

THE RHODOTELLER



R. 'Shamrock' by Garth Wedemire

President's View

Even though we are still in the grips of winter, spring is only one month away. The days are growing longer and on Sunday, March 14th we will be changing our clocks forward, which will allow us to spend more evening hours in our gardens.

In the meantime, I hope some of you are enjoying the many meetings and presentations being offered by Zoom. These programs are never going to make up for not being able to meet in person. But they do provide some very interesting and entertaining garden related information.

We have been treated to a variety of programs in February, beginning with an invitation from the Victoria chapter to join them for their meeting on Monday Feb. 1st with a tour of *'Wildflowers on The Rock'* with Anne Allen and Ian Duncan. For those of us who have never been to Newfoundland, this botanical journey around Canada's most eastern province was interesting. Not a lot of Rhodos to see there.

Then staying in the east, at 3 PM the next afternoon, Tuesday Feb. 2nd, the Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society extended an invitation for members of District 1 to join them as they presented *'Clematis: Queen of the Climbers'* by Jeff Jabco, President of the

International Clematis Society of Pennsylvania. Everyone knows Clematis, but few gardeners take advantage of the diversity of the genus and ways to grow them. As Jeff illustrated, Clematis can be climbing, sprawling, groundcover, large-flowered, small-flowered, a multitude of colours, and fragrant. Clematis can be grown on trellises, over shrubs, through trees, as weavers between shrubs and as ground covers. Wow, so much to learn about these gorgeous plants!

On Wednesday, Feb 3rd at 7 PM, the Cowichan Valley club extended an invitation to join them for a presentation by Agnes Lynn of Victoria on *'Ericaceous Plants of Vancouver Island'*. Showing the variety of these plants right here on the Island, including many up on Mount Washington.

The next evening, Feb. 4th, our friends Dough Keough and Rose Nicolette of the Pilchuck Chapter invited us to join them for their meeting and a presentation by Mike Stewart, Past President of the ARS and RSF. Mike's program *'Natures Carpet – Dwarf Rhododendrons from Higher Elevations'* focused on lepidote species rhododendrons from around the world. He discussed the growing conditions, range of area found and where these plants fit into the rhododendron classification. The program was complimented with pictures taken in the wild and the mountainous regions of Asia where they were discovered.

At 10 AM on Saturday, Feb. 6th, District 1 and the Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association (VIMGA) presented a joint one-hour presentation by Ken Nentwig (retired landscape architect and educator) on *'Water Efficiency in the Landscape.'* Another great educational presentation. All this in just the first week of the month!

There were several other invitations and presentations offered throughout the month: *Wednesday, February 10th the Willamette Chapter's meeting with Wally Reed on "Mapping Your Garden – The Base Map You Need to Create."* / *Wednesday, February 17th the Eugene Chapter meeting and presentation by Dennis McKiver "Rhododendron Species and Hybrids that Grow in a Perfect Climate."* / *Thursday, February 18th the Portland Chapter's meeting featuring Justin Blackwell, Head Curator of Lan Su Chinese Garden, and his program "Chinese and Japanese Gardens: a comparison."* Finally, on *Thursday, February 25th the Eureka Chapter's meeting featured Steve McCormick and John Stephens speaking on "Rhododendrons in Finland."* Such a variety of programs!

I am not sure how many of our members are accepting these invitations, but I for one am enjoying as many as possible. The president of the Willamette chapter in his opening remarks commented that there were more Canadian members joining in than there were from their own chapter - close to 100 signed in by the time the presentation began.

It is hard to believe that it has been one full year since we held our last in-person meeting at the church hall in March 2020. Like many of you, I am sure missing the social aspects of our club meetings, especially the coffee and goodies! And although we will likely not be meeting at the hall again until the fall at the earliest, we are fortunate to have today's technology to help keep us connected.

For our March 9th scheduled meeting, our chapter has been in contact with Don Wallace of the Eureka chapter. He has given us permission to play a recording of his presentation on "Pruning Rhodos – When and How". This meeting will be conducted via Zoom on Tuesday, March 9th. (See program details in this newsletter.) We will be extending an invitation to other District 1 members to join us for this presentation.

Just as I was about to close and submit this article for the March newsletter came the devastating news of the passing of long-time NIRS member, Paul Wurz. Our heartfelt condolences go out to Lynn and family. Paul's loss will not only be felt by our North Island chapter, but by the many friends and fellow ARS members in District 1. As the last remaining commercial rhododendron propagator and nurseryman in District 1, Paul attended as a vendor at the spring sales of most chapters on the island. He will be sadly missed by his many friends and family.

In closing, continue to stay safe and healthy, and hug your loved ones when you can. We know that the pandemic situation will only get better in the coming months and we can look forward to resuming our meetings and activities. Take care!

President Dave Godfrey



Paul Wurz with one of his favourites - R. 'Apricot Fantasy'

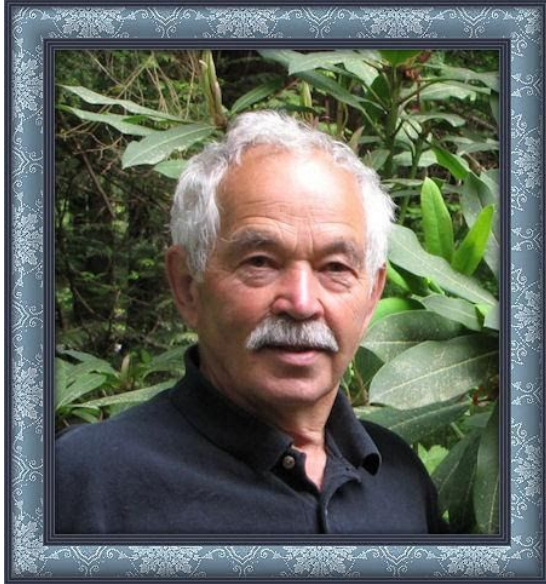
Meetings

The March 2nd executive meeting will be on Zoom.

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

March 9 at 7:30 pm "Pruning Rhododendrons - How and When" on Zoom.

Remembering Paul Wurz



On Saturday, February 20th, our dear friend, and long-time member of NIRS, Paul Wurz, sadly passed away. Paul worked for the School District of Campbell River as a high school teacher, coach, and counsellor for 32 years. It was after he retired 20 years ago that he became a true 'Rhodoholic'.

He first joined the NIRS in 1994 and that was when his rhododendron obsession really took hold. His passion for rhodos and gardening increased each year. It wasn't long before he began propagating rhodos from seeds and cuttings; potting up hundreds of new seedlings and growing plants which he sold at his small nursery 'Hidden Acres' on Gordon Road. His own rhodo garden evolved to

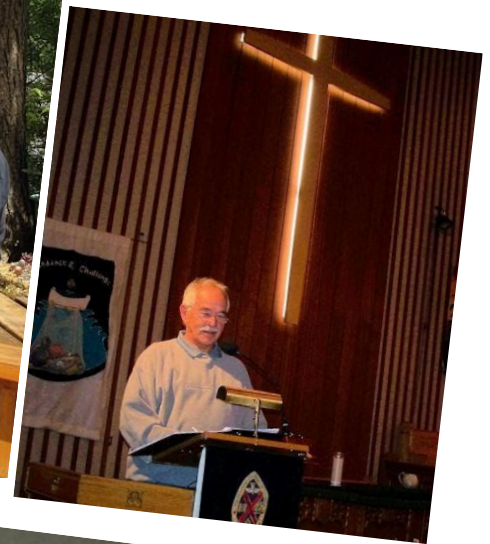
become a collection of several thousand rhodos and it became a showpiece of springtime beauty where visitors were always welcomed.

His loving wife, Lynn, was in charge of countless varieties of companion plants adding her own charm and love of gardening to their 8+ acres of colourful blooms. Paul freely gave his time and his knowledge to the many visitors who enjoyed wandering through their beloved garden full of numerous rhodo beds, many companion plants, productive fruit trees, towering evergreens, and three large ponds.

Paul was involved as President and Vice President of the NIRS three times over the last 28 years. He became the developer of the 'Lofthouse Legacy' following the passing of his close friend, Jack Lofthouse. In 2004, Paul was awarded the American Rhododendron Society's Bronze Medal in recognition of his years of service. Then in 2015, he received the NIRS 'Outstanding Service Award' for his ongoing dedication to the chapter.

It was during his years with the NIRS that he nurtured many contacts in the rhododendron world as he travelled the island, the mainland, and Washington and Oregon states to attend conferences, to give presentations, and to buy & sell his many rhodos. He was constantly on the lookout for new hybrids and his latest love - fragrant and species rhododendrons. This love of species rhododendrons led Paul to become a key member of the planning committee for the 'Grieg Rhododendron Species Garden' at Milner Gardens in Qualicum Beach.

Paul had the gift of the gab as he loved to share and compare stories of his special plants. He'd share his knowledge with anyone wanting to learn more and provide mentorship to new 'Rhodoholics'. Paul loved to laugh and celebrate with close friends and family. His friendly nature and generosity will be missed. He will be fondly remembered by his former colleagues and students, family and rhodo friends - so many whose lives he touched. He will also be fondly remembered by many to whom he frequently sold a special rhodo. His sales pitch was often preceded with, "Hey, I've saved this one just for you. You're gonna love it!"



NIRS Remembering Paul in pictures...
By Noni Godfrey







Recently Seen in the Garden - R. 'Shamrock'

Rhododendron 'Shamrock' is a dwarf evergreen hybrid rhododendron which is purported to bloom around St. Patrick's Day (March 17th). Seasonal variation and planting location may cause some change in the anticipated blooming time. This remarkable hybrid's parents are R. keiskei (dwarf form) and R. hanceanum nanum hybridized - named by Oregonian, Dr. Robert Ticknor and registered in 1978 with the RHS (Royal Horticultural Society). In an article in QBARS – v32n4 which can be viewed online at:

<https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/v32n4/v32n4-ticknor.htm> - Dr. Ticknor describes the plant as having "compact habit and chartreuse flowers".



R. 'Shamrock' has pale yellow tinged green flowers that open from pale green and yellow buds. The flowers are tubular shaped and about 1½" across with slight strong yellow-green spotting on the upper lobe. The trusses of 8-9 flowers are flat in arrangement. As the truss ages, the flowers fade to a light yellow colour.

The moderate olive green leaves are about 2" long and elliptically shaped. This is a dwarf plant growing to about two feet in 10 years with a spreading habit which appears dense since the leaves are retained for two years. R. 'Shamrock' is a lepidote hybrid which has moderately spaced, tan scales on the lower surface of its leaves. The plant does best in full sun to partial shade.

One of the best features of R. 'Shamrock' is its hardiness which is rated at -21°C (-5°F).

Submitted by Garth Wedemire (gwedemire@gmail.com)

PROGRAMS REZOOM!

After a one-year absence, regular NIRS meetings will resume for those members capable of using Zoom technology.

For our **March 9th** meeting, we will present **Don Wallace**, a member and past president of the Eureka chapter, who has given us permission to re-Zoom his recorded program on 'Pruning Rhododendrons – How and When'.



Don is the owner of 'Singing Tree Gardens' in McKinleyville, California. Over the past 20 years, he has planted, propagated, hybridized, and grown from seed many rhododendrons.

Currently, Don is active in hybridizing rhododendrons for fragrance. This recorded program will be of benefit to all who grow rhododendrons. A live Q & A discussion will follow the video.

All chapter members and guests are welcome to join us for this program! Link into the meeting on March 9th starting about 7:15 PM. Program will begin at 7:30.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87925335820>

R. 'thomsonii'



Comox Valley Rhodo Garden Report

By Maureen Denny

Weather permitting there will be the first Work Party of the year on Thursday March 11 at 10am. Due to the Covid restrictions requested by the City of Courtenay, there can only be a limited number of Volunteers. I will contact some of the regulars to attend this work party.

I am looking forward to the time when we will all be vaccinated and events like this can be open to all club members.



R. pachysanthum

Membership Report

By Dan & Margaret Ryan

We are pleased to report that we have had 5 member renewals since our last report. This brings our total memberships for 2021 to 77, including 5 associate members. We welcome Verna Buehler, President of the Cowichan Valley chapter as our newest associate member.

Hopefully, everyone has received their 2021 membership cards that were mailed out with the annual membership booklet. If for any reason you did not receive it, please let us know soon.

On the back of your membership card is a list of local gardening businesses that provide a discount to our members. Be sure to use the card when shopping at the listed merchants and help save towards next year's membership renewal.

The Spring ARS Virtual & Live Convention 2021

Rhodos Down East: Exploring the North Atlantic Region: June 3 to 6.
Registration for Virtual Convention is Now Open!

The Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society (ARHS) will be hosting this four day event. Visit the [All Events](#) page on the ARHS website for more information.



All presentations, garden tours and networking opportunities will be available online. Early Bird registration for virtual convention is now open! Prices will go up on April 1, 2021. Deadline to register for the convention will be May 1, 2021

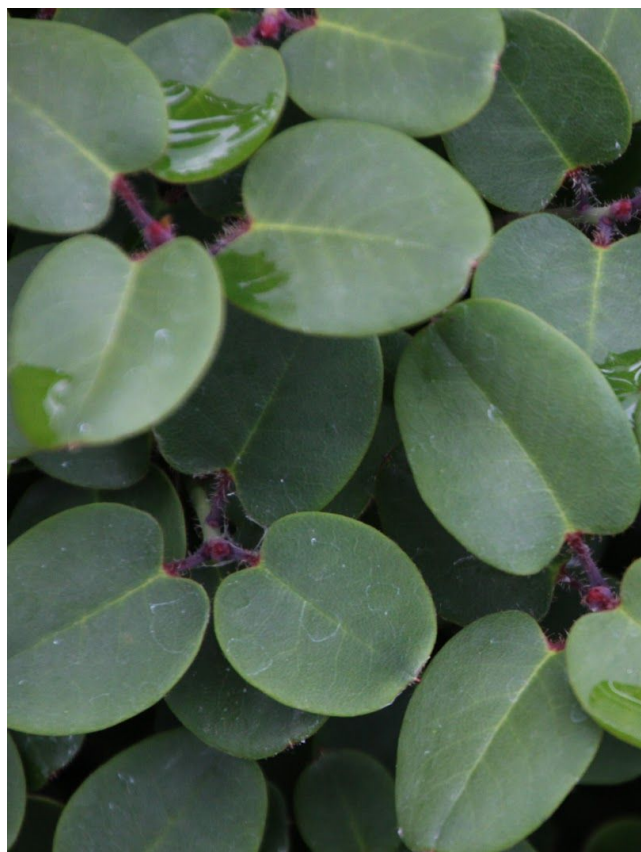
Visit the convention website for full details on programming, deadlines and cost: <https://ars2021.org/> Visit the [Canadian Registration Link](#) (Eventbrite) to register.

The convention events will take place in Wolfville, Nova Scotia between 1 pm to 5 pm ADT (9 am to 1 pm PDT). The virtual presentations will be available to convention participants for a period of time following the Convention. Programming presented at the Old Orchard Inn will be a combination of live and virtual presentations depending upon the Public Health travel restrictions at the time. Schedule is subject to change in speakers and times.

Submitted by Garth Wedemire who hopes to attend the Convention virtually with his computer.

March theme: shamrock/green/foilage

Garth chose rhododendron species in the subgenus **Hymenanthes** whose plants tend to be quite large in their maturity. These rhododendrons are called the elepidotes. They include the large leaved species and do not have scales located on the underside of the leaves. Most individuals would associate the elepidote plants as being the typical rhododendron. All photos by Garth Wedemire; clockwise from top left: 'calophytum', 'habrotrichum', 'strigillosum', 'williamsianum'.



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*R. 'kesangiae' (top) & R. 'sinogrande' (bottom) by
Garth Wedemire*

