

THE RHODOTELLER



Begonia "Cascading Splendor" Photo by Bette Hopwood

Theme: Fall Colours in our Members' Gardens

Thank you to those who submitted photos taken late September 2022 in the Comox Valley.

Meetings & Events

Oct 4 Executive Meeting

Oct 11 General Meeting 7:00 pm Comox United Church [*reminder to Helen Stefiuk, Aji Fliss, Diana van Oostdam, Sheryl Murakami and Antje Guertler to bring goodies*]

Oct 13 CVRG work party 10:00 am

Oct 23 “Fall into Gardening” event at the Qualicum Civic Centre <http://nanaimorhodos.ca/>

President’s View

by Dave Godfrey

It certainly feels like fall is upon us, as the days grow shorter, and the nights are cooler. One of the first signs of autumn is the colour change in the deciduous leaves. With less daylight and cooler temperatures, the leaves struggle to maintain photosynthesis. Thus ends the circle of life for many garden plants. Fortunately for us, most rhododendrons are evergreen and provide beauty all winter long.

As far as cycles go, we began our new season of meetings last month, and it was nice to have 47 members and 6 guests join us for a very informative and colourful presentation on the Jim Barlup rhododendrons by Lois Blackmore of Victoria. Many members expressed interest in purchasing Barlup rhododendrons and Lois offered to take our orders when they go on sale this month. Lois and Roy have also offered to deliver any purchases when the time comes. If you wish to purchase some Barlup hybrids, please let me know and I will forward a list to her.

At our meeting, we welcomed two new members – Ron & Barb Barker of Courtenay and Lyn Sakiyama of Comox. As trends continue, Ron was the lucky winner of the door prize and Roy Blackmore won a raffle draw, along with long-time member, Corrine Innes. Odds seem to favour our new members and guests when it comes to winning a prize. Congratulations to all.



Monkshood Photo by Jean Looy

It was great to have a good turnout of members for the Propagation Group’s demonstration at the Smith Garden on Saturday, September 24th. Our thanks to Wolfgang Hoefgen for providing his knowledge and tips on how to root cuttings. Several members are now interested in “giving it a go!”

Following the demonstration, the prop group held a ‘Members Only’ sale of our cultivated rhodos. The sale was very well attended and brought in some added income to help with this year’s budget. Until such time as the property sells and we know the intentions of the new

owners, the club will not be propagating any new stock. We have enough put aside for our April public sale, and we may also have enough for the sale in 2024. But then we will have to decide what to do in the future.



For those still “thinking about it”, time is getting short for registering to attend the “Fall into Gardening” one-day conference to be held in Qualicum Beach on Sunday, October 23rd. There is a great list of speakers lined up with some very interesting topics. So be sure to register sooner rather than later, as you don’t want to be disappointed.

Unfortunately, I may not make the meeting on Oct. 11th as I will be undergoing cataract eye surgery that day. Therefore, Vice President Naomi Chester has agreed to chair the meeting on my behalf.

In the meantime, take care and stay safe. Happy fall gardening everyone!

Green Smokebush (Cotinus coggygia).
Photo by Valerie Ferris

Autumn Crocus - Colchicum (not a true crocus but in the Lily family).
Photo by Judy Walker





Rose of Sharon (left)

Hardy Fuchsia (below)

Photos by Kathy Haigh



Ways and Means: draw & door prizes

by Aubrey Ferris



'Carmen':

The predominant colour is red, early midseason bloomer, leaves 1 ⅓", 1-foot growth in 10 years. Can take full sun. Hardy to -21°C (Can find on page 107 in "Greer's")



Hino Crimson:

Striking crimson blooms cover this attractive dense compact shrub in mid-spring; foliage is tiny giving a fine texture; ideal when massed in borders, foundation plantings, or low screening; absolutely must have well-drained, highly acidic, and organic soil. This shrub does best in full sun to partial shade. Zone 8a: (-12 to -9.5°C)



R Azalea japonica variegated:

Azalea japonica is a small heath shrub that provides evergreen, bushy growth. Its main appeal, however, is the massive blooming: beautiful flowers ranging from pink to red, purple, and white. **Height** – 3 ½ to 6 ½ feet depending on the species (100 to 200 cm) **Exposure** – part sun/shade plant. Flowering- April-May. More information at nature-and-garden.com

October Program: Leslie Cox

On Tuesday, Oct. 11th, the NIRS chapter will present another informative and entertaining meeting at the Comox United Church Hall. We welcome guest speaker **Leslie Cox aka "the Duchess of Dirt"** to give a presentation on "*Combatting Climate Change in Today's Garden*". The doors will open for members and guests at 7 PM, with the presentation beginning at 7:30 PM. Please be sure to join us for this very timely topic.

CVRG “The Rhodo Garden”

by Maureen Denny

Thank you to everyone who attended last month's work party. As usual, we all pitched in and after only one hour of work the gardens were all looking very nice! Weather permitting the next and last work party of the year will be Thursday, October 13 at 10am. Please bring your own tools and a bucket. Coffee and treats afterwards.





R. 'Shrimp Girl'

Photo by Diana Scott



R. 'Patricia Jacobs'

Photo by Garth Wedemire



R. 'Golfer'

Photo by Diana Scott

Propagation Demonstration

by Judy Walker

On Saturday, September 24, Wolfgang provided a wonderful demonstration to 21 NIRS members on how to propagate rhododendrons by simple cuttings. We all gathered at the Smith garden in the propagation building, and Wolfgang walked us through the whole procedure, from gathering all the necessary equipment (including band-aids...), how to take cuttings, and the process and care of the cuttings, once potted.

This does not require expensive or complicated equipment –a heat mat, plastic dome, good free draining mix (Wolfgang uses 50:50 perlite and peat, with a bit of sand to give the mix some weight), with of course fresh cuttings- using new growth (about 4-5") that is flexible but not too soft and not too hard (he assured us that this knowledge will come with experience!). He said that the earlier varieties are



easier to root. Try to choose a non-bud branch- or if no choice, remove the bud. Cuttings should be popped immediately into a ziplock bag to keep as moist as possible. A box cutter tool is useful for making very sharp, clean cuts- a 45-degree angle cut just below a node is done, with a 1/2" longitudinal cut of a sliver of cambium removed to aid rooting. This end is then dipped in rooting hormone (#2 is for semi-hardwood cuttings) and then with a hole made in the rooting medium with a small stick so that when the cutting is inserted the hormone powder remains on the cut end. Firm the medium around the cutting and water in well. Wolfgang always waters the entire flat well before inserting any cuttings to make sure the peat is fully saturated and then waters again when the cuttings are in.

The cuttings are then placed on the heat mat, and the dome placed on- one can either open the vents in the dome or lift off periodically to keep the environment from becoming too wet. Place the mat and dome where there is good natural light or provide artificial light (12 hours daily). And then you wait...Wolfgang said the greatest problem with rooting cuttings is the gardener poking and checking them all the time...just wait...maybe in February...when you see roots at the bottom of the pot...then it is time to remove them from the heat and provide very dilute fertilizer.

There were lots of questions after the demo about other plants to propagate by cuttings- much to learn! We are so fortunate to have Wolfgang as a valued member- thank you again, Wolfgang- for sharing your considerable knowledge and expertise!

(If there are any errors or omissions, I will provide them at the next meeting!)

Membership

by Dan Ryan

At our September meeting we had 44 members and 6 guests. There were 22 membership renewals. We welcomed new members Barb and Ron Barker, and Lyn Sakiyama.

It's time to renew! The dues for membership are; regular \$40.00 and \$10.00 for an Associate membership (must hold a regular membership with another ARS Chapter). Once again we are offering the "Early Renewal Program". Register before November 30th, 2022 and you will be entered into a draw to win your membership fee.

You can mail your cheque, payable to NIRS, to P.O. Box 3183 Courtenay B.C. V9N 5N4 or e-transfer \$40.00 to the Club Treasurer Noni Godfrey (nonigod@shaw.ca) or you can bring cash or cheque to the October meeting.



Queen Elizabeth Rose (left)

Fall Aster (below)

Photos by Garth Wedemire



Member Profile

by Kathy Haigh

Joanne and Doug Williams lived all of their married lives in Ontario before moving to the Comox Valley. There was the usual: university, wedding in 1965, and 3 kids, working in Ottawa. But in between, there was the unusual: they moved to a remote community in Abitibi Canyon, near Moosonee, ON for Doug's job with Ontario Hydro. (Moosonee is located just 19 km from James Bay, near the Quebec border - and that was the bigger centre.)

Surprisingly, during the three years the young Williams family lived in Abitibi Canyon with 80 other families in the Hydro colony, they emerged with no personal bear stories. However, they have tales of the North including extremely cold winters and a large forest fire that came within 1 km of their home. Spring and summer meant swarms of black flies, horse flies, deer flies and hoardes of mosquitos. They figured that "only white man would build a colony in the middle of a swamp."



Doug's career began in Toronto, working as an electrical engineer for Ontario Hydro. After he graduated from Ryerson U, he earned his P.Eng at night school while working.

Joanne's career began at U of T where she became a physiotherapist. She had a motherhood break from work when their 3 children were small and while they lived near Moosonee, but resumed work part-time, for a total of 20 years practicing physiotherapy.

After living in a tiny, remote northern community, they moved to Ottawa where they remained for 35 years and saw a lot of growth in the metropolitan area. Both Joanne and Doug retired in the 1990's. While there were so many things to see and do and enjoy around Ottawa, they grew weary of the "big city and icy cold winters." They "saw the light" of west coast living and moved to Comox in 2013. Their children, who have given them 6 wonderful grandchildren, live in Victoria, Calgary and Red Deer, AB. They are certainly geographically closer to them here, however, the proud grandparents would love to see them all more often (don't they all?!).

Joanne and Doug love the vibrant senior community in Comox, as well as the milder weather (don't we all?!). They have taken to biking, walking/hiking, golfing, curling, and of course, gardening is a large part of their lives here. Doug is so happy that his 28 large rhodos and 10 azaleas don't require the winter wrapping of burlap, cloth and chicken wire that was needed to survive Ottawa winters!

They also have raised vegetable beds and grow rhubarb, blueberries and strawberries. When they first moved to the Comox house, Annette from Outback Nursery did a garden plan for their property, which they planted as prescribed, and then filled in with other plants (as folks new to

the west coast often do). They now have a solid landscape, after readjusting when the trees and shrubs grew to full size.

Their friend Patty Matthews from the CV Newcomers Club got Joanne and Doug to join the NIRS shortly after moving here. They really enjoyed President Jake's humour and fun at the meetings. Joanne has since taken on the role of "Sunshine Lady" which involves sending cards to members who have had remarkable things happen - both sad and celebratory. They both relish the clubs' characters, socializing and learning situations and look forward to many more years of gardening fellowship at NIRS.



*Actea
Brunette
(right),*

*Calluna
Athena
(below)*

*Photos by
Diana Scott*



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*Dahlias: Normandy Lisanne (top),
Procyon (below) Photos by Barb Barker*



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<http://www.nirsrhodos.ca>