

# THE RHODOTELLER



*"The Big Leaves"*

*R. kesangiae (plant & truss) - Benmore, Scotland photos by Sean Rafferty*

## Meetings

- March 1 Executive Meeting 10:00 am at Comox United Church
- March 8 Club Meeting 7:00 pm at Comox United Church.
- April 24 NIRS Spring Plant Sale at K'omoks First Nation Hall 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
- May 4-8 [ARS Spring Intern'l Convention](#)



## President's View

by Dave Godfrey

For the past few weeks, we have been enjoying some spring-like weather, working in the garden doing some cleanup chores, etc., all the time enjoying the warm fresh air and sunshine. Now, with just a little over 3 weeks until spring officially arrives, Mother Nature has decided it is still winter and brought back the chilly temperatures. It remains to be seen if we have seen the last of winter yet!

With the Covid restrictions slowly being reduced, it was great to have 45 members attend our general meeting on February 15<sup>th</sup>. John Deniseger gave a lovely presentation on the history and development of the Greig Species Garden at Milner Garden and Woodland in Qualicum. Thank you to our associate members John and June for attending and giving such a wonderful presentation.

We are also pleased that Linda Derkach has agreed to give her presentation at our next meeting on March 8<sup>th</sup>. It was unfortunate that we had to cancel her presentation on New Zealand in January, but we're delighted that she is available for our March meeting.

We have been fortunate to not only provide interesting presentations at our meetings, but also to attend Zoom presentations from other ARS chapters. The invitations are continuing to come in from far and wide. So, I will continue to pass these along for those who wish to enjoy them.

During the business portion of our meeting, it was mentioned that our dues payments have not



been keeping up with the cost of paying the US\$30 per member to the ARS over the past several years, and consideration might have to be given to raising our local dues. The dues have remained the same for over 25 years now and it is something the executive board will have to consider. Stay tuned!

The executive board has agreed to revive our public Rhododendron Sale and Show this Spring. As in previous years, the sale will be held in the KFN hall on Comox (Dyke) Road on Sunday, April 24<sup>th</sup>. Details are in this newsletter and many volunteers will be needed to make this a successful fund-raising event. So, as you begin to divide up your bulbs and perennials, we ask that you please consider donating a few to either the revenue table at the meetings or to the companion plant table at the sale.

Plans are still in the works for the special visit by Lionel de Rothschild in April and we can only hope that the Covid restrictions continue to improve. Details will be in next month's newsletter. Take care and stay safe!

*R. arboreum ssp. arboreum* - Brodick Castle, Scotland photo by Sean Rafferty

## March 8<sup>th</sup> Program: Linda Derkach

### “New Zealand: Land of the Long White Cloud”

The Gardens – the Culture – the Plants

From the subtropical gardens on the North Island, to the temperate rolling hills and glaciers of the South Island, New Zealand is a gardener’s paradise. This journey through the land of the Kiwis will tempt you to visit amazing heritage gardens, indigenous culture, and the intriguing native plants of this beautiful and diverse country.



Linda Derkach is a long time and very active member of Mount Arrowsmith Rhodo Society and Vancouver Island Master Gardeners. Gardening, writing about gardens and touring gardens all over the world are some of her favourite things to do. An avid alpine garden enthusiast, Linda is currently the MARS Newsletter editor and Secretary for the ARS.

Linda was to be our guest speaker for the January meeting, but we had to cancel that in-person meeting. So she has kindly rescheduled with us for March 8th at 7:30pm.



*R. hodgsonii* (truss & leaf) -

Benmore, Scotland

photos by Sean Rafferty



# NIRS Rhododendron Sale & Show

by Nadine Boudreau

We are going ahead with a public sale this year on April 24 from 10:00 to 1:00 at K'omoks First Nation Hall, 3320 Comox Road. Although it will be scaled down, we will have our propagation Rhododendrons, NIRS companion plants, and Noni Godfrey's Rhododendrons.

Our plant sale is a great time for members to get together and share our knowledge and admiration of Rhododendrons with the public. The success of the sale is largely due to volunteers. There are many volunteer positions, from hall set up to cashiers, to loaders. Please contact Nadine at [ger.nadboud@shaw.ca](mailto:ger.nadboud@shaw.ca) or Noni at [nonigod@shaw.ca](mailto:nonigod@shaw.ca) if you are able to join the fun and help out.

Start now to pot up and divide plants to donate for the NIRS companion plant table and remember to label each plant. If not in a pot, such as iris roots, bulbs, etc., please put in plastic bags and label including colour too if known! And please do not pot up plants on the last few days before the sale - give disturbed plants a few weeks to adjust and look good for the sale. Furthermore, Judy Walker says "Sad plants just don't sell!"



*R. macabeanum* x *R. sinogrande* - Brodick Castle, Scotland photo by Sean Rafferty

# Big Leaf Rhododendron Species

by Garth Wedemire

On the ARS Website, at this location: <http://rhododendron.org/taxonomictree.asp> you will find the **Rhododendron Taxonomic Tree**. It is an expandable tree which you can expand and contract by clicking the various '+' and '-' symbols that appear.

Expanding the subgenus "Hymenanthes" branch and then the section "Ponticum" of the tree shows twenty-five subsections. These subsections contain what are typically called the "Elepidote" rhododendrons.

Many of the "Big Leaf" rhododendrons are located in the "**Arborea**", "**Falconera**" and "**Grandia**" subsections.

## Genus Rhododendron

- [-] subgenus Azaleastrum
- [-] subgenus Candidastrum
- [-] subgenus Hymenanthes
- [-] subgenus Mumeazalea
- [-] subgenus Pentanthera
- [-] subgenus Rhododendron
- [-] subgenus Therorhodion
- [-] subgenus Tsutsusi

## Genus Rhododendron

- [-] subgenus Azaleastrum
- [-] subgenus Candidastrum
- [-] subgenus Hymenanthes
  - [-] section Ponticum
    - [-] subsection Arborea
    - [-] subsection Argyrophylla
    - [-] subsection Auriculata
    - [-] subsection Barbata
    - [-] subsection Campanulata
    - [-] subsection Campylocarpa
    - [-] subsection Falconera
    - [-] subsection Fortunea
    - [-] subsection Fulgensia
    - [-] subsection Fulva
    - [-] subsection Glischra
    - [-] subsection Grandia
    - [-] subsection Griersoniana

- [-] subsection Irrorata
- [-] subsection Lanata
- [-] subsection Maculifera
- [-] subsection Neriiflora
- [-] subsection Parishia
- [-] subsection Pontica
- [-] subsection Selensia
- [-] subsection Taliensia
- [-] Lacteam alliance
- [-] subsection Thomsonia
- [-] subsection Venatora
- [-] subsection Williamsiana
- [-] subgenus Mumeazalea
- [-] subgenus Pentanthera
- [-] subgenus Rhododendron
- [-] subgenus Therorhodion
- [-] subgenus Tsutsusi

The "**Arborea**" subsection contains Rhododendrons *arboreum*, *lanigerum* and *niveum*.

The "**Falconera**" subsection contains Rhododendrons *arizelum*, *basilicum*, *coriaceum*, *falconeri*, *galactinum*, *hodgsonii*, *preptum*, *rex*, *rothschildii*, *seminoides* and *sinofalconeri*.

The "**Grandia**" subsection contains Rhododendrons *balangense*, *grande*, *kesangiae*, *macabeanum*, *magnificum*, *montroseanum*, *praestans*, *protistum*, *pudorosum*, *sidereum*, *sinogrande* and *wasonii*.

Three subsections contain twenty-six different species rhododendrons. Several gardeners in the Comox Valley who focus on rhododendrons are successfully growing species we call "**The Big Leaves**". NIRS might want to compile an inventory of Comox Valley gardens that have these magnificent plants – all highly prized by lovers of rhododendrons.



*R. falconeri ssp. falconeri (plant & truss) - Arduaine, Scotland photos by Sean Rafferty*

## Video

Judi Murakami sent in this interesting 6 minute video about tracking down rare plant species today. It gives an idea of what the early plant explorers did, but locally. Coincidentally, Vancouver, Washington is the location of the next ARS conference.

[Human Elements : The flower on the cliff | KCTS 9](#)



## Ways & Means

by Aubrey Ferris

### Raffle and door prizes for the March 8th Meeting:



#### Golden Witt

Rhododendron 'Golden Witt' is a low-growing shrub, suitable for containers as well as borders, with creamy coloured flowers with a red speckled splash in the throat. Perfect for pots/containers/borders. Mature height 1.2m



#### Olive

Flower broadly funnel-shaped, about 1½" across, vivid reddish-purple with darker spots scattered over the base of the upper lobe. Truss has 1-2 flowers. Blooms early and grows to a height of 4 feet in 10 year

*Photo: Garth Wedemire*



#### *R. mekongense* (Arboretum Milde)

The mekongense predominant flower colour: Yellow to greenish-yellow, sometimes flushed or marked red or pink. Inflorescence 2-5 flowered. Bloom time is midseason. Broadly upright shrub. Height 3 feet in 10 years.

## Treats and Coffee at Meetings

by AntjeGuertler

Please remember to bring your own coffee or tea mug if you wish to buy a beverage.

Also a reminder that the following people signed up to bring treats to the March meeting:

Sheryl Murakami, Heike Schnoor, Judi Murakami, Joanne Williams and Maureen Denny.

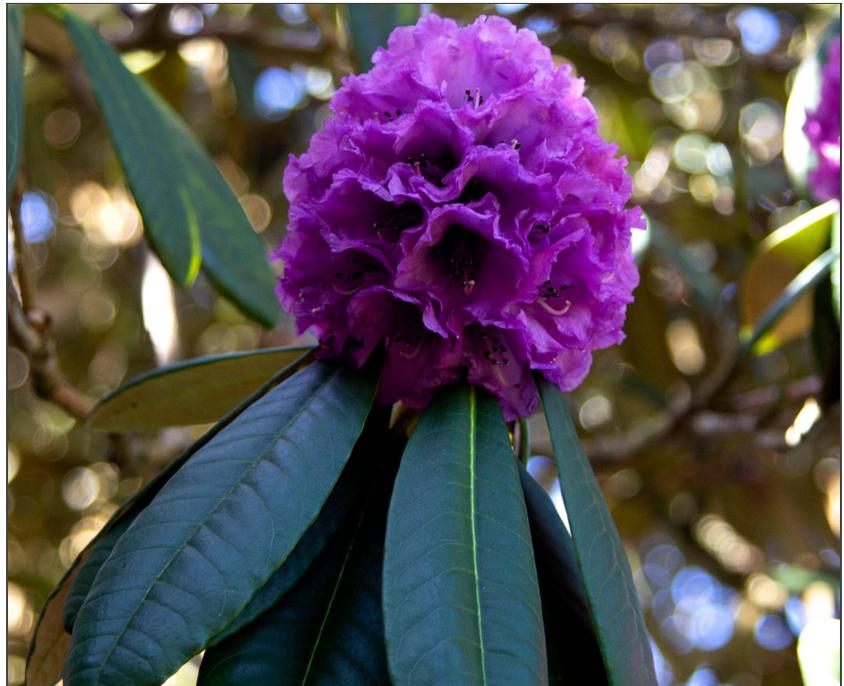


*R. niveum* (plant and truss) - Castle Kennedy, Scotland photos by Sean Rafferty

## Membership

by Dan Ryan

At the February meeting we had a good turnout of 43 members and 2 guests, with one becoming a new member. Welcome Danielle Shepherd! We now have 72 members. It was great to see the attendance at the meeting, looking forward to it continuing to grow. The 2022 Membership Yearbooks were handed out at the last meeting, and will also be at the March meeting. The rest will be mailed out.



## Member Profile

by Kathy Haigh

**Judy Walker** is a gardener, a writer, a painter and so much more!

Judy was born and raised in Vancouver. She attended UBC and earned a BSc Honours in Agriculture. As a new grad she moved to Nanaimo and worked at what is now VIU as a biological lab assistant. Her love of gardening really sprouted while in Nanaimo.

Judy moved to Comox in 1982 and lives on a small farm and vineyard on the bluffs near Goose Spit with husband Brian. She loves spending time working in the orchard of mostly old varieties of pears, plums and apples, with recent additions of peaches and figs. "There is always something to do and it presents itself when I step out the door." An old farmer told her that if one can't find anything to do, "you ain't lookin'."

She has become proficient at growing vegetables and fruit, and she encourages all of us to grow and eat our own food in season. "Why on earth would you ever buy asparagus from Mexico or garlic from China? We can grow it all here!"



Judy studied at the University of Washington (Seattle) to earn her Masters in Landscape Architecture. Following her degree, Judy worked in an architecture and engineering office in Comox before writing the final exams to become a registered landscape architect. Because she was a gardener first, Judy likes to focus her work on plants and their effects on a landscape.

As well as being a member of the BC Society of Landscape Architects, Judy was a Registered Professional Planner. She has been a planner with local levels of government and a consultant on residential properties. She also taught residential landscape design classes at North Island College. The combination of her education, experience and personality, have allowed her to balance both sides of environmental issues - working with people with differing views and to see the humour in any situation. She is still active in her profession and her goal is to be in the garden as much as possible.

Judy was a founding Board member of the Comox Valley Land Trust. She also wrote a regular column for the Land Trust called "One Yard at a Time". The land trust has many covenants in place to protect land and the CVLT continues to have a great reputation as land protectors today. Education and conservation of nature are key elements of Judy's professional and personal worldview.

In 2015 Judy published her book "A Garden for Life: Mary Greig & the Royston Rhododendrons." As a gardener, Judy met Mary Greig and became fascinated with her life. Judy is contemplating co-writing books on renowned rhododendron gardener Alleyne Cook and pioneer landscape architect Clive Justice - perhaps later in her retirement.

During NIRS monthly meetings Judy can usually be found alongside Naomi at the revenue table. She enjoys sharing a mutual love of gardening, and thus, has been a valuable longstanding member of the NIRS. In fact she is one of the original 9 members Harry Wright rounded up in order to become a chapter.

Judy started sketching and watercolour painting while she was studying in Seattle. She continues these artistic pursuits now with Lupine Studio and finds many interesting subjects in the garden, slugs excluded. Another indoor hobby to do during inclement weather is reading gardening magazines and non-fiction books with a strong lean toward science and architecture. Her latest highly recommended garden read is "Windcliff" by Dan Hinkley and just acquired Dan Pearson & Midori Shintani's "Tokachi Millennium Forest" on the 400 hectare garden in Hokkaido, Japan. Judy promises a book review soon!

Judy feels that her "Stay Home Club" hat suits her perfectly. She would rather be at home (inside or outside) than anywhere else. She may be a classic introvert but her friendly smile and ever-evident sense of humour can be deceiving. She has made outstanding contributions to the world of nature in the Comox Valley.



*R. falconeri ssp. eximium, indumentum* - Benmore, Scotland photo by Sean Rafferty

# Climate Change: What Can One Conscientious Gardener Do?

*Reprinted from the February MARS "Rhodovine" with permission by the author, Linda Derkach*

Climate change seems like much too big a challenge to take on. But as gardeners, we can make a difference right in our own backyards. As best-selling author Douglas Tallamy states in his book, *Nature's Best Hope*, conservation starts in our own yards.



*Raging Storms  
–  
Higher Tides*



## The Trouble with Carbon

As you probably already know, carbon dioxide plays a big part in rising temperatures and changing weather patterns. West Coasters know this all too well: heat domes, atmospheric rivers, windstorms and high tides. Things are changing and not for the better. Carbon is the culprit - so how can we as gardeners help to remove it before it does more damage.

Plants remove carbon from the air and sequester it in their tissues and in the soil. Growing lots of plants – especially evergreen – and avoiding soil disturbance that releases carbon into the air are ways that gardeners can help.



*The Stumpery at RSBG mirrors Nature's plan: Long-lived evergreens, shrubs and ground covers to protect the soil.*

*The "Heat Dome" of 2021 caused damage to evergreens.*



## Avoid Tilling the Soil

Apart from the fact that rototilling and turning soil over in the garden is not good for all the microorganisms in the soil, it releases carbon back into the air – something we want to prevent.

## Plant Trees and Shrubs

While it may be difficult to have all native plants in your garden, a variety of broad-leaved evergreens, conifers and native shrubs is a good start to creating a garden that sequesters carbon – thus keeping it from contributing to global warming.

The good news for us is that the evergreen leaves of our rhododendrons sequester carbon in their wood and their leaves, holding it there until the wood or leaves rot. The longer the leaves stay on a plant, and the longer a plant lives - the longer they store the carbon and keep it out of the atmosphere.



*Layers in the forest and the garden help to sequester carbon.*

Our iconic Douglas firs and other conifers are champions at sequestering carbon for as long as they live – so protect your evergreens and you are contributing to slowing global warming.

## Fertilisers & Mulch

There is debate as to whether synthetic fertilisers are harmful to the microorganisms that inhabit the soil. If you apply too much fertiliser the buildup of salts can be toxic to the microbes. Organic fertilisers are an option. Many gardeners do not use fertiliser.

However, plants in pots do not have access to the beneficial organisms in the garden. Since bagged potting soil is not 'alive', our potted plants and shrubs can benefit from an application of organic fertiliser as our Propagation Group has done for our baby rhododendrons.



*Autumn leaves are left right where they fall and provide a natural mulch for this tree and its companions*

We can look to Mother Nature for a natural way to fertilise. Leaves fall and compost around plants. So raking leaves off the grass to create leaf mould in the fall for use in spring is a natural way to feed the soil and thus your plants.

Or just rake the leaves right into the planting beds to protect soil and plants during the winter.

Rhododendron gardeners are inveterate mulchers, so it is comforting to know that this has been of great benefit to our plants, the soil and its inhabitants. Nature abhors bare soil and quickly covers it with native plants of her own choosing. And we can do the same. Natural mulch, compost and leaves are excellent mulches. And don't forget about living mulches. Many attractive small plants – native and otherwise - love to grow in companionship with larger shrubs and trees.

# Tree of the Year 2022

by Kerri Scott

Comox Valley Nature (CVN) is now accepting nominations for the 2022 “Tree of the Year” award. The annual contest, now in its fifth year, fosters a strong connection with nature and increases awareness of cherished local trees. The organisers invite residents to nominate trees they love in the Comox Valley to raise interest in the value and protection of trees. This is an exciting opportunity to identify and highlight individual trees of significant interest or beauty.

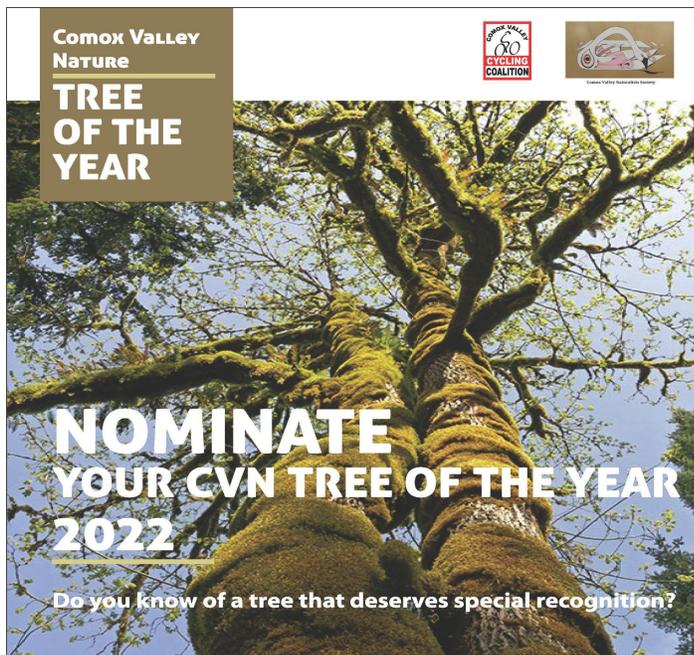
There is an abundance of trees on public and private property, young and old, that have inspirational stories. Noteworthy trees like the oak tree on Headquarters road that was grown from an acorn collected at Buckingham Palace. Or the “Bear Tree” on the Dove Creek connector. A habitat tree, saved from removal, when black bear cubs were spotted climbing around in the cottonwood’s branches.

Nominations are open now and will run until April 1. Details and an entry form for CVN Tree of the Year can be found on the CVN website.

When the nomination phase closes the public will be invited to choose their favourite tree from the nominees by voting online until June 2022.

According to one of the event organisers, Fred Newhouse, “While our focus is on appreciating all the trees, a winning tree will be chosen by public vote. A small prize is awarded to the nominator of the Tree of the Year, and we will all benefit from learning about these beautiful specimens.”

Once the nominations are in, residents will be provided with maps to tour the trees. Exciting changes are coming to the toured part of the event, Newhouse explained. “We plan to do different maps for cycling and walking this year and we would like to have one special tour day for Garry oaks.” Garry oaks are an at-risk species on Vancouver Island.



The winners of the Tree of Year are not always the tallest or oldest trees but the ones that hold value to our community and tell a story. Last year the winning tree was an arbutus in the Cumberland Community Forest. A close second was the bigleaf maple in Morrison Park nominated by Marion Dulude’s Grade 6 class from Puntledge Park Elementary. Dulude submitted the nomination to the CVN Tree of the Year contest on behalf of her students, acknowledging that their voices matter.

There is no need to log into this contest! For more information and the easy online nomination form visit the CVN website: [cvnature.ca/treeoftheyear/](http://cvnature.ca/treeoftheyear/).

## Board of Directors & Committee Chairs 2021/2022

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### Newsletter Editor

Kathy Haigh 250-702-4311

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Rhododendron Society**

*R. kesangiae v album (truss & new growth)*

*Photos by Sean Rafferty*



## 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.