom, I am pleased to report that a dozen or more of our members have been attending and enjoying the Zoom presentations offered to those who wish to join in. It has also provided us an opportunity to visit other chapter meetings, meet some of their members and enjoy their program presentations. All from the comfort of our own home!

On Wednesday, January 13th, we were invited to join the Willamette Oregon chapter meeting to enjoy a colourful presentation by Kathy Lintault on ‘Camellias’. In addition to being a member of the Willamette Rhododendron Society, Kathy is also past president of the Oregon Camellia Society. Wow, who knew that there were so many different varieties of beautiful camellias? And they enjoy similar growing conditions to rhododendrons. A very colourful presentation!

Then on Friday, January 15th, Linda Gilkeson gave District 1 chapters a presentation on “Year-round Organic Gardening’. Gardeners in our mild West Coast climate can harvest fresh food from the garden all year round. To do that you need to choose the right varieties and plant them at the right time. Linda covered the basics of growing vegetables year-round, from fertilizing the soil to planting schedules for winter harvests. She also included tips on how to make the best use of space to grow the most food. A very educational and entertaining presentation.

The following week, it was back to Oregon on Wednesday, January 20th to attend the Eugene chapter presentation by Dr. Keith White on “The RSBG Sikkim Expedition 2015 – In the footsteps of J.D. Hooker”. A similar presentation to that which Steve Hootman gave, but from a different perspective.

Dr. White has long lived in Salem, Oregon and practiced medicine in Independence, Oregon, just west of Salem. He is a member of the board of the Rhododendron Species Foundation and has long served the ARS. Keith is an experienced photographer and is the chairman of the photography committee of the RSF, so you know his photography is great. Keith gave us a look at the rhododendrons of Sikkim, plus the magnificent scenery of that wonderful part of the world.



‘Olive’ taken Feb. 11, 2012 by Garth Wedemire

And the following evening, Thursday, January 21st, Peter Adams a member of the Portland ARS chapter presented a program on the founding and development of his “White Cloud Vireyas Nursery” in Hawai’i.

With a degree in psychology from the University of Washington, and following a varied career including IT programming, Peter and his wife retired to the Big Island of Hawai’i and started a nursery specializing in vireyas. Along with a timeline of the development of the nursery and the construction of the Adams’ unique home and 3000 sq. foot greenhouse, Peter also shared images of some of his favourite vireyas. Another colourful and welcomed program attended by several of our NIRS members.

So, although it may seem noticeably quiet for many, there are lots of opportunities for members to join some very enjoyable and informative programs. We hope that you will decide to join us for some of the upcoming programs being offered.

Until next month, stay safe and let us hope the vaccine will help us resume normal activities by the summer. It would certainly be welcome news to be able to hold another summer sale, and perhaps even our annual picnic... social distancing of course!

By Dave Godfrey



Both photos above are 'Rosamundi' at Biebersteins taken May 13, 2008 by Garth Wedemire

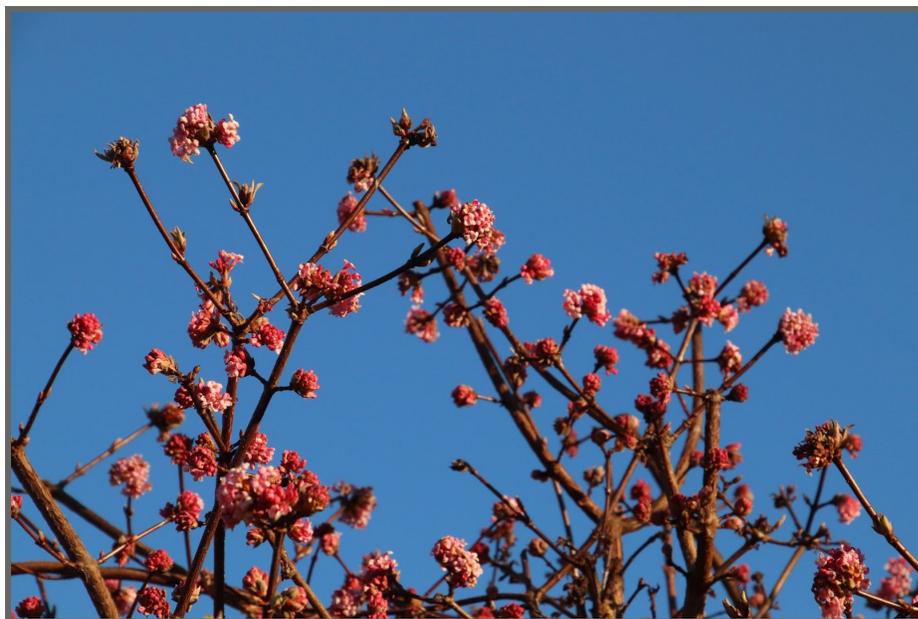
Meetings

Regular monthly meetings and other events have been cancelled until further notice due to COVID-19, however, there may be some meetings on Zoom.

The February 2nd executive meeting will be on zoom.



Both: Virburnum bodnantense 'Dawn' taken on Jan. 22, 2021 by Garth Wedemire



Escape, connect with nature and enjoy peaceful **Milner Gardens & Woodland** February 5 to March 27, Fridays and Saturdays viewing 11:00 am to 3:30 pm, last entry 3:00 pm. Winter admission \$6 adult, \$4 youth, free for 12 and under. Milner Gardens members and current VIU students with card free admission. Golf cart shuttle for mobility concerns. Gift Shop open for gift and heritage plant purchases, Tea Room takeout menu offers soup, scones, beverages, cookies, Milner jams and jellies. Please follow safe Covid-19 protocols <https://milnergardens.viu.ca/hours-admission-0> 250-752-6153

Membership Report

Some outstanding dues continue to trickle in, and we welcome back these late renewing members. Unfortunately, we still have about 20 memberships outstanding from 2020. For those who still wish to renew your membership, the easiest way is by e-transfer to club treasurer nonigod@shaw.ca or pop your \$35 cheque payable to N.I.R.S. into the mail at our club's mailing address (P.O. Box 3183, Courtenay, BC, V9N 5N4). Thank you.

President Dave is presently updating the membership yearbook with our current members' information. We will be mailing your 2021 membership cards along with the booklet when it is approved by the Executive.

By Dan & Margaret Ryan



Hamamelis x intermedia 'Jelena' taken Jan. 22, 2021 by Garth Wedemire

Garden Supply Discounts with NIRS Membership

Once again, a reminder that NIRS membership brings discounts at many garden nurseries and retailers. Those businesses providing discounts for 2021 include:

- Arrowsmith Greenhouses in Coombs (10% -1 gal pots)*
- Art Knapp's Plantland, Courtenay*
- Black Creek Farm & Feed Supply*
- Black Gold, Royston (Select Items)*
- Campbell River Garden Center (not seeds or bulbs and plant material only)*
- Growing Concern in Black Creek (seasonal opening-Leslie Cox)*
- Hidden Acres Nursery, Campbell River*
- Ken-Dor Garden Center, Qualicum Beach*
- Shar-Kare - both Courtenay and Campbell River*

If any member wishes to have other businesses considered for discounts to our members please bring them to the attention of our President Dave Godfrey. Discounts can help save the price of your membership.

Zoom Presentation Feb. 6: WATER EFFICIENCY in the LANDSCAPE

Vancouver Island Master Gardner's (VIMGA) and District 1 of American Rhododendron Society (ARS) invite you to a **Zoom** seminar by guest presenter Ken Nentwig. In this presentation, Ken will briefly touch on:



- Collecting rainwater and managing precipitation
- Collection and storage of rainwater and using it in the landscape
- Handling runoff from impervious surfaces
- Natural vs Built Environments
- Rainwater vs Stormwater
- Uses for rainwater

Ken is a retired landscape architect currently involved in training programs internationally. He is a course developer/facilitator at Gaia College and at Pacific Horticulture College and has presented courses at UVIC. Previously a College Professor at University of Guelph, Ridgetown Campus (ON), he took an early retirement and migrated to Vancouver Island in 2010.

When: Saturday, February 6th from 10:00 am to 11:00 am You will be sent the Zoom link prior to the presentation. RSVP to Dave.



Nandina domestica (Heavenly Bamboo) taken Dec. 29, 2014 by Garth Wedemire

The Comox Valley Rhodo Garden Report By Maureen

Weather permitting, there will be the first work party of the year on **Thursday, February 11 at 10 am**. I have been in touch with The City of Courtenay regarding Covid protocols they would like the club to follow for a work party. Other than the usual mask-wearing and social distancing, they have requested that the attendance be kept small, to approximately six people and a list of attendees be taken. If the weather is good, I will contact some regular volunteers for the work party. Hopefully in March, when the weather is better anyway, the work party can be open to all.



R. sutchuenense taken March 27, 2017 by Garth Wedemire

Winter Snow Tip:

Sweep those Rhodos!

By Jill Gould

One thing I have been aware of in winter: wet snow can be really detrimental to shrubbery. My husband ran out the other evening (Jan. 23 snowfall) with a broom to clear off Jean Marie de Montague, which was bowed down to the ground.

Snow may look really pretty, but if it starts to rain, or the snow begins to melt, the weight of the snow is considerable. I have seen ornamental evergreens split apart. They will not resume their former shape automatically. Once the branch is bent, it may remain forever skewed out to the side. Hedging cedars and junipers are prone to this. The most unfortunate result is broken branches. I nearly lost a Curly Willow in the past. The whole 20-foot tree heeled over dangerously at a 30-degree angle, and required propping to keep it upright. There were no leaves on it, but the dense twig pattern held the snow.

Since Jean Marie is a favourite with Dave, and she is growing fairly large now, he keeps a close watch. We hope none of the branches actually broke!

Natives in our Gardens

Mahonia

By Lynda Pasacreta

Recently, a few of us were tending a perennial garden in a local park, and birds filled the air with a cacophony of sound. It seems the birds know that the work we do in the gardens will expose their favourite food.

Experienced photographers outfitted with massive photo lenses often stop to chat with us while we weed and plant. It is a wonderful relationship as they educate us about the more than 40 species of birds that can be found in the park, especially during migration. We educate the photographers about the favourite native plants that feed wildlife year-round in the park.

At this time of year, on the West Coast, many visitors to the park are concerned about Anna's hummingbirds. Quite often they suggest we hang hummingbird feeders in the park. Loud gasps can be heard from seasoned gardeners.

We point out the many flowering plants we have in abundance at this time of year. *Mahonia* (*Mahonia x media*) is an absolute favourite of the over-wintering hummingbirds.

Mahonia, a genus of approximately 70 species of evergreen shrubs in the family Berberidaceae, is native to North America.



larvae.

Mahonia aquifolium

Mahonia aquifolium, the Oregon grape, is prolific in the park. It has the prickly leaves similar to holly, with yellow flowers in late spring. Oregon grape plants are extremely beneficial and attractive to wildlife. Pollinators like butterflies, moths, bees, and hummingbirds enjoy the nectar from the flowers. The fruits, of which many remain on the plant through the winter, are favourites among birds such as towhees, robins, and waxwings. Some butterfly and moth species rely on Oregon grape plants to host their

Oregon grape can be a colourful accent to your garden. It prefers some shade. Try growing it with sword fern, western columbine, delphinium, and fleabanes. There are three species: Cascade Oregon grape (*Mahonia nervosa*), low Oregon grape (*Mahonia repens*), along with *Mahonia aquifolium*.

In bloom now and throughout the winter, *Mahonia x media*, an interspecific hybrid shrub, is an important nectar source for our feisty little feeders. The parents of *Mahonia x media* are *Mahonia oiwakensis* subsp. *lomarifolia* and *Mahonia japonica*. Hummingbirds love the long-lasting, soft, yellow candelabra-shaped flowers. Visitors to the park are stunned by the strong upright form and magnificent height (can reach up to 13 feet) along with the large expanse of yellow blooms of *Mahonia x media*. [Reprinted with permission from BC Council of

Garden Clubs Jan. 2021 newsletter]

***Eriophyllum
lanatum* (Common
Woolly Sunflower)**

By Jill Gould

This plant is native from Northern California all the way up the Pacific Coast to BC. It is a low-growing plant that is easily overlooked when not in bloom. Richard Hebda of the Royal BC Museum waxes lyrical over the Woolly Sunflower. If you don't know who Dr. Hebda is, go to the back of the class!



Eriophyllum can be found at Point Holmes in Garry Oak habitat, and at the east end of the Comox Airport runway. While “rescuing” Camas bulbs near the airport a couple of years ago, I spotted it.

When in bloom, it is a spectacular rockery plant, covered in miniature bright yellow daisies. Also covered in happy bumblebees! After blooming, the seed heads could be sheared back, leaving the low-growing dusty green leaves, attractive in their own right. It is easily propagated by seed or by offshoots. (I have done both.) It prefers sandy or light soil and a sunny location. Like most Asteraceae, it dislikes winter wet and soggy soil.



At our plant sale in July 2020, I donated a small *Eriophyllum*, duly labelled. It was examined by several people, who viewed it dubiously and passed on. Maybe a little bit of “I don't know what it is so I don't want it”?

Eriophyllum is a jewel of a native plant which makes an easy transition to the garden.

An oldie in the world of garden (and life) advice...

Planting Your Spring Garden

For The Garden of Your Daily Living

Plant Three Rows of peās

1. Peace of Mind
2. Peace of Heart
3. Peace of Soul

Plant Four Rows of Squash

1. Squash Gossip
2. Squash Indifference
3. Squash Grumbling
4. Squash Selfishness

Plant Four Rows of Lettuce

1. Lettuce Be Faithful
2. Lettuce Be Kind
3. Lettuce Be Patient
4. Lettuce Really Love One Another

No Garden is Complete Without Turnips

1. Turnip For Meetings
2. Turnip For Service
3. Turnip To Help One Another

To Conclude Our Garden We Must Have Thyme

1. Thyme For Each Other
2. Thyme For Family
3. Thyme For Friends

Water Freely With Patience And Cultivate With Love.
There Is Much Fruit In Your Garden Because You Reap
What You Sow. Pass It On!!!

For your information/education/entertainment:

Mike Kincaid's Website: <https://propagateplantslikeapro.com>

Mike lives in Yelm, Washington which is south of I-5 between Tacoma and Olympia, close to McChord Air Force Base.

YouTube has quite a number of videos on rhododendrons and azaleas that can be viewed on your computers, tablets and smartphones. Videos on propagation, planting, fertilizing and deadheading, as well as photographic tours of gardens and nurseries, are available for your viewing. During these cold and rainy winter months are good times to view these videos.

Over the last few years, I have seen a number of submissions by Mike Kincaid. Some of his earlier videos are on propagating and growing rhododendrons.

Recently, Mike has posted videos of his garden and nursery area. His enthusiasm is compelling as he describes his collection of flowering rhododendron. Mike has collected and planted some of the latest highly desirable hybrids and species in his garden. His plants have become large enough to make an impressive display of blooms. I have recently subscribed to his YouTube Channel.

Here are just four examples of his recent work:

Surrounded by a Beautiful Landscape | Flower Blooms in Spring
April 14, 2020 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9Xe_s_Xblw

Take Another Garden Tour | Rhododendrons in Bloom at the Nursery!
May 2, 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32opkEZzWEo>

Rhododendron Garden Tour at Kincaid's Nursery | Huge Spring Blooms
May 25, 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gEx01OIsOlo&t=1s>

How to Create a Beautiful Landscape Bed | Flower Bed Ideas for Front Yard and Back yard
Oct 1, 2020 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-kL8n0_cH2s

Mike is quite entertaining. You should learn quite a lot from Mike. I do!

Submitted by Garth Wedemire

Newsletter submission deadline is the 25th of each month. Don't be shy - any members may submit photos, articles, notices, online viewing, tips, etc.



Crown the Comox Valley's 'Tree of The Year'!

The Comox Valley Nature's (CVN) annual contest, now in its fourth year, will once again throw the spotlight on contenders for the CVN 2021 'Tree of the Year' title.

The Tree of The Year contest invites residents to nominate trees they love in the Comox Valley. Submissions may be significant because of their natural beauty, ecological importance, unique story, cultural significance or a role they play in the lives of the people and community that surrounds them.

The goal of the CVN contest is to foster a strong connection with nature, raise awareness of cherished local trees and raise interest in the value and protection of trees rooted within the Comox Valley Regional District boundaries.

"Easily overlooked and often undervalued, trees deserve their moment in the spotlight," says CVN Director Karen Cummins. "This contest is simply a fun and inclusive way for people to identify and highlight individual trees in the Comox Valley that hold significant interest, cultural importance, strong heritage value or natural beauty."

"This is an exciting opportunity to demonstrate your appreciation of trees," notes Cummins, "and the value in keeping those of special note alive and well."

Nomination details and an entry form for CVN Tree of the Year can be found at cvnature.ca/treeoftheyear/. Nominations are open now and will run until April 1, 2021.

Later this year, residents will be invited to tour the trees and choose their favourite tree from the nominees by voting online at the CVN website from April 16 to June 1. The process is simple – the tree with the most votes wins.



Previous contests have unearthed some remarkable trees and their stories. Demonstrating the strong ties and affection their communities have towards them, a large Douglas-fir on Tsolum River was the inaugural 2018 winner. 2019 saw a stunning Garry oak on Vanier Road win top honours and a graceful yellow cedar in Royston took the 2020 crown. Their inspiring stories and pictures can be viewed on the [CVN website](http://cvnature.ca/).

The 2021 title winner for Tree of the Year will be announced on June 10. In addition to putting the best Comox Valley trees on the map, the contest offers a prize to the individual putting forth the winning nomination.

Comox Valley Nature is a non-profit society whose purpose can be summed up by their motto: "to know nature, and keep it worth knowing". CVN always welcomes new members. If you are interested in joining, visit the online membership registration page at cvnature.ca/membership/.

Carol W. did the cycle tour to view the CVN 2020 Tree of the Year, "The Royston Yellow Cedar"
Submitted by Karen Cummins

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Island Rhododendron Society**

Ilex verticillata taken Dec. 31, 2020 and *Helleborus*
'Ice N' Roses Pink' taken Jan. 22, 2021 by Garth
Wedemire

