

THE RHODOTELLER



Theme: "April Flowers" 'Rim Fire' photo by Antje Guertler

President's View

by Dave Godfrey

As the saying goes... "April showers bring May flowers!" But this year the showers were frequent, and sometimes heavy, which damaged some of the early flowers and rhododendron blooms. We are always grateful for the periods of sunshine we receive, but even on those days the temperatures remained cool. Officially we have been 5 to 10 degrees cooler than normal for this time of year.

April was an extra busy month this year in comparison to the last few years. The 'members only' Rhododendron sale hosted by our propagation group on Sunday, April 10th was a great success - thanks to all who decided to add another rhodo (or two or three) to their garden.

On April 20th, we held our monthly general meeting where we hosted Lionel de Rothschild of Exbury, UK. It was nice to see so many members and guests in attendance for his delightful presentation. Our thanks go to Judi Murakami for arranging his visit and to Adrianne & Rob McNabb for providing accommodations during his stay here in the Comox Valley.

No sooner had we used the KFN hall for Lionel's presentation, than we were back in the hall for our annual Rhodo Sale & Show... the first public sale in three years! Thanks to Nadine Boudreau for her organizational skills and her many volunteer members who helped stage the event, the sale was a tremendous success.



Lionel de Rothschild with Dave and Noni Godfrey in the Smith's garden. April 20 photo by Kathy Haigh

It was nice to see a dozen NIRS members attend the special open garden event at Milner Gardens & Woodland in Qualicum on Tuesday, April 26th. Despite a downpour around 1 o'clock, it soon eased enough to tour the garden and visit with the many other members from

the Vancouver Island chapters. It was wonderful to see how much the Greig Species Garden has grown in the four years since it was officially opened.

Carolyn Chester and Robert Argall were kind enough to open their gardens for the members of the Mount Arrowsmith and Nanaimo chapter to tour on Thursday, April 28th. Robert had opened his garden for our members to tour earlier in the month. If any other members would like to open their gardens for a 'Members Tour' please let me know the date and times so that we can advise the other NIRS members.

Garth Wedemire has been posting a "What's in Bloom?" gallery on our website. There are several member albums already available and we would love to feature some of yours. Please send any photos of your garden in bloom to either me or Garth and we will be sure to include them for others to enjoy.

That is all I have for now, except to remind you that we will be holding our AGM and Elections at 7:30 PM on Tuesday, May 10th at the McNabb's garden in Royston. Adrienne will welcome those who wish to arrive early (6:30-ish) for a tour around their gorgeous garden. Although she has many garden chairs, I would suggest you bring your own folding lawn chair along. As with our other meetings, there will be a door prize draw and refreshments available.

Take care for now, enjoy your garden and see you at the meeting!

'Silver Skies' photo by Garth Wedemire



Meetings & Events

May 3 Executive Meeting 10:00 am @ Comox United Church

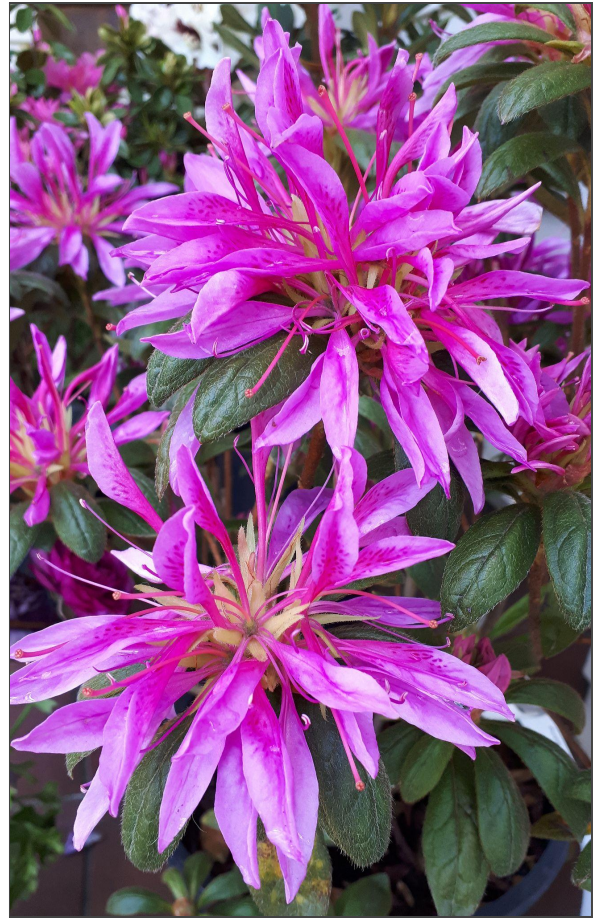
May 10 AGM @ McNabb's Garden in Royston 7:30 pm

May 12 CVRG Work Party 10 am

June 25 Summer Picnic @ Chester's Garden 4:00 pm

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.



*'Purple Dragon' Azalea (above)
'Sappho' x 'Tweedy bird' photos by Naomi Chester*

Treats and Coffee at Meetings

by Antje Guertler

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 AGM May meeting at Adrienne's house: Arnie Sollberger, Connie Prain, Dorothy Law, Maureen Denny, Antje Guertler.

In the Community

by Kathy Haigh

Project Watershed has recently reached a milestone in the Kus-Kus-Sum project along the Courtenay River. After years of planning and fundraising, and months of removing concrete, asphalt and utilities, a variety of native species trees and shrubs were planted near the 17 Street Bridge in April. This year will see many more physical changes to the former sawmill site as it will be graded to a natural river slope and replanted. Fundraising continues so this project may be completed sooner rather than later.

The current fundraising event is called ["Paintings by the Numbers"](#) and features 50 paintings donated by Ken Kirkby and Nana Cook. Each one is worth between \$1500 and \$4000. A \$500 ticket will guarantee that you receive one of the paintings, based on a fun art draw event on May 14th at 40 Knots Winery. But if you'd like to spend just \$20 on a raffle you may win a \$500 entry ticket - and there will be 3 of these draws on May 5th. [project watershed raffle](#).



'Seaview Sunset' photo by Antje Guertler

(above)

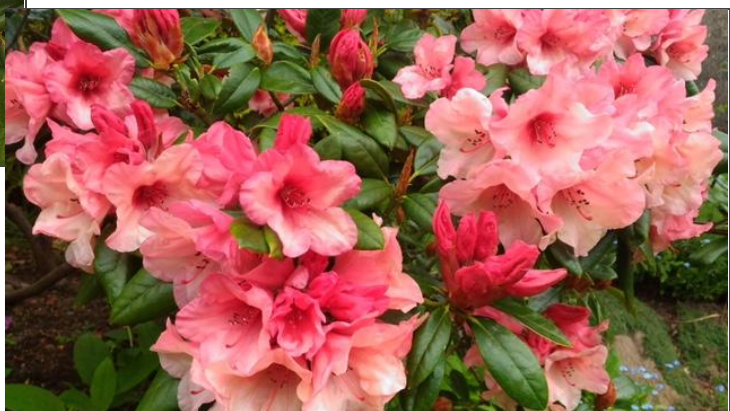
Comox Valley Nature

The list of 36 trees nominated for CVN Tree of the Year 2022 is now online <https://comoxvalleynaturalist.bc.ca/> as well as our cycle routes to Tour the Trees - please vote for your favourite.

It turns out that there are 9 trees nominated in Courtenay, 16 in Comox, 3 in Fanny Bay and 6 in the area north of Courtenay and Merville. Eleven are Garry oaks. All the stories are so compelling. Have a look and see which one and its story speaks to you.

Ways and Means

Elby is the door prize for the AGM in May. (photo below)



NIRS Rhododendron Sale & Show

by Nadine Boudreau

Key volunteers

(L to R)

Connie Prain,
Judi Murakami,
Naomi Chester,
Nadine Boudreau,
Judy Walker,
Antje Guertler,
Aubrey Ferris,
Noni & Dave
Godfrey.

Photo by

Kathy Haigh



Thanks to all the volunteers that helped at the sale this year! The participation of members is what makes the sale a success! The propagation Rhododendrons have continued to be a large part of our revenues. Final sales tallies will be announced at the AGM. We had a beautiful truss display with Naselle winning the People's Choice. The NIRS table was filled with donated plants that were quickly bought up. The winner of the Free Draw Rhododendron was Lora Stockland from Cumberland; her Mom had been a member of this group several years ago so she was so happy to win this Rhododendron called 'Yaku Prince.' The raffle draw winners for Margaret Ryan's quilted wall hangings were Kathy Haigh and Joanna Tancon of Campbell River.



'People's
Choice Award'
winner was
'Naselle',

2nd place was
a tie with
'Mood Indigo
'and 'Jim's
Blueberry
Jam'.

Photo by Noni
Godfrey

CVRG “The Rhodo Garden”

By Maureen Denny

It is amazing what a small group of determined and hard-working senior gardeners can accomplish in only one hour. At last month's work party we wheelbarrowed and spread about five yards of mulch onto the bed on the south side of the garden. Tyler Johns from the Courtenay garden crew also helped, just when we were all getting a little worn out. Thanks to all club members who participated. Then we gathered for well-deserved coffee and snacks.

Don't forget that May is officially declared as “Rhododendron Month” by the City of Courtenay. Courtenay Lady, hybridized by one of our founding members, Harry Wright, is The Official Flower of Courtenay and is planted in the BOVI Bed, (Born on Vancouver Island), at the CVRG.

Next month's work party will be held on May 12 at 10 am. A few wheelbarrows and goodies are appreciated.



'Courtenay Lady' photo by Harry Wright



Membership

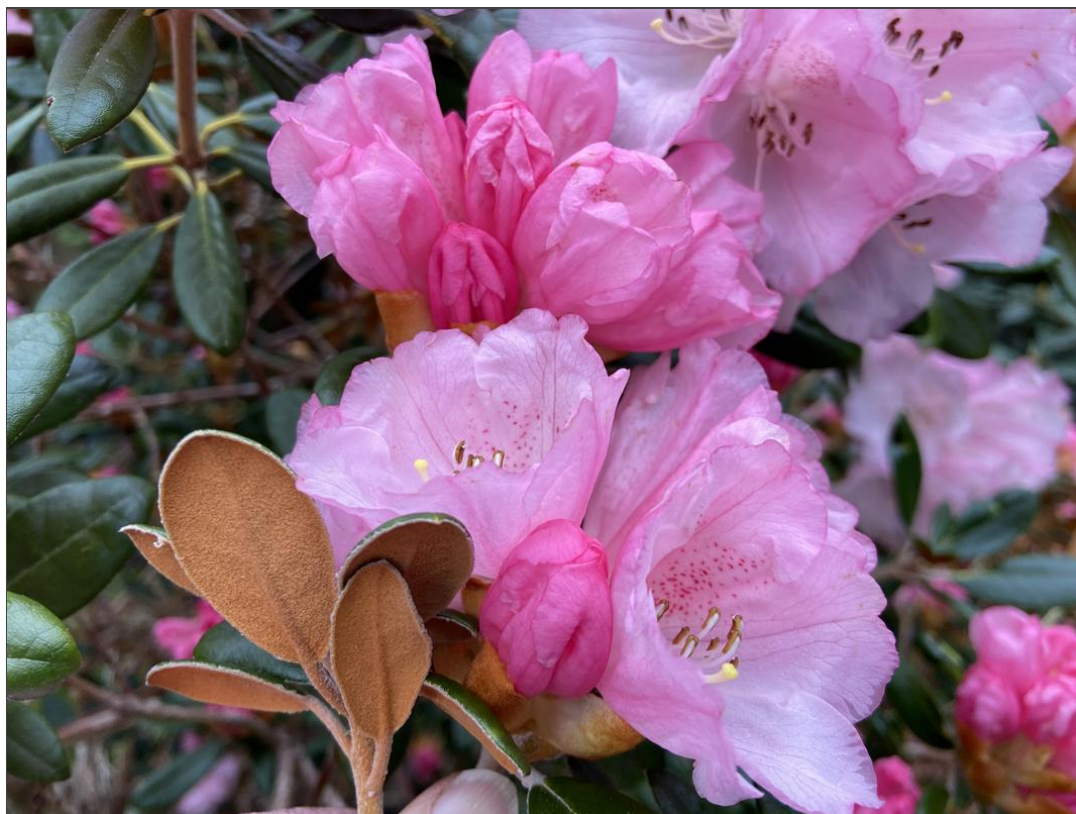
by Dan Ryan

The special April Meeting at the K'omoks First Nation hall was attended by 44 members and 17 guests. We currently have 73 members, including 5 associates.

There will be a motion at the AGM for the membership fee to increase from \$35 to \$40 beginning in 2023 to help cover the exchange rates for ARS membership.

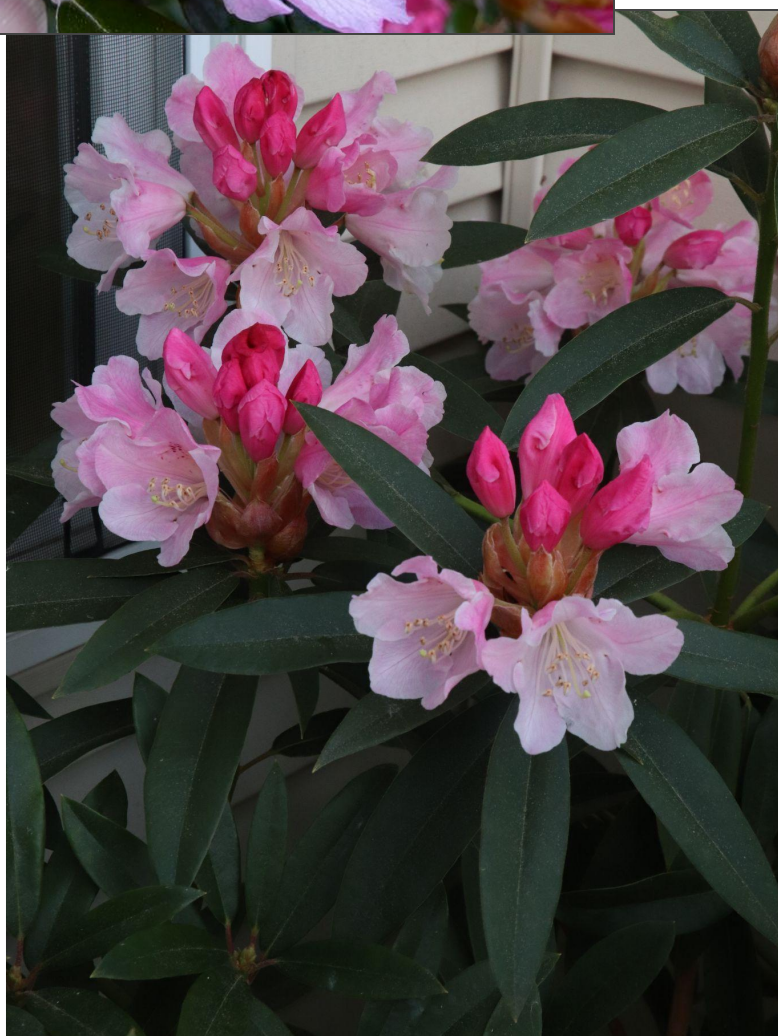
Bulb display at Robert Argall's garden, April.

Photo by Kathy Haigh



Unknown rhododendron - photo by Jean Looy

R. morii - photo by Garth Wedemire



Member Profile

by Kathy Haigh

Maureen Denny was raised in the village of Kleinburg, ON, north of Toronto. Her love of gardening and the outdoors came from her parents and their rural lifestyle. Maureen's family always had vegetable and flower gardens (which she helped with) along with copious trees that her father planted (which she played in with her siblings and friends). The Humber River flowed near their property, so that featured prominently in her outdoor adventures year-round.

As a testament to her true Canadian roots, Maureen's family were neighbours and friends with Pierre Berton's family. Their daughter Patsy was best friends with Maureen and her twin sister, Tish, and they were always together. Maureen and Tish are featured in Mr. Berton's children's book, [The Secret World of Og](#), as the "terrible twins."

Maureen was awarded the "Ontario Scholar" certificate while attending high school in Kleinburg and enjoyed art lessons in addition to outdoor pursuits. She dreamed of studying gardening in England, however, she attended the University of Toronto for a year following high school instead.

Maureen met Preston in Toronto during a yoga class (yoga was a new phenomenon in Canada in the early 1970's). At the age of twenty, Maureen moved from Ontario to Vancouver, and a few years later she married Preston and they lived in Victoria for a while, then on to the lower mainland. Her constant desire to learn more about plants led her to take the Master Gardener Program at Van Dusen Botanical Garden, and Maureen worked in a garden centre in south Surrey for five years.

In 1996 Maureen and Preston moved to Comox, and they live in the same house to this day. Along the way, they had two daughters: one lives in Comox now, and one in Port McNeil. Plus, two grandchildren are now part of her life: a 20-year-old girl studying art in Vancouver, and a 13-year-old boy in Port McNeil.

Maureen's interest in gardening continued and she worked at Anderton Nursery for ten years, becoming their manager of trees and shrubs. While working there she took a Garden Design program at NIC. Later, Maureen started gardening for a few people - both consulting for newcomers to the region (mostly Albertans, ahem) and getting her hands dirty helping folks maintain their established gardens. Maureen finds it very satisfying to help people with their yards and gardens; over the years her favourite client was NIRS's Fran Thornton. These days she works "about nine hours a week"



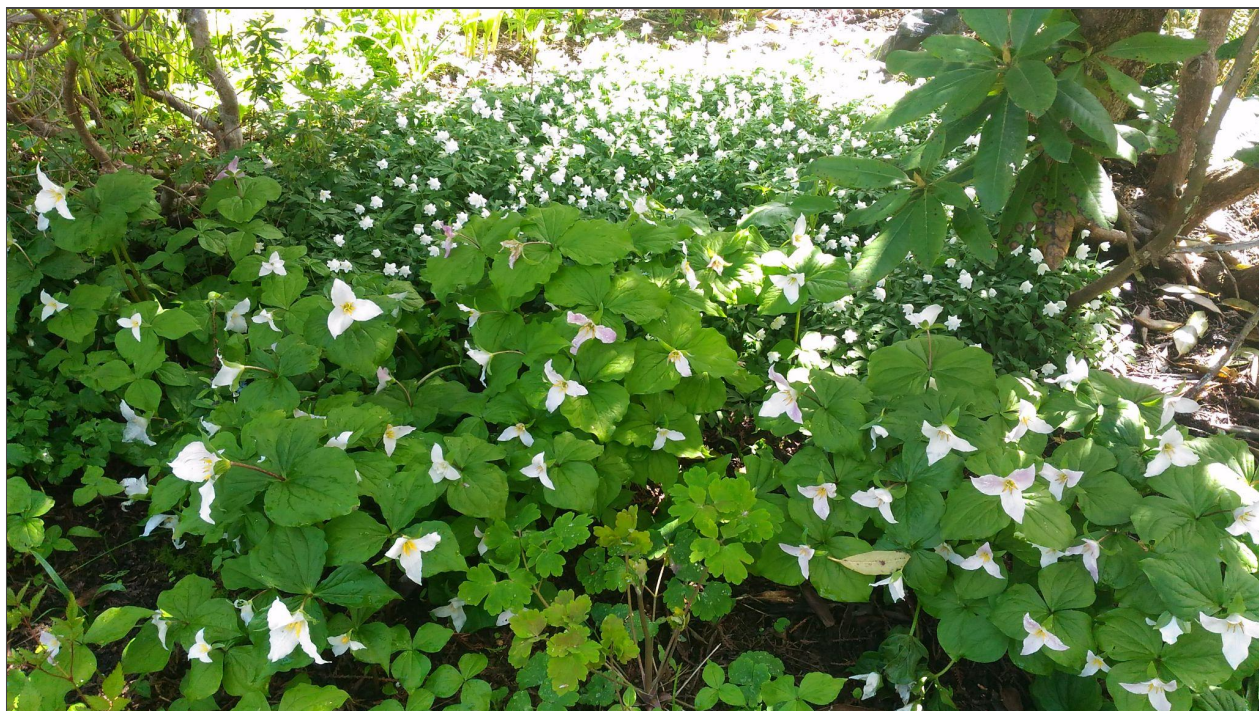
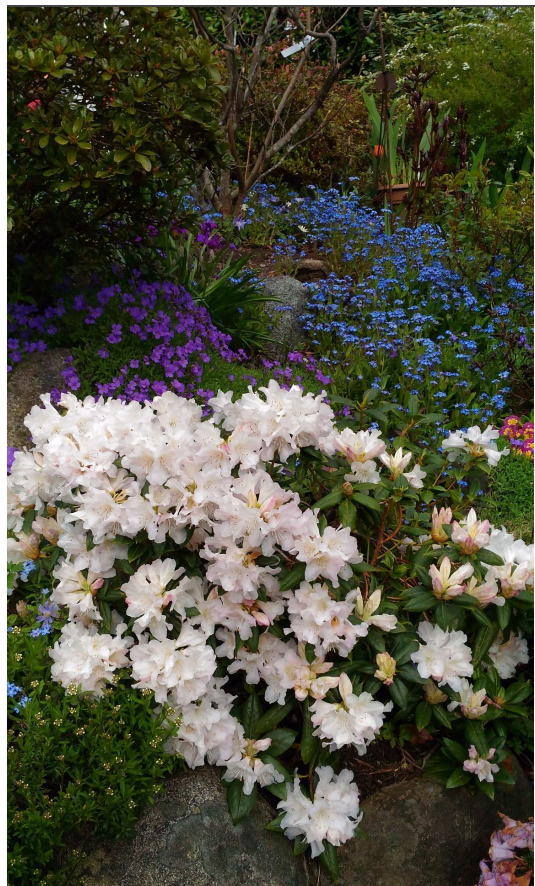
for others. That is in addition to looking after her own property and volunteering with NIRS.

Maureen loves “the rhodo club” with all the great people involved. She has been looking after the CV Rhodo Garden for four years now, did publicity, social committee, propagation group and has been a general helper as needed at sales and such. She is currently on the executive board as Past President, after serving two years as President, and two years before that as Vice President. In 2021 she received the ARS Bronze medal for her commitment to NIRS activities.

Maureen describes her own yard as a “collector’s garden with a strong design element.” She loves all the hostas in her shady backyard, along with peonies, various perennials and 40+ rhodos and azaleas. Like many of us, she has been battling deer in her front yard but has developed a garden that they no longer eat.

The simple life still calls to her. Maureen keeps fit with yoga stretches, gardening and walking her small dog. So while she never realized her dream of studying gardening in England, she lived a fulfilling life of studying and practicing gardening closer to home. The classic quiet, polite, understated, hard-working Canadian!

Photos by Antje Guertler (top) 'Dora Amateus', (below) Trillium



The Greig Rhodo Species Garden Tour

By Jill Gould

An invitation was issued to all District 1 members of the American Rhododendron Society to have a special tour of the Greig Rhododendron Species Garden at Milner Gardens and Woodland on April 26. About a dozen members of the North Island Rhododendron Society travelled to Qualicum to join members from other chapters. The garden looked fantastic, considering that it has only been in existence for five years or so. Despite the cool spring, many rhododendrons were in bloom; the weather took pity on us and it stopped raining. There was also a spectacular show of Trilliums.

Geoff Ball, Executive Director of Milner Gardens and Woodland, welcomed us and noted how far we have come in the last few years, starting this garden from scratch. Personally, I remember the newly-logged and roughly mulched section of ground with spindly little species rhododendrons poking up, and on the other hand, volunteers struggling to manoeuvre gigantic rhododendrons on tarps! The rewards are now apparent.

Dr. Douglas Justice, Associate Director of Collections at the UBC Botanical Garden, paid tribute to the late Ted and Mary Greig (Royston Nursery) whose plants are grown all over Vancouver Island and the UBC Botanical Garden. Doug said, "We should celebrate the pioneers of Rhododendron growing." He observed that there are some really good hybrids from the past which are no longer commercially available, but which deserve to be propagated for distribution. This is a future project: not at the Species Garden, of course, but perhaps nearby. Plans are being made.

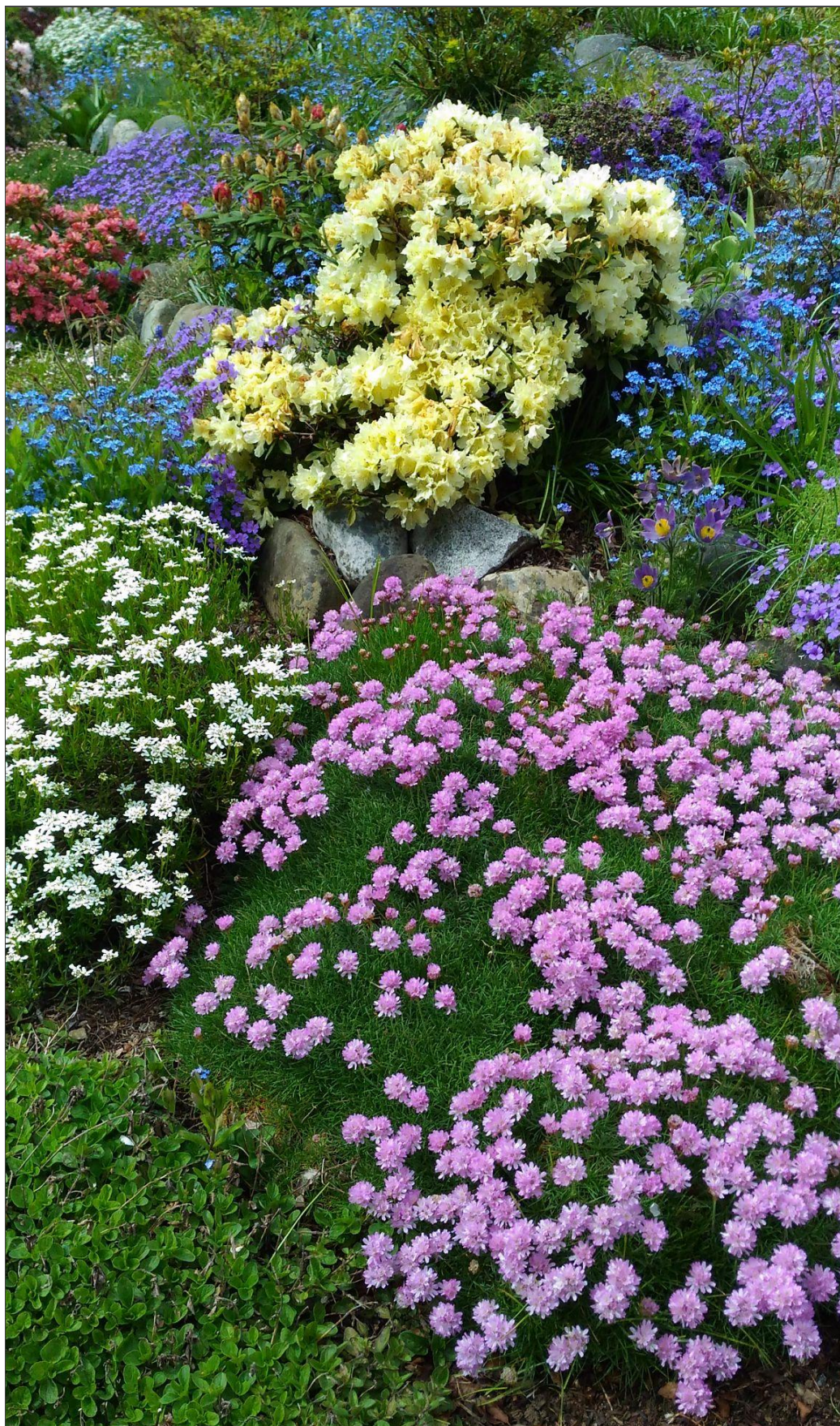
Glen Jamieson, ARS Journal Editor and District 1 Director said that it was important to work on the conservation of species: the Greig Species Garden is working alongside the UBC Botanical Garden. He suggested that a record of species and valuable hybrids on Vancouver Island could start with the help of clubs compiling a list of where certain species or hybrids are being grown in their areas of Vancouver Island.

Dr. Douglas Justice, of the UBC Botanical Garden, was awarded the American Rhododendron Society's Silver Medal. Doug is the son of the late Clive Justice, who was himself awarded the ARS Gold Medal.

Chris Southwick from the Nanaimo Chapter was also awarded the American Rhododendron Society's Silver Medal. Chris is the granddaughter of Ted and Mary Greig of Royston Nursery, and a person who has given longstanding service to District I and the ARS.



For those of you who have not had a chance to see the Species Garden, I recommend taking the short drive to Qualicum. Bring your NIRS membership card. The Greig Rhododendron Species Garden is destined to be a valuable asset in Rhododendron preservation, and it belongs to us. We are fortunate.



'Patty Bee' Photo by Antje Guertler

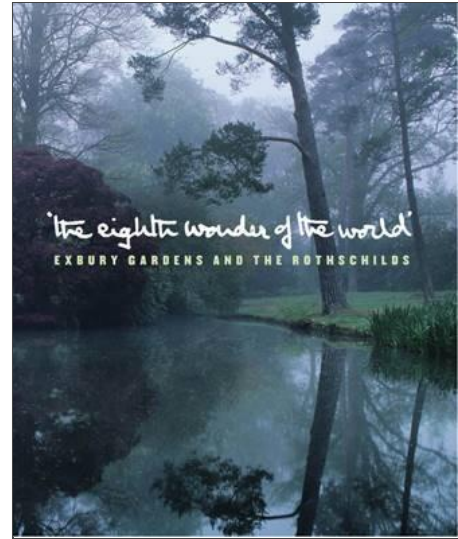
“The Eighth Wonder of the World: Exbury Gardens and the Rothschilds”

By Lionel de Rothschild and Francesca Murray Rowlinson

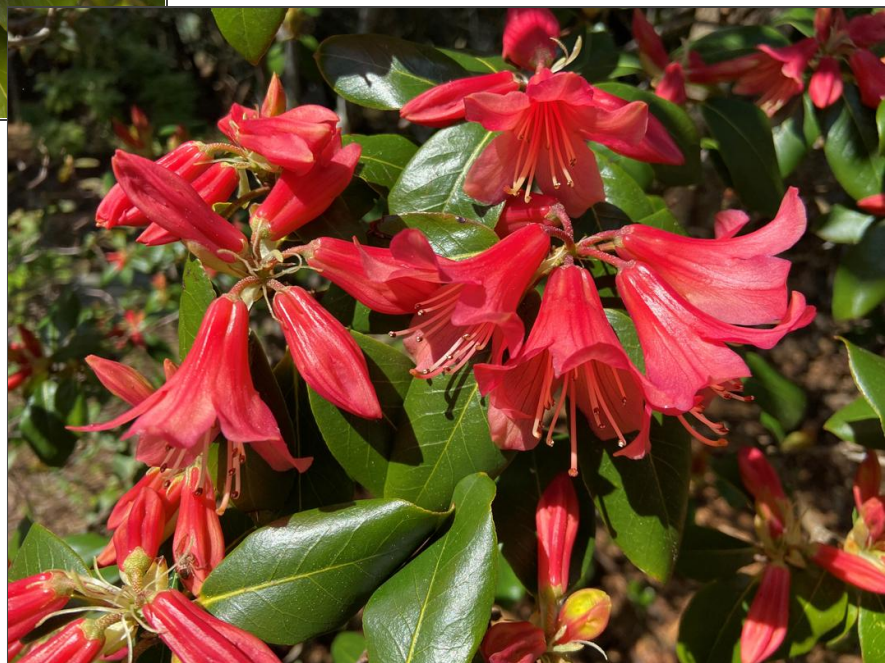
The history of Hampshire’s renowned Exbury Gardens and the extraordinary achievement of Lionel de Rothschild in creating them.

This book celebrates Lionel de Rothschild (1882–1942) and his vision in creating Exbury Gardens, a two-hundred-acre woodland garden in Hampshire, and all those who have worked to realize its beauty. Ten chapters tell the story of the prominent Rothschild family and their horticulture project at Exbury, detailing Lionel’s life, the intrepid plant hunters he sponsored, and the influence the plants had on gardens in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Richly illustrated with more than two hundred images, many published for the first time, *The Eighth Wonder of the World* chronicles the life of Exbury itself from before the arrival of the Rothschilds, into the war years, and beyond. The book places Exbury at the center of the development of private and public gardens—above all for rhododendrons—in the British Isles during the interwar years. In a stunning exploration of the woodland gardens, the book showcases the fascinating collections of rare plants, shrubs, and trees that remain on show today, as well as the famed rhododendrons, azaleas, magnolias, and camellias.



Judi Murakami will be placing a group order for any members wishing a copy of Lionel’s latest book. The discounted price (20% off the \$45 US price) is available to our members. Please contact Judi to place an order in the first week of May.



Double Camellia (above)

‘Biskra’ (right)

Photos by Jean Looy

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'Teacher's Pet' (above), 'Unique' (below)

Photos by Garth Wedemire



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