

THE RHODOTELLER



Acer japonicum 'Aconitifolium' ('Dancing Peacock') by Garth Wedemire

President's View

by Dave Godfrey

From summer drought to winter rainstorms, it is as if someone has turned on a climate switch! By the time you read this, we will have suffered two 'Atmospheric Rivers' or 'Weather Bombs', as the weather office is now calling them.

The second of these storms happened to coincide with the ARS "Fall into Gardening" Western Regional Conference on October 23 – 24th. There was concern that a power outage might affect the continuation of some presentations. Thankfully, this did not happen and the conference went off without a hitch.

I hope those of you who signed up for the conference were able to enjoy the many interesting speakers that gave presentations on a variety of topics. I found them very educational and entertaining, with a sprinkling of occasional humour. There were over 650 participants registered from around the world. The majority were ARS members, with other garden club enthusiasts also joining this 'virtual' webinar.

The entire conference was recorded and is now available for viewing on the MARS website by those who wish to enjoy the presentations after the fact. To view these videos, click on

<https://marsrhodos.ca/2021-fall-into-gardening-conference/> The password is fall2021. You are encouraged to share the link with friends and fellow gardeners

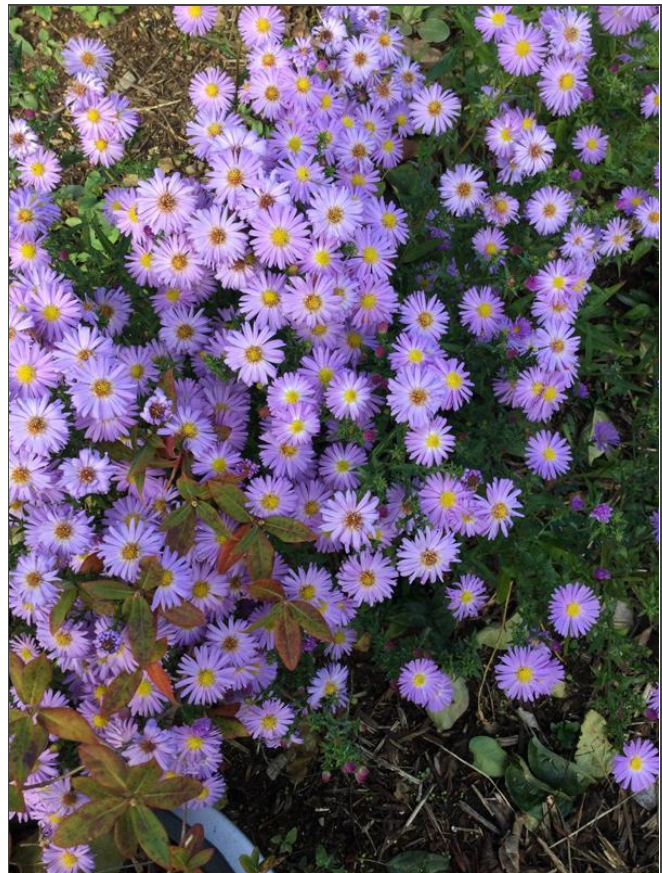
In his closing remarks, ARS President Bill Meyers, thanked the members of the MARS & Nanaimo chapters, including our own Garth Wedemire (Associate member of the Nanaimo Chapter), and the Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association who worked hard to bring the speakers together and prepare such a successful experience for all viewers. He also invited all ARS members to consider attending the ARS 75th Anniversary Convention scheduled for May 4 – 8, 2022 in Portland/Vancouver, WA. This conference was originally scheduled for 2020 but had to be postponed due to the pandemic. Here is a link to view the convention promo video: [ARS 2022 American Rhododendron Society Spring International Convention on YouTube](#). Something to look forward to next spring - if travel restrictions ease.

Covid restrictions continue to impact our meetings at a local level. We had hoped to have Harry Burton of Salt Spring Island as our guest speaker this month. However, we have since found out that he is not vaccinated and will not be vaccinated in time. Therefore, we have had a last-minute change of speakers. Under the current BC Health and Comox United Church guidelines, we are no longer limited to 50 persons. Proof of full vaccination and wearing of masks are still required, but it is no longer necessary to advise in advance on your plans to attend. Please come to enjoy the meeting and bring a guest if you'd like.

At the October executive meeting, we discussed the prospects of holding our December Christmas party this year now that restrictions are easing. The BC Health authorities won't allow for the typical potluck dinner, as buffets are not allowed. Instead, we will host an afternoon social gathering beginning at 2 PM with games, goodies, and drinks (cider/tea/coffee). Unfortunately, we won't be able to have the 'Jeopardy' trivia game, as in the past, because of the close contact of the teams discussing answers. However, we will have a few games and prizes. This format was confirmed at the General meeting by a show of hands by most of the 27 members in attendance.

As we have done for many years, our club members will help sponsor a family in need with our annual Christmas Hamper project. Diane Van Oostdam has agreed to organize the hamper project once again - details are in this newsletter.

In the meantime, please continue to stay safe and enjoy the many benefits of belonging to the NIRS.



Fall Aster photo by Connie Prain

Fall Colour Album for 2021 on the NIRS Website

By Garth Wedemire

It's Autumn now. The warm and vibrant garden colours of spring and summer are in our rearview mirror. But do not fear – brilliant fall hues are at hand to enchant and delight us. Rhododendron lovers are known for their ability to imagine beyond the stunning blooms of spring and consider the hidden potential within each plant – whatever its genus - for dazzling colour in the colder months of the year. Is it just me, or have you also noticed that nature's display garden is particularly eye-catching this Fall?



Photos above are in our **Fall Colour 2021 Album** (listed from left to right): *Pinus strobus* (Eastern White Pine), *R. 'Bubblegum'*, "Ash Tree in My Backyard" (photo by Julie Waller), *Hamamelis 'Jelena'*, Park border near The Wandering Moose Café in Cumberland, and *Ginkgo biloba* (photo by Bette Hopwood)



Generous sharing of photos from our club members has meant that we have been able to create a "**Fall Colour Album**" on our website, featuring plants growing in the Comox Valley and the Campbell River area. You'll want to have a look. I suspect we'll all see a few new plants on our list of "**must-have**" autumn beauties for next year.

There are currently three galleries in the Album ('September,' 'Early October' and 'Late October') with over 170 photographs submitted by thirteen of our members. Our plan is to keep adding photographs to the Album as long as folks keep contributing. Contact Dave Godfrey or Garth Wedemire for assistance with the process of submitting your photographs.

On the left are samples of two plants which are frequently found in gardens of our members and in most gardens throughout our North Island communities. The yellow-leaved plant is from Campbell River and is a Witch Hazel named 'Diane' (photo by Jean Looy). The photograph below it shows a *Hydrangea* growing in the Union Bay area (photo by Dave Godfrey), with flowers that become more remarkable as Fall progresses. We'll be adding hydrangeas like this to our garden next year!

In the Courtenay, Comox, Cumberland area the following trees produce amazing colour each Autumn: Acer (Japanese and Sugar Maple), Aspen, Dogwood, Gingko, Katsura, Red Oak, Serviceberry, Smoke bush, Stewartia, Sumac, Sweetgum, Tulip tree and Tupelo. Not to be outdone, the following shrubs display their Fall Colours: Azaleas (Deciduous and Evergreen), Beautyberry, Burning Bush, Heavenly Bamboo, Fothergilla, Hydrangea, Itea, Ninebark, Viburnum and Witch Hazel. Want to know more? Google “fall colour” – attach the name of one of these plants, then search under images – you’ll be delighted with the results.

Photographs of backlit subjects (top-right: *Disanthus cercidiphyllum*) and close-ups of fruit, seed pods and spent flowers (bottom-right: *Sorbus* ‘Cardinal Red’) make great pictures.



Fall Colours - Cumberland photo by Garth Wedemire

November 9th Program: Christine Southwick

“Gardening with Rhododendrons”



Chris Southwick had the good fortune to be born into a family that loves the outdoors, gardening, and rhododendrons in particular. Her grandparents were Ted and Mary Greig, who were pioneering rhododendron and alpine plant enthusiasts on Vancouver Island. They passed on an appreciation for plants to their son Jim and their daughter-in-law Jean, Chris' parents.

Chris has been gardening all her adult life. When she moved to Nanaimo in 1992, she purchased a property just off Hammond Bay Road and began gardening with rhododendrons in earnest at that time having purchased some lovely Rhodos with that property.

Joining the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society in 1994, Chris became involved with the chapter and served as program chair, treasurer, vice-president, president, and board member for most of the years since joining the Society. She has co-chaired the annual Show and Sale, judged shows for other Vancouver Island clubs, and was co-chair of the 2012 Fall ARS Regional Conference. She was honoured with the NRS Bronze medal in 2008. As a rhododendron species proponent, Chris currently serves on a committee that helped create the Greig Rhododendron Species Garden at Milner Gardens and Woodland in beautiful Qualicum Beach.

Chris retired from a career in Education and when she retired, Chris was the Assistant Superintendent for the Nanaimo School District. She became a certified Master Gardener to carry on learning about plants and giving back to the gardening community. She is currently the Vice-President of the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society and Past President of the Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association. She is also on the Board of Milner Garden and Woodland and the Rhododendron Species Foundation.



Chris built a new home in 2008 on just over half an acre. She enjoys sharing her garden of several hundred rhododendrons, including many dwarf species Rhodos, many native flowering plants, ferns, Japanese maples, dogwoods, primulas and vegetables.

This presentation on “Gardening with Rhododendrons” will be presented at 7:30 PM on Nov. 9th. Christine's program will cover: Basic information about the genus rhododendron, suggestions for growing rhododendrons successfully and how they can be used in gardens, suggestions for purchasing rhododendrons and frequently asked questions.

Fall Colours photo by Sue Grant

Ways & Means

by Aubrey Ferris

Christmas Book Sale: Our books and printed material will be sold at a discount for our members at the November and December meetings.

- The *Greer's Guidebook To Available Rhododendrons* that is normally \$26 has been reduced over 25 % to \$19 (Amazon price is \$39.00).
- *The Public Gardens of Vancouver Island* is reduced 25% to \$15.
- And our 2 booklets of *Rhododendron Fundamentals* are sold together at 50% off at \$3.

Raffle plants at the Nov 9 meeting: Special thanks to Sue and Garth for the donation of plants 4, 5 & door prize. Please note that the raffle has changed so you can now deposit your tickets in the ticket jar of the plants you want to win. You get to pick the plant to draw for!



1. Morgenroth:

Dark red buds open to a lighter red then fade to rose color, leaves are dark green. Plant is rounded and compact. Bloom time is midseason. Grows 4 feet in 10 years. Hardy to -21° C.



2. klusimanum: (pronunciation: ki-U-see-Ah-num)

One of the best of the native Japanese azalea series. Evergreen, semi-evergreen to deciduous shrub, low, dense, twiggy, often prostrate, 2 ft (0.6 m) in 10 years, may reach 3 ft (0.9 m) high. Flowers typically are shades of purple but may be red, pink or rarely white. Not sure what colour this would be.



3. R. thomsonii (thomp-son- i)

The predominant colour is deep red. Lax truss holds 3 to 12 flowers. Blooms early midseason. Grows to 5 feet in 10 years. Hardy to -15° C. Does best if planted in a location protected from the afternoon sun and late frosts. *Attractive peeling red bark and impressive calyxes.*



4. Mildred Amateis

4-5 truss
 Broadly funnel shape
 1.0m in 10 years
 White flowers are softly flushed pink and fragrant
 Grown from cutting from our "Airpark" garden



5. Silver Skies: (is in a large pot)

Predominate pink flower
 Hardy to -21° C
 Bloom time is early midseason
 Estimated height 2 feet in 10 years



Door prize: rex ssp. fictolacteam

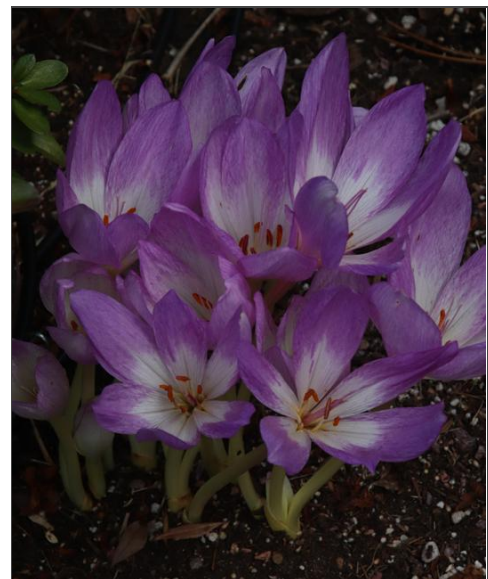
Upright growing tree-like shrub with quite large leaves.
 Leaves up to 12" long, rust brown to dark brown indumentum.
 Colour ranges from cream to white or white tinged pink.
 Hardy to -20° C
 Height 5-6 feet in 10 years

Meetings

Nov 2, 2021 Executive Meeting 10:00 am at Comox United Church

Nov 9, 2021 General Meeting 7:30 pm at Comox United Church. *Reminder that the following people signed-up to bring goodies: Patty Matthews, Janet Campell, Arnie Sollberger, Maureen Denny, Bette Hopwood, Joanne Williams.*

Crocus 'The Giant' photo by Garth Wedemire



Remembering Our Roots

by Dave Godfrey

As November is Remembrance month, I began thinking about where our organization started and where we have come to this point in time. In researching some history of the American Rhododendron Society (ARS) and particularly ARS District 1 here in British Columbia, it occurred to me that many of our members, especially the newer ones, might not know where it all started and others may have forgotten.

To quote from the ARS website... As early as 1931 Guy Nearing wrote to Joe Gable: "*We really need a rhododendron society in this country.*" World War II helped bring the ARS into the world, because it interrupted most British rhododendron activities, on which the founders of the ARS were quite dependent. In September 1940, Guy complained to Joe Gable that his letter to the British Rhododendron Association took so long to get there that the seeds he had hoped to purchase were all sold and the yearbook no longer available: "*Under the circumstances, it might be worthwhile to launch an American Rhododendron Association and try to keep up the interest until the British one resumes.*"

Many other American plant enthusiasts became involved, and a meeting was arranged. In September of 1944 about forty persons attended the first meeting in the auditorium of the Public Service Building in Portland, OR. On January 9, 1945, the articles of incorporation of the American Rhododendron Society were signed and the name 'The American Rhododendron Society' was adopted, with a purpose to encourage interest in and to disseminate information about the genus Rhododendron.

As interest grew in the Society, various chapters were formed and the first in Canada was the Vancouver Chapter which began in 1955. It wasn't until 1980 that the Victoria Chapter became the second chapter in BC and the first on Vancouver Island. Before this time, ARS memberships were increasing around the Province, and all were members through the Vancouver Chapter. Harry Wright of Comox, Ken Gibson of Tofino, and Garth Wedemire of Maple Ridge were among some of the early District 1 ARS members.

In February 1984, several individuals from around the Comox Valley, including Pauline Bonney, Gary Green, Heather van Essen, Bruce Helander, Madeline & Len Simmons, and Judy Walker, met at Gwen & Harry Wright's home in Comox and made the decision to form their own ARS chapter. Under Harry's leadership, letters were written and commitments were made. Finally, the North Island Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society was accepted and received its charter at the 4th Annual Western Regional ARS Conference in Richmond, BC on October 20, 1984.



During the early years, monthly meetings were held at the Filberg Lodge in Comox. Activities included garage sales, truss shows at Driftwood Mall, bus tours, summer barbeques and garden tours, with some becoming major fund raisers for the chapter. In March 1991, attendance at the meetings became too large for the Filberg Lodge and the decision was made to move to the Comox United Church Hall, where we still meet today. *[continued next page]*

By the late 1980's the Fraser Valley Chapter, Cowichan Valley Chapter and Fraser South Chapter were all formed as the interest and membership numbers continued to grow. By 1989, there were many NIRS members travelling to meetings from the Qualicum/Parksville/Port Alberni areas. So, under the leadership of NIRS members Everett and Pat Jefferson and an NIRS start-up donation of \$500, the Mount Arrowsmith Chapter was formed in 1990. Then in 1993, members of the MARS chapter formed the offspring Nanaimo Chapter. This was the same year that the Peace Arch Chapter formed on the mainland. At that time, District 1 had a total of 9 chapters.

Unfortunately, by 2011 both the Fraser Valley Chapter with members north of the Fraser River (Maple Ridge/Mission/Pitt Meadows) and the Peace Arch Chapter with members from the White Rock/South Surrey area dissolved. The opening of the Golden Ears Bridge allowed members from the Fraser Valley Chapter to attend meetings of the Fraser South Chapter in the Langley/Abbotsford area. Improvements to roads and highways in South Surrey also made it possible for the Peace Arch Chapter to combine membership with the Fraser South Chapter.

There are currently seven chapters in District 1 with five on Vancouver Island. Because of the vast urban area of the Vancouver Chapter and the long commute times for members, the Chapter is working hard to survive. It would be unfortunate to lose this chapter, as it was through them that the other chapters of District 1 began.

Throughout the years since our club was formed, there have been more than 230 ARS memberships registered in the North Island Chapter. We currently have 82 memberships - 2 "Honorary Lifetime" members (Gwen Wright and Bernie & Gloria Guyader), 74 "Regular" members and 6 "Associate" members from other chapters. The majority of our North Island members have been very supportive of the chapter and club activities throughout the current pandemic. It is our hope that our members will renew their memberships to continue supporting the legacy of the North Island Chapter, which began with the forming of "**Our Roots**" some 37 years ago.



*Lace Leaf Maple
photo by Dan
Ryan*

Nine Stage of Rhodoholism

As presented by David Sellars

“From Rhododendrons to Rock Gardens” presentation at the Virtual ARS Fall Conference

1. Sees flowers at Big Box store
 2. Starts collecting hybrids
 3. Joins rhodo society
 4. Starts collecting species
 5. Becomes obsessed with foliage
 6. Buys bigger property
 7. Starts growing species from seed
 8. Makes expeditions to China
 9. Shaves head and becomes a Buddust monk
- (However, David explained that his experience was different for the last two)
8. Rhododendrons grow large and fill the garden
 9. Starts removing hybrids and makes space for other plants

Japanese Anemone photo by Antje Guertler



Cornus 'Cherokee Sunset' photo by Naomi Chester



Christmas Hamper Program

by Diane Van Oostdam

Christmas Greetings. Once again it's time for the NIRS Christmas Hamper. Many of our members choose to participate in this optional club initiative.

Please bring either a non-perishable item to our November or December meetings, or a cash or cheque donation in any amount. You can also drop this off at my house (1740 Linden Ave., Comox); e-transfers to dianeivano@yahoo.ca will also be an acceptable donation. If you have any questions please call Diane Van Oostdam 250-650-0437.

We hope to sponsor a family of four and we'll get their details on November 15. My committee will purchase gifts and/or gift cards for each of the children. The list below is the basic list for the hamper; we are able to add extra items if so desired.

SUGAR (2 KG.)	CANNED SALMON OR TUNA
FLOUR (2 KG.)	JAM OR HONEY
COFFEE (300 GRAMS)	PEANUT BUTTER
TEA (SMALL PACKAGE)	SPAGHETTI
JUICE (TETRA PACK)	SPAGHETTI SAUCE
SOUP (ASSORTMENT)	SNACK TREATS
CANNED VEGETABLES	RICE
STUFFING MIX	CRANBERRY SAUCE
COOKIES	HYGIENE ITEMS - TOOTHPASTE, HANDSOAP, SHAMPOO
CRACKERS	CEREAL
PAPER PRODUCTS (NAPKINS, TOILET PAPER, PAPER TOWELS)	

Thank you for your continued generosity!



Nandia 'Gulf Stream' photo by Diana Scott

Comox Valley Rhodo Garden Report by Maureen Denny

The last Work Party at the Comox Valley Rhodo Garden was held on October 14. A sincere thanks to everyone who participated throughout the season to keep this beautiful garden looking good. We always receive so many positive comments from the public as we are working, and even some questions about Rhododendron care. The “Heat Dome” this summer was challenging for all gardens, and some of the Rhodos at the CVRG did suffer with leaf burn. Watering was also a challenge, but this issue was taken care of by the City of Courtenay’s garden crew with added irrigation lines and increasing the flow and frequency of the watering schedule. A special thanks to Tyler Johns, our liaison with the City who always responds to my concerns and questions about the gardens in such a timely and enthusiastic way. Thanks to all who donated goodies for our social time after the work was done.

Work parties will resume next March. Wishing everyone a safe and healthy winter.



Hesperantha coccinea 'Major' photo by Naomi Chester

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