

THE RHODOTELLER



Tomentum is this month's theme. Rhododendron proteoides photo by Garth Wedemire 2003-05-31

President's View

by Dave Godfrey

We have passed the autumn equinox and you can feel the dampness in the air. The temperatures are dropping, with the leaves turning colour and beginning to fall, which means even more work to keep the gardens clean.

Speaking of fall colours, Garth Wedemire has suggested that our website feature of 'What's Blooming' might include one last gallery of fall garden colours. So, if any members have photos of colourful blooms and foliage, please forward them to me or Garth for inclusion in the new gallery.

It was wonderful to get back to an in-person meeting last month and members were excited to meet others we have not seen for many months. All the 30 members who attended were masked and provided proof of vaccination. The same protocols will need to be followed for the foreseeable future. We are still restricted to a maximum of 50 members in the hall, so RSVP to me if you wish to attend the meeting on Oct. 12th, when MARS member Rose Prufer will provide a presentation on "Pruning Rhodos."

The highlight of the meeting on September 14th was the opportunity to present Maureen Denny with the NIRS Bronze Medal. Maureen has been a member since October 2011 and during this time has performed duties in most areas, from the kitchen to the Presidency! (See full details in this issue.) Congratulations Maureen on this much deserved award.

Your executive members are busy with the business of keeping us moving forward during these uncertain times. Approval has been given to support the continuation of the District 1 Zoom account. This will continue to provide us with an opportunity to attend meetings and presentations from other chapters around the world.

Speaking of presentations, most of you are now aware of the ARS 'Virtual' Fall Conference. This year the ARS chapters in Nanaimo and Qualicum have organized an assortment of presentations from world class speakers and it is all FREE! No registration fees, no travel and accommodation

expenses – you can even attend in your pyjamas if you wish! All you need to do is register with your email address at the address given in the poster found in this issue. The conference will be October 23rd and 24th, so now is the time to get registered.

That is all I have for this month, other than to remind members to let me know if you plan to attend our October meeting. Also, for some of those attending to bring along an item or two to share in 'Show & Tell', and possibly a donation or two for our Revenue Table, and any magazines or books for return.

Until next month, stay safe and we look forward to seeing many of you at the meeting!



Rhododendron falconeri ssp. *eximium* photo by Garth Wedemire 2003-04-06

Tomentum -

by Garth Wedemire

What It Is and Why It Makes Plants More Desirable

Having spent some time searching the Internet for information on the topic of “Tomentum on Rhododendron Leaves”, I decided to share what I discovered. Today, I photographed three plants in our garden whose leaves are adorned with both tomentum and indumentum.

The following definition coincided with my ideas about tomentum:

“**Tomentum** refers to the hairs on the top surface of the leaf which are loosely attached. It eventually wears off as the season progresses. By late fall or winter, the tomentum is usually gone and the dark green surface of the leaf is fully exposed.”

Most references say that **tomentum** is a coating of hairs on the top surface of leaves. However, some say that tomentum could occur on the lower surface of the leaf. This gives one the impression that tomentum and indumentum are interchangeable terms. I don't agree. Have a look!

The first plant is the **Greig form of R. bureavii**. Tomentum is loosely attached while indumentum is more firmly attached. I was able to rub a little of the tomentum from the upper leaf surface.



The second plant is '**Golfer's Sister**'. (Did you know that 'Golfer' had a sister and it is said that she is even more beautiful than 'Golfer'? Go figure!)



A lovely plant having both tomentum and indumentum. The tomentum gradually disappears while the white indumentum persists.

The third plant is the **R. pachysanthum** 'Buckskin'. This plant has long lasting, silvery-brownish tomentum, on the upper surfaces of its leaves and a thick, rusty brown indumentum on the undersides.



The tomentum can be easily removed (as illustrated in the picture on the left). 'Buckskin' has remarkable dark brown indumentum which probably inspired the name selected for this plant.

R. pachysanthum is endemic to the country of Taiwan. Many plants of the species grown from seed are treasured by collectors. In the author's opinion, the form 'Buckskin' is highly desirable and should be sought after by gardeners who want that special plant that visitors to your garden will notice and ask where they can get one of these plants for themselves. (Don't mention where I live!)



ARS Bronze Medal

It was with great pleasure that President Dave Godfrey presented the American Rhododendron Society Bronze Medal to Maureen Denny at the meeting on 14 September 2021. 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.

Maureen joined the club in October 2011 and has been a valued and active member throughout the years. Always willing to help, Maureen first offered to assist with our Social Committee, and in 2016 became NIRS Vice President. After two years of supporting the club and taking on various additional responsibilities as VP, Maureen was elected President in 2018 and with her calm and reflective leadership capably guided the club over the following two years.

Having been a regular attendee at the work parties for our Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden for many years, Maureen took on the role of CVRG Director in September 2018 and has organized the work parties and coordinated with the City of Courtenay with competence and efficiency. Over the years, Maureen has contributed to our annual fundraising Rhodo/Plant Sales and Garden Tour committees and been an active participant in our various social events.

As a member of the NIRS Propagation group, Maureen participates in meetings and workshops and is a regular at the work parties and sales. Maureen has recently taken on the role of Publicity Director to connect with the public and our local media. She can always be counted on to pitch in and, when not 'up front' in a leadership role, she can be seen working quietly in the background.

Maureen was in the nursery trade for many years and has a broad knowledge of plants and their care. In her modest yet confident way, Maureen is always willing to share. Her experience and expertise have been greatly appreciated by club members and community groups.

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

The Bronze Medal was presented as part of a framed certificate stating:

"The American Rhododendron Society North Island Chapter Recognizes Maureen Denny for the Bronze Medal Award for her many years of service and continued dedication to the Society. September 14, 2021"



'Golfer' photo by Garth
Wedemire 2021-08-30



Meetings

October 5, 2021 Executive Meeting 10:00 am at Comox United Church

October 12, 2021 General Meeting 7:30 pm at Comox United Church. RSVP to Dave Godfrey.
Reminder that the following people signed-up to bring goodies: Dorothy Law, Sheryl Murakami, Arnie Steinberger, Judi Murakami, and Antje Guertler.

[2021 Virtual ARS Fall Conference - October 23-24](#)

October Meeting Program: “Pruning Rhodos”



The guest speaker for the NIRS October 12th General meeting will be Rosemary Prufer, a member of the MARS chapter in Qualicum Beach.

Rosemary's passion for plants started at a young age in North Vancouver. After working at several jobs, she realized that working with plants was something she needed to focus on. In 1995 she completed the Horticulture program at B.C.I.T. and never looked back.

Rosemary has been a member of the ARS for over thirty years. She has been an active member in several chapters and has taken on every position, except for treasurer. Participating in plant sales and giving the occasional talks and demos has helped her learn so much and make so many wonderful friends.

Rosemary's topic for our meeting will be on “Pruning Rhodos” with an emphasis on those plants damaged by this year's summer drought and heat dome. Be sure to get your name on the list if you wish to attend this interesting and informative meeting. Call Dave at 250-335-0717 or email: davegod@shaw.ca.

What is that Woolly Covering on My Rhododendron's Leaves?

by Garth Wedemire

On rhododendrons, indumentum is commonly a woolly covering on the underside of mature leaves, while a similar surface on the upper side of the leaves is called **tomentum**.

The following information from Don Wallace's **Singing Tree Gardens Nursery** website (www.singtree.com) provides the following description and pictures of tomentum.



What is this stuff on my rhododendrons? Often, I receive phone calls from alarmed customers wanting to know how to get rid of the white dust coating on their rhododendrons. Even after explaining what it is, and that it is sought after among rhododendron collectors, and that it is a natural feature of the plant, I am asked how to "get rid of it". Only when rhododendron collectors become familiar with this feature do they really like it. This, I suppose, is because it is not a trait of the most commonly planted rhododendrons.

The official definition of **tomentum** by the American Rhododendron Society is "matted woolly hairs on stems, leaves or seeds". The silver to white to brown fuzz on the top of leaves will usually wipe off. This substance has often been found to prevent insect predation and can help leaves hold moisture in times of drought. To the seasoned rhododendron collector, this is "as good as it gets!".

The following information was found on an Internet post by Sharon Bryson and Bill Wilgenhof (members of the Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society - <http://atlanticrhodo.org/>) entitled "Rhododendrons are Interesting in Summer"



Growing rhododendrons may have an ultimate aim for beautiful flowers in the spring months, but other features provide interest at other times of year. Flowers only last 2-3 weeks, so it is good to have virtues throughout the rest of the year.

Many of the rhododendrons we grow have been selected for interesting foliage. The emerging new growth shows great variety in leaf form, texture and colour.



Sharon and Bill from the ARHS say in their blog posting that an all-time favourite with respect to wonderful foliage is a cross of (*R. yakushimanum* x *R. pachysanthum*) made in 2001 by **Joe Harvey** from Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Many of these seedling plants have found their way into our gardens and some have been so good that they have been dubbed "Blue Heaven" because of the lovely blue-gray tomentum that appears each summer. All have nice furry indumentum which stays after the tomentum wears off as the season progresses. The link for this readable blog post is : [Rhododendrons are Interesting in Summer](#).



*Both photos show tomentum on *R. sinogrande* - the top one is magnified.*

*Photos by
Garth
Wedemire
2016-07-04*



Comox Valley Rhodo Garden Report

by Maureen Denny



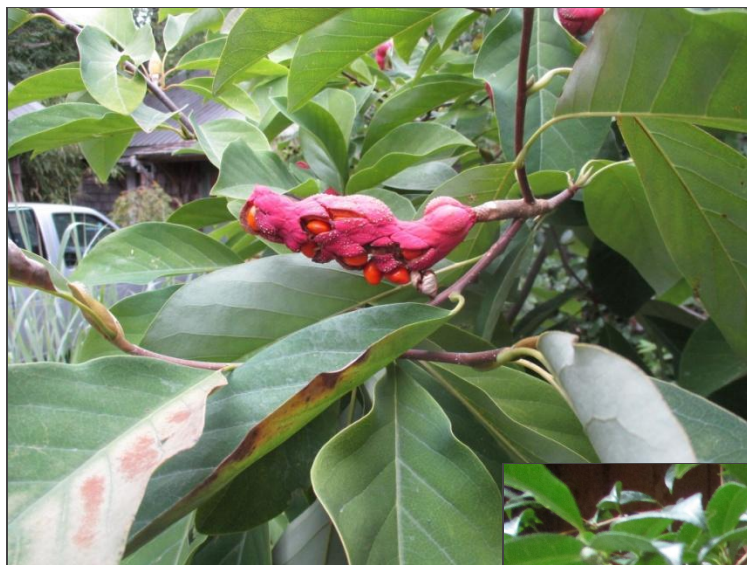
A small but dedicated group of members met for September's Work Party and in about one hour we had the gardens looking good. Some Rhodos were still showing signs of stress due to lack of water. With the recent rains this should no longer be a problem. The next Work Party will be on October 14 at 10 am, weather permitting. Please bring your own tools and a bucket. Goodies are always appreciated.



Dan Ryan "helping" in his fancy gardener's chair, Doug Williams and NIRS' newest member David Hopkins at CVRG. Photos by Judi Murakami

Guess What?

By Judith Walker



I have two trees loaded with these alien structures, which were once beautiful flowers! Guess what the trees are?

Look for the answers at the end of this newsletter.



Membership

by Dan and Margaret Ryan

It was great to be able to get together again for the September meeting. Thirty members attended this first in-person meeting we've had for quite a while. We have 20 renewals from the meeting and another half dozen or more from mail-ins or e-transfers.

For those unable to attend the meetings, we encourage you to mail a cheque payable to N.I.R.S. to our chapter mailing address – P.O. Box 3183, Courtenay, BC V9N 5N4. Or as an alternative, e-transfer your renewal by email to the club Treasurer Noni Godfrey (nonigod@shaw.ca)

It's time to renew! We are once again having the early registration incentive contest. "Register before November 30, 2021 and be entered in a draw to win your membership fee back". We would like to have as many memberships renewed so we can have everyone signed up with the ARS by January 1, 2022. The cost for a membership remains the same, **regular \$35.00** and \$10.00 for an associate membership (has a regular membership with another ARS chapter).

It's Bulb Planting Time!

by Robert Argall

Now is the time to start planting bulbs for the Spring. There are a wide variety of bulbs available, with the best-known being narcissus and tulips. But there are also hyacinths, anemones, Dutch iris, fritillaries, crocus, snowdrops, etc. The store with the widest variety of bulbs in the Comox Valley is Art Knapp's, and most of their bulbs come from Holland, where they are dipped in a solution to prevent the narcissus fly.

You can plant the bulbs from now until December. I've even planted tulip bulbs in January, but narcissus need to be planted by the beginning of December. They should be planted 4 to 6 inches deep. Tulips need the sun more so than narcissus; although all bulbs will pretty well bloom the first year. Most tulips sold now are only really strong for the first year, but narcissus will bloom and spread as long as you don't have narcissus fly.



Since I plant so many bulbs (3,000 - 6,000) each year, I like to stagger the planting, so that they bloom from March until the end of May. When you buy narcissus and/or tulips, the small white tags for narcissus or on the front of the box with a large picture of the flower will tell you whether it blooms early, middle, or late in the season.

Some of the 'tried and true' narcissus that we refer to as daffodils would be tête-à-tête (small), Dutch Master (medium with thick stems to resist the wind) and they are sold in bulk along with mixed narcissus - bulk is much cheaper; 'Thalia' is a white narcissus with three blooms on each stem, 'Jet fire' is small with yellow petals and orange/red trumpets, and a relatively new one, called 'Red Ranger'. Tulips include Angelique, Princess Irene, Apricot Beauty. Also, any of the botanical tulips which are small and closest to the natural tulips found in the high



mountains of Turkey. These will also naturalize if they like their situation.

There are so many more at Art Knapp's that you could choose from every year new ones come in. You will see that it says "New" on the box. There are also bulbs that are packaged singularly and mixed ones, and many of them are new this year.

I hope this gives you some idea of the variety of bulbs now available. Have fun choosing and planting!



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Newsletter Editor

Kathy Haigh 250-702-4311



R. kesangiae 2019-06-16

Photos by Garth Wedemire



'Golfer' 2021-08-30

**Follow us on Facebook: North Island
Rhododendron Society**

Guess What? Answers: top/pink is a Magnolia seed pod, 'Barbara Cook' and bottom/peachy is a Camellia seed pod- 'Aunt Mavis'- both Alleyne Cook selections.