

THE RHODOTELLER



Rhododendron 'Isola Bella' photo by Jean Looy

Meetings & Events

- Apr 5 Executive Meeting
- Apr 11 General Meeting at Comox United Church at 7:30 pm
(treats reminder Monica Dahl, Adrienne McNabb, Judi Murakami, Aji Fliss)
- Apr 13 Work Party at CVRG 10 am
- Apr 19-23 Azalea & Rhodo convention in Atlanta
[ASA/ARS convention 2023](#)
- Apr 30 NIRS Rhodo Show & Sale at K'omoks First Nations hall, 3320 Comox Rd. Courtenay
- May 9 AGM at McNabb's garden
- May 14 NIRS Mother's Day Garden Tour



R. 'Seta' photo by Valerie Ferris

Thank you to everyone who submitted articles and current photos from their gardens.

President's View

by Dave Godfrey

We can't take credit for bringing the sunshine back with us from our Dominican holiday, or maybe we can! The weather has been sunny for the first two weeks of our return... although the temperatures could have been a tad warmer.

It was nice to be back in time for the March general meeting, which VP Naomi Chester agreed to chair. I very much appreciate and thank Naomi for filling in during our absence. As Naomi mentioned, it gave her an opportunity to wear many hats, but she was ready to hand them back.

As spring is officially upon us, your executive committee is busy preparing for our major fundraisers of the year. Our annual Rhododendron Sale & Show will be held at the K'omoks First Nations hall on Sunday, April 30th, and the return of our Mothers' Day Garden Tour on May 14th.

Once again this year, Nadine Boudreau is chairing the sale team and has many volunteers lined up to help with the various tasks required to make the event a success. If you wish to help, there is always lots of help needed. So give Nadine a call at 250-650-1709 and she'll be happy to provide you with more info.

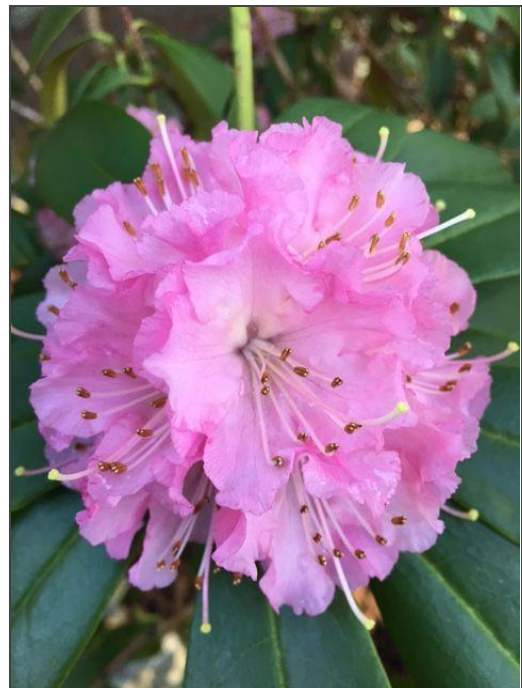
After a three-year absence due to Covid, our Mothers' Day tour is coming back! Carolyn Chester has 6 beautiful gardens lined up for the tour on Sunday, May 14th and will be looking for gate sitters to take the tickets. This year's gardens will be located from North Courtenay to Black Creek/Robinson Lake area. If you wish to volunteer for a three-hour shift and receive a free ticket for doing so, please contact Carolyn or speak with her at our April 11th meeting. We really appreciate the help of our members to make these much-needed fundraisers a success.

Milner Gardens and Woodlands is inviting members of all District One chapters to a celebration of the Greig Species Garden on Tuesday, April 11th, from 1 to 3 pm. Milner will be open only to ARS members at that time (free admission); it's a low-key affair with refreshments and a few speeches, giving everyone a chance to wander the paths and see the changes since the Greig Species Garden first opened 5 years ago.

For a full 'rhododendron' day, our April general meeting is that same evening. Our guest speaker, Dorothee Keiser of the Nanaimo chapter, will be advising us on how to "Garden with Native Plants". This should be a very informative and educational meeting and we hope many of you plan to attend.

Almost three-quarters of our members have now received their 2023 Members' Yearbook. For those who have not received their copy yet, please see me at the April meeting. We try to hand out the booklets in person to help save the cost of mailing them to members.

That's it from me at this time. Take care and hope to see many of you soon!



R. 'Christmas Cheer' photo by Helen Stefiuk

NIRS Plant Sale April 30, 2023

by Nadine Boudreau

Our annual Rhododendron Sale and Show is only a month away. With the garden tour a couple of weeks later and the open gardens this is the time we really have fun with fellow members. If you would like to volunteer for the sale, please contact me at ger.nadboud@shaw.ca, Those who signed up already will be receiving a confirmation email.

The sale is at the K'omoks First Nation Hall at 3320 Comox Road. The sale is from 10 am until 1 pm. We start to set up around 8:30 - 9:00 am. If we are able to set up Saturday night we will send out an email to see who is available to help set up tables and bring the Propagation Rhododendrons to the hall.

The social committee will be providing coffee and tea. Volunteers each bring a snack to share, anything from cookies, muffins, fruit, sandwiches, etc.

The NIRS Companion Plant Table will be organized by Judy Walker and Naomi Chester. As you do your early spring clean-up and perennial split —don't forget to pot up a few extras for our NIRS companion plant table! This table is always a customer favourite and brings in a lot of revenue for the club. Please label



R. sutchuenense photo by Jean Looy

the plants with names (common names are fine). This helps the sales team set up go a lot smoother. I think you have heard enough about bringing in healthy plants.

Please refrain from 'shopping' until an announcement is made around 9:30 to give everyone a chance to get organized, it's a busy time. Volunteers may use the chair/table room as a holding area to keep their plants until they can go through the checkouts. We cannot store plants in the kitchen.

Connie Prain will be heading up the truss display. Please get your trusses to her as soon as possible in the morning so her team can get the trusses in vases and labelled. The easiest way to label your truss is to write the name of the Rhodo on the underside of the leaf with a felt marker. Please send a list of the names of any trusses you wish to bring for the display to Noni Godfrey by e-mail (nonigod@shaw.ca) by Saturday morning April 29 as she may have to print up display labels.

Antje Guertier is leading the Propagation Rhodododen sale area. If Antje needs help with transporting the rhodos from the Smith property, we will send out an email.

Noni Godfrey will head the cashier team, this includes the tag pullers and receipt writers.

We will be selling some of our garden books this year, Janet Campbell is taking the lead at this table.

Carolyn Chester will be one of the greeters and selling tickets for our Annual Mother's Day Garden tour at the Ways and Means table, along with the team promoting our club handing out pamphlets and draw tickets.

Volunteers are asked to please park on the grassy area next to the hall, not in the parking lot or the neighbouring properties!

Noni will be providing a copy of the poster for publication in a separate email. Please print out some copies and post in your neighbourhood. We must get the word out!

Any questions regarding the sale don't hesitate to call me at 250-650-1709 or email: ger.nadboud@shaw.ca



Hacquetia epipactis photo by Helen Stefiuk

Program April 11:

“Gardening with Native Plants” with Dorothee Kieser



Many native plants are suitable for shade or part shade gardens. Not only are native plants interesting and beautiful, but they are also excellent sources of food for Native bees many of which are in considerable decline. The talk focuses on the best growing conditions and propagation techniques.

Dorothee Keiser has been a certified Master Gardener for many years. She brings her scientific approach (from her career as a biologist) to her seminars as well as a wealth of experience from her own extensive home orchard, vegetable, flower, and rhododendron gardens. In addition to her volunteer work with the Master Gardeners, Dorothee is an active member the Beban Learning Garden (a large, local community garden in Nanaimo, which features a greenhouse), and has given numerous seminars on many gardening topics to gardening clubs and associations. Dorothee is the Past President of Vancouver Island Master Gardeners and is currently the Lead Mentor for the Advanced Master Gardeners' course given jointly by Vancouver Island University and VIMGA.



Crocus and Narcissus photos by Monica Dahl

Ways & Means: Apr. draw & door prizes by Aubrey Ferris



R. 'Refrain' (page 187 in "Greer")

Flower 1¼" to 2" across, hose-in-hose, white suffused with brilliant to light purplish pink and a few deep purplish pink stripes, conspicuous vivid purplish red blotch. Inflorescence 1-3 flowered

Parentage: 'Vittatum' x 'Miyagino'

Upright habit, 7 feet in 10 years



R. 'Purple Gem' (page 215 in "Greer")

Beautiful large purple blooms with violet streaks and edging adorn this majestic shrub in mid to late spring; an accent shrub that will definitely make an impact; Is an open multi-stemmed evergreen shrub with an upright spreading habit of growth.

4 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 4 feet. Best in full sun to partial shade.



R. 'Yaku Prince'

Flowers open purplish-pink and ages to a lighter pink, pale purplish-pink blotch and dark reddish-orange spotting. Ball-shaped truss of 14 flowers. Late Midseason. Nice compact plant. just 1½ feet tall and 3 feet wide after 10 years, ultimately growing to 3 feet tall.

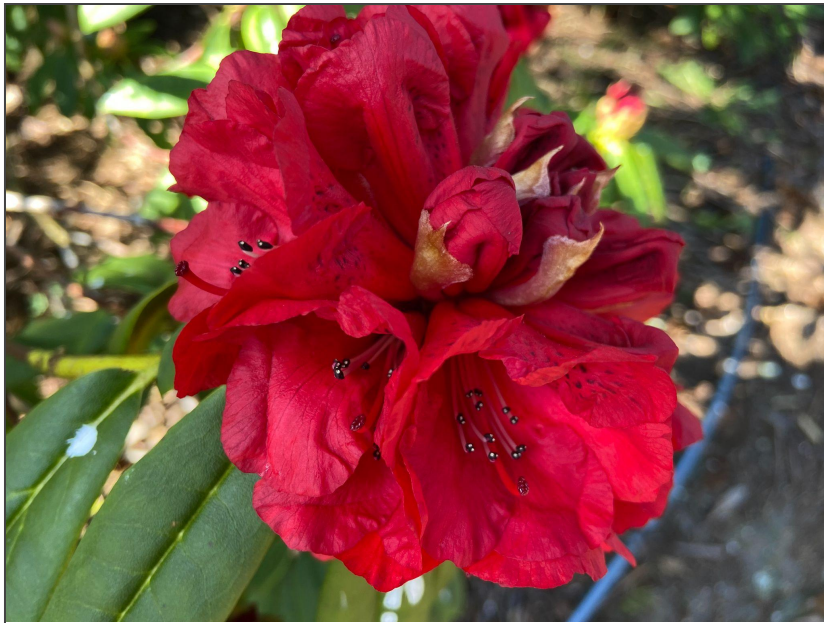
Notable for being one of the most winter-hardy varieties available.

CVRG

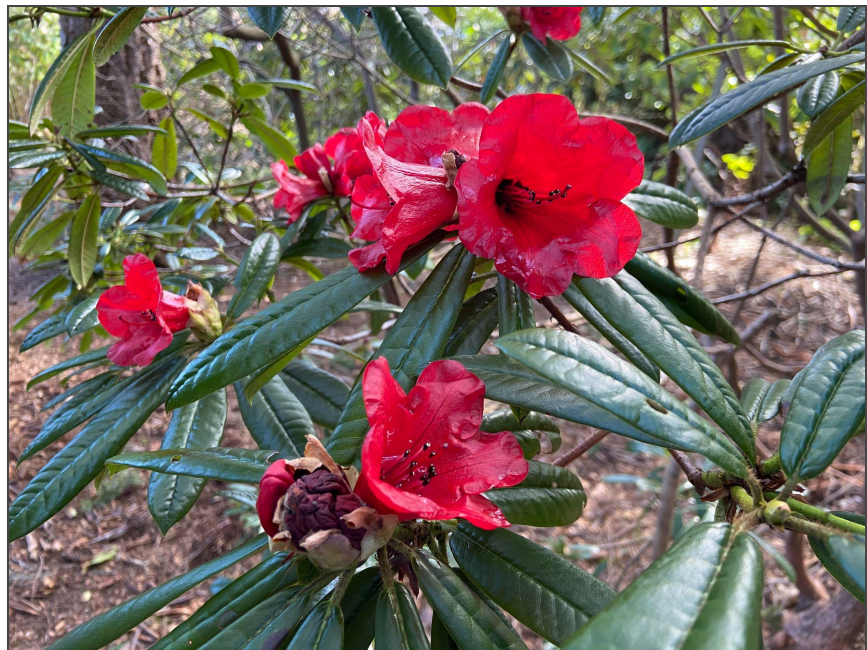
By Maureen Denny

It was a small crew of women gardeners who attended March's Work Party, but being an efficient and hard-working crew, we were able to get the gardens all cleaned up and looking good. Some good news is that the wooden NIRS sign will be taken down and refurbished by a Courtenay sign business, and this work will be paid for by The City of Courtenay. The plan is to have the work done and the sign installed before the beginning of May, as May is officially Rhododendron Month in Courtenay. The sign will also be moved to a new location in the gardens. The current location is no longer appropriate since the Canoe Club expanded their storage area. The next work party will be on April 13th at 10 am. We will need extra help as we will be spreading mulch on one of the garden beds. Please email me if you can bring a wheelbarrow. Please bring a rake as well as your bucket and tools.

Coffee and goodies are served at the picnic bench after the work is done. Come join us!



*R. 'Peter Faulk' (top)
and
R 'Maxine Childers'
photos by Jean Looy*



Plant of the Month

by Ron Sutton

Rhododendron orbiculare

This species rhododendron grows wild in the Guangxi and Sichuan provinces of China. It is a relatively slow-growing shrub, to only 3 feet in 10 years, but eventually 6-10 feet.

It produces distinctive, oval, lily pad-shaped leaves, and medium to dark pink loose flower trusses, of 8-12 flowers. It blooms in late April to early May and is rated hardy to -5°F/-20°C.

This rhododendron prefers sun to light shade. My plant gets a bit of direct morning sun and then is shaded the rest of the day.

This species has received the RHS award of garden merit, but it isn't easy to find. My plant seen here, photographed on May 2nd, was purchased from Fearing Farm, which is now closed. The RSBG and Chimacum Woods nursery in Washington, list it in their offerings.



R. orbiculare

Pacific Tree Frog

By Jill Gould

So, here I was on a mild day, Feb. 7, lifting a layer of dead leaves from my front flower bed when something moved. The tiniest little green frog looked up at me; only $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long. I hastily replaced some leaves over it and retreated with apologies!

Pseudacris regilla, the Pacific Tree frog, is the most common frog found on the West Coast of North America. The range is from Northern California to coastal Alaska, being very abundant on the BC coast and Vancouver Island. As adults, they grow to about two inches long. Maturity is reached the year after metamorphosis. Their colour can range from bright green to brown or any combination in between (sometimes greyish or speckled). They are capable of gradually changing colour to suit their surroundings. If among leaves or grass, they remain green. They have a black eye stripe from their noses, over the eye and to the shoulders. The males are slightly smaller than the females, with a dark patch on the throat (vocal sac).



Tree frog on trellis



Two tree frogs cuddling under the hose

Tree frogs are mainly nocturnal, but are seen in the daytime, as they will move if disturbed. Having said that, I have known them to “park” in plain view all day, giving opportunities for a cautious photographer to approach.

Tree frogs usually mate in early spring, depending on local weather conditions. Their mating call is astonishingly loud for such a small frog: a “ribbit” or “krek-ek” noise at dusk and during the night, which is certainly noticeable now (late March) as hundreds of little frogs start their “spring chorus”. They can be calling right beside you, but are hard to find as they hide very well. Tree frog males also make a “dry land” call, more like “creeeek” which can be heard year-round, even in the day if the weather is balmy, or during rainy periods.

Tree frogs need water to reproduce, laying their eggs in a pond or other small bodies of still water. Once hatched, the tadpoles are vegetarian. When all four legs appear at maturity, the frogs become carnivorous with a diet of insects and small slugs. At this time, they leave the water and become terrestrial. Hence, tree frogs. They have sticky toe pads that enable them to climb and stick to vertical surfaces. I’ve found one 8 feet high on the porch wall during the day, perched over a light fixture, where it rested until nightfall.

A couple of years ago, a cousin visited during “spring chorus”. She liked to keep her window open at night and complained in the morning about “the racket” that was so loud she had to close the window. And what was that noise, she asked. Obviously a city gal.

Spring plants with a little story...

This primrose welcomed us to our new yard 9 years ago and doesn't disappoint. Valerie Ferris



Trillium is a woodland plant, but my yard is not. I'm pleased to see its return this spring to my garden which contains many native plant species. Kathy Haigh



*This rhodo was bought from the Species Foundation in Washington - labelled *R. dauricum*. It is 25 years old and might actually be *R. mucronulatum* 'Cornell Pink'. Helen Stefiuk*

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Crocus and Cyclamen in the Stefiuk garden



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