

THE RHODOTELLER



Theme: "Our May Flowers"

"Eunie", Acer palmatum 'Linearilobum', 'Could Bee', 'Aglo' photo by Jean Looy

President's View

by Dave Godfrey

Here we are in June and at the end of another season for meetings. As mentioned at the Annual General Meeting on Tuesday, May 10th, this issue will contain many of the committee reports given at the meeting, especially for those members unable to attend. It was great to have 32 members in attendance, as we welcomed back two former members Lynne Mackie and Kristin Murray who renewed their memberships that evening.

With an official quorum in attendance, the motion to increase our membership dues from \$35 to \$40, to offset the ever-increasing exchange rate for our ARS dues payments, was passed by a majority vote.

Once again, I thank Judi Murakami for conducting the "election" portion of the meeting, whereby Dan Ryan, Judy Walker and myself were unchallenged in our bid for the next two-year term. Welcome to Naomi Chester, as our new Vice President replacing outgoing Robert Argall.

Here then is my President's **report for the AGM...** "Although we had to be careful with our activities for the past year, due to the ongoing Covid pandemic, it was a relief to finally get back to in-person meetings beginning last September.

I would like to thank the members of the executive board and the various committee chairs for their continued support throughout the past year. Your commitment to the club and to the ARS organization makes my position so much easier.

During the past year, I attended the District 1 President's meetings on the club's behalf, both in person and virtually via Zoom, and gave reports on our activities and progress. I am very proud of our accomplishments over the year. Through some of the comments I have received at these meetings, I can tell you that we can take great pride in our website, Facebook page and newsletters. I wish to thank Kathy Haigh and Garth Wedemire for their continued support in these areas.

One of our proudest accomplishments is the ongoing Propagation Group's success. Thanks to the many hours of hard work of several members, in particular Wolfgang Hoefgen and Antje Guertler, our propagation sales have kept us financially afloat these past few years. In speaking recently with Bob & Adela's son, Rich Smith, we have permission to continue our operations at their property for the foreseeable future. He anticipates the sale of the property will not happen until next year.



*2022-23 executive members Noni Godfrey, Naomi Chester, Carolyn Chester, and Dave Godfrey
at Adrienne & Robert McNabb's garden on May 10. Photo by Kathy Haigh*

Another source of pride is our Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden and all the work required to maintain it in its maturity. I would especially like to thank Maureen Denny for overseeing the garden and for her close liaison with the city parks department. Thanks to all the members who attended the monthly work parties to help keep the gardens looking their finest for all to enjoy.

Again, thank you all for your continued support and I look forward to working with you in the future.”

Following the other items on the agenda, it was my great pleasure to award the ARS Bronze medal to a very surprised Judy Walker. Judy is our longest-standing member being involved with the club since its founding in late 1984. A copy of Judy’s presentation can be found in this issue and on our website.

In closing, I wish to remind everyone that we will be holding our annual potluck picnic on June 25th, in the beautiful garden of Carolyn & Naomi Chester. Details and directions will be forthcoming, but let’s all hope that summer will be a lot kinder than the cool spring has been so far.

Meetings & Events

June 14 CVRG Work Party 7:00 pm

June 18 “National Day of the Garden” @ Anderton Therapeutic Garden 11:00 am-3:00 pm

June 25 Summer Picnic @ Chester’s Garden 4:00 pm



‘Haida Gold’ photo by Jean Looy

Ways and Means

AGM Report by Aubrey Ferris

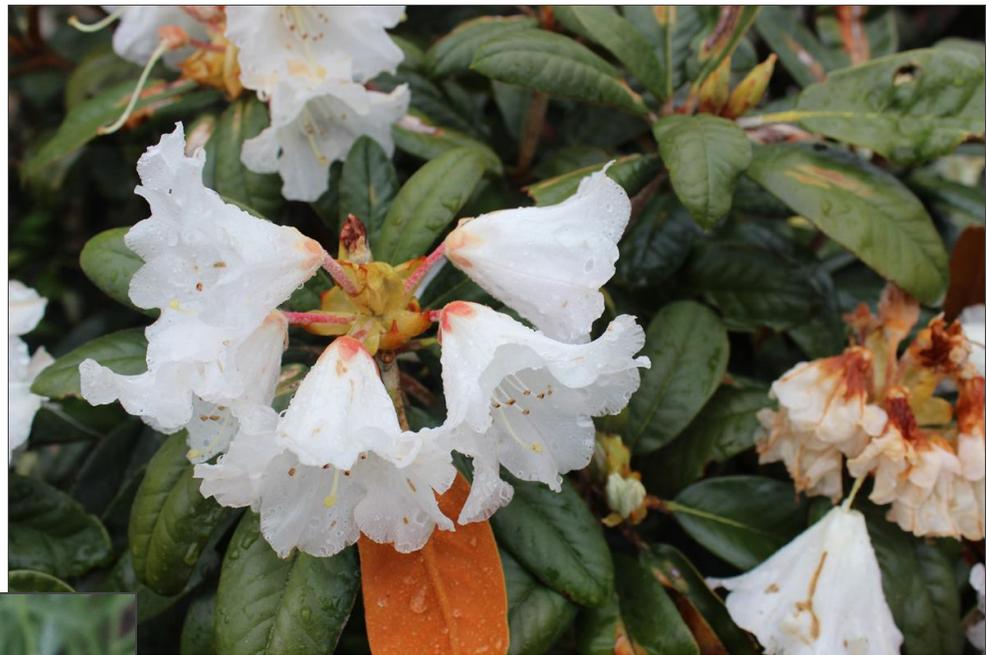
Thanks to covid, it was a very short season for meetings and sales.

We did, however, manage to bring in about an average of \$100 per meeting which helps contribute toward covering society's expenses.

We brought in some new items for members (plant and tree markers) and sold them at a very good price to members. We should continue to look for products that have a better price when purchased in larger quantities and then we can make them available to members at a low cost.

Special thanks to Antje for getting the raffle Rhodos from the garden to each meeting; Garth for supplementing raffle prizes with some excellent plants; Noni for bringing in the small pruning scissors and doing the books; Valerie for making sure we were prepared for each meeting; and special thanks to those who participated in the raffles.

The door prize Rhodo for the June picnic will be R. 'teddy bear'.



'Teddy Bear' photo by
Dave Godfrey



Checkered Lily
photo by Garth Wedemire

Sunshine Lady

If you know of a member of our club who is experiencing an illness, surgery or bereavement please contact Joanne Williams to pass on a message on behalf of our Club.

CVRG “The Rhodo Garden”

AGM Report by Maureen Denny

The Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden is maintained jointly by volunteers from our club and The City of Courtenay Parks Department. This very successful relationship is through the ‘Partners in Parks’ Program, established in 1996.

Work parties are held once a month from March to October. Formal meetings with Parks staff have been held April 2021 and April 2022. Issues discussed include pruning of large trees in the gardens, irrigation, path relocation, and expansion of the canoe storage area.

Unfortunately, vandalism has been an ongoing issue in the gardens. Some Rhodos have had their branches torn off or cut, and one Rhodo in the BOVI bed was completely cut down. This Rhodo was replaced this spring. Signs were damaged last summer and thankfully The City paid to have them replaced.

We highly value our relationship with the city staff, especially with Tyler Johns our liaison with the Parks Department. Also, a thank you to all volunteers who have volunteered their time and effort in the past year. Thanks, Antje for your regular patrols of the gardens as you take your walks at the Airpark.



Antje and Dave removing a dead rhodo. The work party on May 19th was the first time we used our new “Volunteers” sign. Lots of people stopped to look and complimented the workers on the great job we do on the garden. Photos by Noni Godfrey.

Work parties for the summer months now switch to a Tuesday evening schedule. The next work party will be held Tuesday June 14 at 7pm, and please also write on your calendar July 12, and August 9. Dave will send out a reminder to all as there is no newsletter for July and August. Hope to see many of you in June to begin the task of deadheading.

Membership

AGM Report by Dan Ryan

Here are recent Membership numbers for comparison:

2020 - 88 Regular and 7 Associates. **2021** - 76 Regular and 5 Associates. **2022** - 68 Regular and 5 Associates, including 6 new members this year.



'Victorias Consort'
photo by Bette
Hopwood

Revenue Table Report AGM Report by Judy Walker & Naomi Chester

Due to Covid-19, we were not been able to meet and have a revenue table until September 2021.

The revenue table provided income for the five months (Sept., Oct., and Nov. 2021 and Feb. and March 2022) of \$324.70 This is lower than pre-pandemic years but still substantial.

Generous donations by members for the Revenue Table provide funds each year that go directly towards society activities, such as hall rental, Christmas Party and the June Picnic. Donations include plants propagated and divided by members and by the propagation group, tools, books and magazines, special jams and garden produce- all of which make for some good shopping at break time.

Judy and Naomi thank all the members for making this such a fun and important addition to our society.

R. macrophyllum
photo by Dave Godfrey



ARS Bronze Medal

by Dave Godfrey

It is with great pleasure that we present the American Rhododendron Society Bronze Medal to **Judith Walker**. 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.

Judy holds a special place in our club as one of the longest-standing members of the North Island Rhododendron Society. A founding member when the chapter was formed in late 1984, Judy was part of the initial group who decided to focus a portion of their garden interests toward the genus rhododendron and thus formed a Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society.

This small group shared the roles required of the new organization and Judy became the club's first Secretary/Treasurer for a two-year term from 1985 to 1987. Continuing her post-secondary education took Judy away from the NIRS for a number of years, and the club was honoured to contribute a small bursary toward her studies.

Plants have played a significant role in Judy's life, drawing her toward educational, work, and play opportunities in plant-related fields. Judy has a BSc Honours in Agriculture, worked as a biological lab assistant, has a Masters in Landscape Architecture, worked as a Professional Planner with local governments and a consultant on residential properties, and taught residential landscape design classes at North Island College.

Judy is a founding Board member of the Comox Valley Land Trust and was the author of their regular 'One Yard at a Time' column. She wrote and published her book - *A Garden for Life: Mary Greig & the Royston Rhododendrons*, as a tribute to Mary and Ted Greig - friends and notable figures in the Rhododendron world. Judy and her husband Brian Pearson live on a small farm and vineyard, spending many hours working on the grapevines and in the orchard and gardens.

Judy's knowledge, skills, and experience have contributed significantly to our club over the years. Members have enjoyed the tips shared through various



Judy Walker in McNabb's garden May 10. Photo by Kathy Haigh

'Educationals' and Panel Discussions, and appreciated the Programs prepared and presented at our General Meetings. Many of our members have also been pleased to attend Judy's presentations at ARS conventions and conferences.

As a member of the Propagation Group, Judy participates in meetings, and workshops and is a regular at the work parties and rhodo sales. Upon her retirement, Judy took an even more active role in the club and was elected as a Board Director in 2018. Judy has been Co-chair of the Revenue Table for the past 4 years and assists in the organization of the NIRS Companion Plant Table at our annual fundraising sales. Judy has also taken an active interest in the maintenance and planning of the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden. Most recently she has been the club's liaison with the city parks department to help develop a future plan for the growth of the CVRG.

We thank Judy 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 Judith Walker for the Bronze Medal Award for her many years of service and continued dedication to the Society - May 2022"

R. 'Loderi King George' (top)

and R. diaprepes

photos by Judy Walker



EEEEK! Something's Eating My Azaleas!

by Jill Gould

(originally published September 2016)

Fig. 1 Sawfly larva damage of Azalea



Fig. 2 Sawfly larva

And it looks like a little green caterpillar, so you rush off to get environmentally-friendly BtK. Sorry, it won't work. This little green "caterpillar" is a sawfly larva (Fig. 2). While caterpillars are the young of moths and butterflies (*Lepidoptera*), sawflies (not really flies either) are wasps (*Hymenoptera*). BtK only works on *Lepidoptera*.

What is eating your Azaleas (Exbury hybrids are especially susceptible) is the larva of an Azalea sawfly, a small non-stinging wasp. There are two species, but you don't need to know the Latin names. Like many insects, sawfly larvae are a perfectly camouflaged: green, the colour of the leaf. You may not notice the damage until the Azalea is badly afflicted. The good news is that the Azalea sawfly has just one generation a year. The bad news is that the larvae form cocoons which live in the soil under the plant, ready to hatch out next spring, in greater numbers.

While some folks I have spoken to have never had a problem with Azalea sawfly, others have had devastating attacks in their gardens. The sawfly larvae skeletonize the leaves (Fig. 1), until only the veins remain. The leaves grow back but it puts stress on the plant and looks pretty unsightly.

If you are aware that you may have this insect in your garden, you can hand-pick the larvae and drop them into a bucket of soapy water to kill them, but they are hard to see. Insecticidal soap spray works, but remember, it has to contact the insect directly, as it has no residual effect. This poses a conundrum for those of us who hate using "insecticides". May I point out that an insecticide is something that kills insects? Safer's soap is an insecticide. BtK is an insecticide. Stomping on the larva is an insecticide. Organic farmers are permitted to use Rotenone or Pyrethrum for insect control, both of which are insecticides of plant derivation which break down fairly quickly and are washed off by rain. A synthetic insecticide which also works is Carbaryl (Sevin). Following Integrated Pest Management (IPM) guidelines, one uses the least toxic choice, in the smallest amount to be effective, and only when needed. You make the choice.

Member Profile

by Kathy Haigh

Robert Argall comes from a long line of gardeners. His great-grandfather started the first commercial nursery in Victoria. Robert's grandmother was three when her family immigrated from England to Victoria in the 1880s, and she developed a lifelong love of gardening which rubbed off on Robert. His great-grandfather's favourite rose from England continues to grow in Robert's garden.



Robert taking us on a garden tour on April 12, 2022. Photo by Kathy Haigh

Robert was born and raised in the greater Victoria area, moving a couple of dozen times. He attended the University of Victoria and after attaining his BA, he completed a 5th year in Education. This allowed him to begin a teaching career, specializing in high school English and History. He survived a life-threatening head-on car crash during his final year of studies.

Luckily, though, he had met John that same year at UVic, who became his partner. Robert and John both accepted teaching jobs in Courtenay after graduation. John taught French and Socials in junior high, while Robert taught English and Socials at the old Courtenay High School (it has since closed and Vanier HS replaced it). As time went on, Robert only taught English, mainly grade 12, and became the English department head there, in the fourth-largest high school in BC at the time.

But we need to back up a little, because after five years of teaching, Robert quit! He had a strong desire to travel, so he did for 14 months. His mostly solo travels in the 1970's took him through Europe, a crazy overland bus trip from England to India and return, Asia (Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore), more Europe, then New York, Halifax, Toronto, and finally back in Victoria with \$1 left. Upon his return, he reapplied at Vanier High School and took up his previous role as department head, due in large part to his stellar reputation.

When John and Robert first moved to Courtenay, they rented a cottage on the same property where he now lives on Wireless Road. A fantastic opportunity to purchase the whole remote property came up so they seized the day and became owners of 4.6 acres with a house and cottage and small out-buildings. The yard evolved over the years into amazing gardens, thanks to Robert's planning and attention, all day Saturdays working in the garden, and the wisdom to hire a gardener. He learned most of his gardening information from books, since there were not many other sources to learn from then in this area.

There was one lonely deer living there to start, which then procreated. A fence was erected when the herd was having a negative effect on the gardening. The whole re-landscaping began with expanding a small flower bed in the front to be "a bit longer." Soon, a rock wall was built as the first of many features to come. The mostly wild, forested property had a small number of planted trees: 1 lilac, 1 rhodo, 1 laurel, 1 prickly yew. The back area had an established orchard and lawn - some of which was cleared to make flower beds. There were some Douglas Maples near the house but had to be removed when their leaning became worrisome.

Nowadays Robert's property boasts over 160 rhodos, about 50 azaleas, 20 camelias, 20 Japanese maples, 5 magnolias, and over 6,000 bulbs are planted each year. Most NIRS members have had the thrill of wandering through the blooms when Robert offers spring tours. He loves to share the beauty of his gardens.

In 1997 Robert retired from Vanier HS after 32 years of teaching, with students expressing their respect for him with a standing ovation for him when the principal announced his retirement; John retired the same year. However, Robert continued working in education for five more years by marking papers in the distance education program. They enjoyed skiing, travelled to England and other countries, and always loved to read. Robert says he can't imagine a day without reading and has books everywhere in his house. Sadly, in 2004 John died of throat cancer.

Robert had serious health issues of his own, which presented as fatigue, then partial heart failure 14 months ago. He had two different open-heart surgeries within one week, which he is still recovering from although he is vastly improved.

"Living in the same place for fifty years creates attachments and has many benefits," said Robert. "The main consequence as a gardener is seeing the long-term results of your work. The plants and trees are free to grow their natural height and size in the large space available to them." His grandmother would be so proud!



R. augustinii 'Playfair' photo by Garth Wedemire

'Cosmopolitan' photo by Dave Godfrey



'Paprika Spiced' photo by Dave Godfrey

Chaenomeles X superba photo by Jean Looy



In the Community

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**THE GARDENS ON ANDERTON
CELEBRATES THE NATIONAL YEAR OF THE GARDEN**

SATURDAY, June 18th, 2022, 11–3 p.m.

**“LEARNING ABOUT GARDENS”
Ongoing Events**

CV Horticultural Society Info Table
CV Horticultural Society Bonsai display
N. Island Rhododendron Society Table
Meet & Chat with Allotment Owners
Snack & Gift shop OPEN ALL DAY

Children’s Garden Events:
See how plants grow, plant seeds to take home, guess the number of sunflower seeds.
And More . . .

Bring a picnic lunch and wander our 2 acres of flower beds.

**11:30 a.m.
Bouquet Making
Demonstration
with Louisa H.**

**12- 1 p.m.
What is Living
Soil?
Demo and Q & A
with Soil Scien-
tist
Andrew Couzens**

**1-2 P.M.
Q & A with the
DUCHESS OF DIRT
Leslie Cox**

**1:00–1:30 p.m.
Learn about No-Dig
Gardening with KERRY
ANN GRIFFITHS
Church Street Urban
Garden**

Raffle Prizes

Admission by Donation

2012 Anderton Rd. Comox BC (behind the Anderton Nursery)
Website: gardensonanderton.org

Year of the Garden
Année du jardin 
Live the Garden Life • Vivre la vie de jardin

Fall into Gardening is Back

On Sunday, October 23, the Mount Arrowsmith and Nanaimo Rhododendron Societies along with the Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association are hosting a one-day fall gardening workshop at Qualicum Beach Civic Centre.

This year's theme will be "Your Garden and Climate Instability." Save the date; details will follow.



'Hello Dolly'
(top) and
'Medusa'
(bottom)
photos by
Diana Scott



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Noni Godfrey 250-335-0717

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Newsletter Editor

Kathy Haigh 250-702-4311

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Rhododendron Society



'Lemon Dream' (above) photo by Dave Godfrey,
'Yellow Hammer' (below) photo by Garth Wedemire

