

THE RHODOTELLER



R. 'Bluebird' by Garth Wedemire

President's View

by Dave Godfrey


After enjoying almost two weeks of summer-like weather, we are now back to our normal pattern of on and off showers. As the old saying goes... "April showers bring May flowers!" It is nice that these showers and rain are light, so they don't beat down all the colourful blooms.

May has once again been proclaimed as "Rhododendron Month" by Courtenay Mayor Bob Wells. This tradition was first recognized in 2007 by then Mayor Starr Winchester. In addition, the rhododendron 'Courtenay Lady' is recognized as the official plant of the City of Courtenay.

This beautiful rhododendron was hybridized in 2001 by horticulturist and local rhododendron specialist the late Harry Wright, who was also a founding member of the North Island Rhododendron Society in 1984.

'Courtenay Lady' is one of "The Courtenay Five" group of rhododendrons, which also includes 'Courtenay King', 'Courtenay Queen', 'Courtenay Duke' and 'Courtenay Princess'. They are the highlight of the BOVI bed (Born on Vancouver Island) found in the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden CVRG). 'Courtenay Lady' is located beside the special bench dedicated to Harry.

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF COURTENAY



PROCLAMATION


RHODODENDRON MONTH

WHEREAS *Rhododendrons enhance the beauty of our City in the spring; and*

WHEREAS *The City's partnership with the North Island Rhododendron Society at the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden provides additional beauty for our citizens and visitors; and*

WHEREAS *The official plant of the City of Courtenay is the "Courtenay Lady" Rhododendron;*

NOW THEREFORE *I, Bob Wells, Mayor of the City of Courtenay, hereby proclaim May 2021 as "Rhododendron Month" in the City of Courtenay.*



Mayor Bob Wells

Every spring the rhododendrons put on their peak of display during April, May and June, and are a treat to enjoy for all who visit the Airpark Walkway. Be sure to visit and take your camera.

Speaking of cameras, we are pleased to receive so many beautiful photographs from our members. The "What's Blooming" gallery on our website is growing larger and getting a lot of visits and accolades. If you have not been there recently, I invite you to take a few minutes to check it out. As many rhododendrons are starting to show their spectacular colours, I encourage you to take a few photos of your plants and their blooms to share with the rest of us. Please email them to me at my Shaw address found in the booklet.

Some of our propagation group members have been busy lately potting up the rhododendrons to larger sized pots. Wolfgang and Antje have been keeping an eye on our supply to ensure they are being watered on a regular basis during the warm spell and will be seeking helpers during the summer months.



R. impeditum by Garth Wedemire

Thanks to Lynn Wurz, we were given the first opportunity to purchase 200 one-gallon plants from Hidden Acres Nursery in Campbell River. Arrangements were made to transport these to the greenhouse at our propagating area. Thanks to Jill Gould & Dave Doubek, Pauline Thompson & Bob Eberle and Carolyn & Naomi Chester, Noni Godfrey, and Antje Guertler for their assistance with this task. As Wolfgang explained, these plants will be grown on to a saleable size for plant sales in a year or two.

As we are losing our Rhododendron propagating professionals on the Island, it is of greater urgency for District 1 chapters to propagate their own supply. It is also most important to concentrate on the current diversity of Rhodos in our own gardens and propagate the more exotic varieties that one cannot purchase in retail stores.

As suggested at the Presidents' meeting in March, the first step is to establish a database of those notable plants in our gardens, which are suitable to be propagated. Each chapter has been asked to establish a database of their gardens, and contribute to a District 1 database, which is to be established shortly. If there is a member interested and willing to begin this project, please contact me at your convenience.

In the meantime, we are approaching our Annual General Meeting on May 11th. This year we will conduct the meeting and hear reports via Zoom. Time is running out for any member interested in the positions of Secretary, Treasurer or two Directors. The incumbents (Carolyn Chester, Noni Godfrey, Antje Guertler and Aubrey Ferris) have indicated that they are willing to stand for another two-year term; however, this should not dissuade any members who might wish to join the executive team. Please let me know ASAP if you are interested.

In closing, I would like to share with you an updated version of Harry Wright's spectacular 'Courtenay Five'... Dave



Top Row: 'Courtenay King' 'Courtenay Queen'. Bottom Row 'Courtenay Princess' 'Courtenay Lady' 'Courtenay Duke'

For a more in-depth look at the 'Courtenay Five', here is a link to Harry Wright's original article (from Fall 2006) <https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/v60n4/v60n4-wright.htm>



'Blue Diamond' by Garth Wedemire

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the North Island Rhododendron Society will be held on Tuesday, May 11, 2021 at 7:30 PM using Zoom technology. All members are invited to attend.

Business to come before the meeting will include the Annual Financial Report, Reports from Committees, and the Election of Officers and Directors for 2021/22.

There are four 2-year board terms (Secretary, Treasurer and 2 Directors). Members wishing to put names forward for nomination are to contact President Dave Godfrey before Monday, May 10, 2021.

Following the business portion of the meeting, a video tour of Hidden Acres Gardens will be presented as a memorial tribute to Paul Wurz.

Executive Meeting: Tuesday, May 4, 2021 at 10 am on Zoom.



Top: 'Muncaster Mist', bottom: Sisyrinchium (Blue-eyed Grass) photos by Garth Wedemire



NIRS Members Only Plant Sale

by Judith Walker

As Dr. Bonnie Henry says “Be Kind”, so please think of all your fellow plant collectors, and pot up some treasures to share at the NIRS *Members Only* plant sale!

Saturday, May 29th from 10am-2pm, at the Chester’s home 2636 Parker Road, Courtenay.

There is still time to divide and pot up plants for the sale and remember to label each plant. If not in a pot, such as iris roots, bulbs etc. please put in plastic bags and label and include colour too if known!

Unusual and rare plants are always sought after by our enthusiastic membership. Other garden related items are welcome...perhaps a shovel that comes with an operator?

All plants and garden accessories can be delivered to Carolyn’s driveway Wednesday May 26 to Friday May 28th, so that the sales team can get items priced and organized before the sale. Please consider lending a folding table prior to the sale, if available.

All funds raised will help us continue with activities over the year. Thank you...and see you at the sale, cash, cheques or credit for payment.

Contact information will be taken at the gate, use of the hand sanitizer is requested and **masks must be worn at all times**. If the sale gets busy, we may need to limit the number of people that can enter the site at any one time. Current provincial Covid-19 restrictions will be in place.

See you at the sale!



Lucy wondering if mom would let her pot up some Chionodoxa for the sale... photo by Judith Walker

Comox Valley Rhodo Garden Report

By Maureen Denny

On April 15th we held another successful work party with six volunteers in attendance. Thank you to those who participated. Dan Ryan and Dave Godfrey put the large “May is Rhododendron Month” banner high up on the southside of the Old Train Building situated on Cliffe Ave. which can clearly be seen by all who are driving into Town.

On April 20th Dave Godfrey, Judy Walker and I met with Mike Kearns, Joy Chan and Tyler Johns from the Courtenay Public Works Department (the Parks Dept. now is under Public Works). At this meeting we discussed and reviewed the Management Plan and other ideas for the maintenance of the CVRG, and a number of ideas were agreed upon. We decided that we would meet every February to plan for the upcoming year, and possibly again in the fall to review how the Gardens did over the summer.

The City has offered to pay to replace the bed signs that were damaged last year by vandals. The cost of replacement is approximately \$250.00. We certainly appreciate this offer, as our club’s income is down due to cancellation of our major fundraising events.

The next Work Party will be held on May 13th at 10am. We will be spreading mulch on the BOVI garden bed, along with general cleanup and weeding. Two wheelbarrows will be needed. Bring your own tools and a bucket. Hopefully by then attendance numbers will not be restricted and this event can be open to all. I will send out a notice to advise everyone as the work party date approaches.

I have written a short article for The Record newspaper on “May is Rhododendron Month”, which I have requested the paper to print the first week of May, so look out for that!

The Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden is coming up to the most beautiful time of year, when all those flowers we have been waiting for will be out, so make sure a visit to The CVRG is in your plans!

‘Courtenay Lady’ is recognized as the official plant of the City of Courtenay

photo by Noni Godfrey

For a historical look at the BOVI bed (Born on Vancouver Island), click here for Diana Scott’s article

<https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/v62n4/v62n4-scott.htm>





As a follow-up to the advertised Comox Valley Nature’s “Tree of the Year” contest, here is a link with the 27 nominees. You may vote online for your favourite up until June 1st.

https://comoxvalleynaturalist.bc.ca/nominees-for-tree-of-the-year-2021/?fbclid=IwAR0P7FnxUC9KtM_K95k30G6-8Q-mGiterEDBaoXwzlhWeXEyo2i9gAfoao



'Courtenay Queen' photo by Dianna Scott



'Bobs Blue' by Garth Wedemire

No Fuss Tulip “Meadow”!

By Judith Walker

Are you tired of buying tulips each year and potting them up, only to find that the following year they are either different or gone entirely? Here is a brilliant way to have an incredible collection of tulips for cutting. Most tulips are “designed” to not be repeat bloomers (much better for sellers) but many tulips do better in the ground, in perfectly drained soil, with summer drought conditions- exactly what they would have in their native home.



Each year in the fall I take my potted-up old tulip bulbs - and plant the healthy bulbs in this tulip bed in the fenced vegetable garden - not organized in colour theory order, never watered, no feeding, a bit of mulch in the winter - next to total neglect!

My ‘Princess Irene’ have come back smaller than my originals, but are lovely. ‘Budlight’ which is rather tall for my windy area has become a delightful 10” little pointy yellow and green flower. ‘Mango Charm’ has more interesting splashy colours of peach and yellow than the first year, ‘Apricot Fox’ has never looked so healthy and ‘Ballerina’ is showing off more than it ever did in the confines of a pot. The mix of colours is wonderful and bouquets last for ages...or I just enjoy the sea of colour while I weed the broccoli!

So never throw out that odd tulip bulb that has survived in a soggy pot...make a tulip meadow!

Happy Gardening!

Pasque Flower

[reprinted from BC Council of Garden Clubs May 2021 newsletter]

Pasque flower is in full bloom in the Lower Mainland. This beautiful flower ranges from the Yukon and Northwest Territories, down through British Columbia, across the western tip of Ontario and is the floral emblem of Manitoba. The pasque flower typically grows in open areas such as prairies, slopes and rocky outcrops.

Pasque flower, (*Anemone* or sometimes *Pulsatilla patens* var. *multifida*), grows 30 centimetres tall and forms a rounded clump, which increases yearly. It is a well-behaved plant and it never gets out of hand. On the top of each stem is one flower with purple petals and yellow stamens.

Bees are attracted to the pasque flowers' abundant pollen in the early spring. The arrangement of the sepals, which reflects sunshine, make it a great spot for insects to warm up.

New growth typically starts as soon as the snow melts and flowers bloom soon after, hence its name pasque flower which refers to Easter or Passover. The centre of each flower is the female part of the plant. It has purple styles and is encircled by bright yellow stamens which is the male part of the plant that produces the pollen. These are surrounded by petal-like sepals, which can range from pale to deep purple, sometimes white. Once the flower is pollinated it becomes an attractive seed head that is covered in silky down.



Pasque Flower photo by Noni Godfrey

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Noni Godfrey 250-335-0717

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Newsletter Editor

Kathy Haigh 250-702-4311



Top: *R. augustinii* 'Marine'



'Blue Peter' Photos by Garth Wedemire.

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