

THE RHODOTELLER



Amaryllis photo by Jean Looy

Meetings & Events

Dec 6 Executive Meeting

Dec 12 Christmas Party (see article on page 3 for details)

2024

Jan 9 General Meeting

Feb 20 General Meeting

May 2-5 ARS Spring Convention in Bellingham, WA



Skimmia japonica photo by Lois Clyde

President's View

By Naomi Chester

"From December to March, there are for many of us three gardens - the garden outdoors, the garden of pots and bowls in the house, and the garden of the mind's eye." Katherine S. White

As we enter the holiday season, we still find great beauty in the garden as the sparkles of frost/snow illuminate the branches/leaves. Many of us have already seen spring bulbs peeking above ground, primulas blooming and rhododendrons flowering so it still feels like another spring is happening before winter eventually arrives. The early hellebores, camellia sasanqua and witch hazels (hamamelis) are likely to start blooming this month after the mild November. We wait with both patience and anticipation...

This is the time that, despite all the celebrations, gardeners take time to rest just like nature encourages us to do. However, having seen many of our members in the garden nurseries recently I'd say many of us are choosing to do lots of indoor gardening with amaryllis, paperwhites, forced hyacinths etc. It is clear that the garden is never far from our thoughts.

I'd like to thank all of our members for another wonderful year of sharing our passions, gardens and experiences in our friendly community. The Executive Committee looks forward to celebrating with you at our Christmas party on December 12th (read on for further details).

Wishing you all a very happy and healthy festive season to close out 2023.



Azalea 'Washington State Centennial'
photo by Naomi Chester



Unknown Japanese Maple
photo by Dan Ryan

Christmas Party

by Dave Godfrey



On Tuesday, December 12th, we will hold our festive Christmas potluck dinner/party. Those members wishing to attend are asked to advise either me or Social Committee Chair Antje Guertler, as to which dish (approx. enough for 8 people) you will be bringing: appetizer, vegetable casserole, potato casserole, salad, cold veggie platter, meat dishes, cold cuts, cheese platter, fruit platter, dessert, or buns & butter. Once again, the club will be providing ham and turkey for the main entrée.

Please bring serving utensils and mark your dishes for return at the end of the evening. Members are also asked to bring their own cutlery, plates, and mugs. We will have hot apple cider available, as well as the usual decaf coffee and tea.

Doors will open to members and guests at 5 pm, with dinner served around 6 pm. Following dinner, we will enjoy another issue of the "NIRS Christmas Trivia" game. Always lots of fun! The game will also be interspersed with several "Heads or Tails" games. Each round costs a loonie to enter and we will probably have 4 or 5 rounds. So be sure to bring along \$5 worth of loonies if you wish to play.

In lieu of a Christmas hamper, we will once again be collecting cash donations at the party towards this year's Hamper Project. Or if you wish to donate you can always e-transfer your donation to our club Treasurer nonigod@shaw.ca. As we did last year, all donations will be presented equally to the CV Food Bank and the Care-A-Van/Comox Bay Care Society.

For those unable to make the party, we wish you a safe and happy holiday season and look forward to seeing you in the New Year.



Ways & Means

By Aubrey Ferris

Christmas Party Door Prize:

R. 'Patty Bee' is a dwarf evergreen shrub.

Flowers are funnel-shaped and light yellow-green.

Height to 75 cm and hardy to 21°C.

Easy to root and grow. Very free flowering. Dislikes fertilizer.





*Acer 'Red Dragon'
and Smoke Tree
photos by Jean Looy*

Sword fern photo by Kathy Haigh



The Life & Death of Hirsutum - Now it is Resurrected as *Rhododendra*

By Steve Henning, ARS Dist. 8 Dir.

Many of us couldn't believe the wealth of information and photos that became available on Hirsutum. It was too good to be true. It required a continuing web presence and constant maintenance. In 2021, it lost its web presence and had lost maintenance in 2015. It was just announced that Canadian web guru John Verwolf has created "*Rhododendra*" which is a functional replacement for Hirsutum. The new website is at <http://www.rhododendra.com/>.

On June 4, 2009, a website, Hirsutum.info, was created by Herman van Ree in the Netherlands. The goal of the Hirsutum project was to collect as much information and as many photos as possible concerning rhododendrons. This included species, hybrids, azaleas, vireyas and azaleodendrons. It was amazing how quickly this website grew. The actual ambitious goal of posting photos and information was being carried out by one person, Marjo Schlenter, Herman's wife.

It eventually grew to over 20,000 entries. I was skeptical at first that such a site would last for very long. However, it grew and grew and became the go-to site for rhododendron information. Finally, on July 19, 2012, after seeing Hirsutum grow, I made available to Herman and Marjo, 2,000 of my photos at <http://rhodyman.net/hirsutum.html>. Hirsutum listed over 1,200 hybridizers and had over 10,000 photos contributed by over 150 photographers from around the world. The major contributors were Garth Wedemire from Canada, Everard Daniel from England, Herman van Ree, and Tijs Huisman from Holland. Valley Forge Chapter's Jim Willhite also contributed photos and was the major contributor from the US.

Then in 2015, Herman van Ree announced he was discontinuing his involvement with the Hirsutum website. The website continued to be available but with no new information. Then, in 2021, the website stopped working altogether. There were some archives of the Hirsutum site that saved some pages, but since Hirsutum was database-driven, only a portion of the information was available in the archives.



Recently, on November 13, 2023, Ken Webb announced "They have a guy on Vancouver Island who is working on rebuilding the Hirsutum Website." His name is John Verwolf. *Rhododendra* is the name of his new website, <http://www.rhododendra.com/>. He still has to add information about hybridizers and botanists from the old Hirsutum website and he is going to build a public input system so that users can add information as they collect it. However, for all intents and purposes, *Rhododendra* is up and running and has most of the functionalities that Hirsutum had.

Thank you John Verwolf!

Plant Sale and Garden Tour Update by Nadine Boudreau

The executive is gearing up for our two main fundraisers. The NIRS plant sale will be held on Sunday, April 28th, 2024. We hope to have it at the same venue, the K'ómoks First Nation Hall. We will have our propagation rhododendrons for sale as well as companion plants donated by our members. If any members would like to sell plants or garden-related items, please contact Nadine Boudreau for more information. This is also a good time to see what plants you could divide or seedlings growing in the garden that you could pot up and donate for the sale.



Our Mother's Day Garden Tour will be on Sunday, May 12, 2024, we are highlighting the Comox/East Courtenay area. If you are in this area and feel you are ready to open your garden to the public, please contact either Carolyn Chester, Kathy Haigh or Nadine Boudreau, this year's coordinators. We have a few gardens confirmed - thank you to those who have already agreed to share their gardens.



*I took this photo on Nov. 18 - a rhododendron growing through our neighbour's fence. The big rhodo inside is in full bloom and this branch that made it outside was just too good to miss - tough plant! Photo by Judy Walker. **Can you identify this rhodo?** Judy, and others, think it might be R. 'Christmas Cheer'.*

Membership

by Dan Ryan

Thirty-six members and nine guests attended the November meeting, and we received five renewals. We currently have 82 members including 7 associates.

It's time to renew! The dues for membership are: regular \$40.00 and associate \$10.00. You may mail your cheque to N.I.R.S., P.O. Box 3183 Courtenay B.C. V9N 5N4, or e-transfer \$40.00 to the Club Treasurer, Noni Godfrey, (nonigod@shaw.ca).

Last chance to get in on the "Early Renewal Program." Renew before November 30th and you will be entered into a draw to win your membership fee. The winner will be announced at the Christmas Party on December 12th.



Pyracantha berries
photo by Jill Gould

R. 'Hill's Bright Red'
photo by Diana Scott





Mahonia aquifolium in Seal Bay Park photo by Kathy Haigh



SAVE THE DATE !
ARS 2024 Spring Convention
Bellingham, Washington
May 2-5, 2024

Four Points by Sheraton, Bellingham
 Hotel and Conference Center
 714 Lakeway Drive, Bellingham, WA, USA, 98229
 Phone: +1 360-671-1011

Highlights:

- Pre-Tour: **May 1: Private Gardens around Seattle**
- Convention: **Tours * Seminars * Workshops * Banquets**
- Post-Tour: **May 5: Gardens around Vancouver, Canada**

Time to check your Passport!

Plus:

Plant Sales * Auctions * Raffles * Photo Booth * Poster Session

Help get the message out!

**Please forward to friends and gardeners in
 your community and around the globe.**

Visit ARS2024.org for more information and to register.

Board of Directors & Committee Chairs 2023/2024

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Naomi Chester 778-992-2999

Secretary

Carolyn Chester 250-619-5864

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Dave Godfrey 250-871-0717

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Newsletter submission deadline is the 2nd Saturday of each month.

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<http://www.nirsrhodos.ca>



Loganberry leaves photo by Jill Gould



Euphorbia 'Miner's Merlot' photo by Kathy Haigh