

# THE RHODOTELLER



*Rhododendron 'Daviesii' Azalea photo by Jean Looy*

## Meetings & Events

June 6 Executive Meeting

June 13 Work Party at CVRG 7 pm

June 17 Potluck Picnic @ Argall garden 4 pm

\*Next general meeting at the church hall will be on September 12<sup>th</sup>, when Glen Jamieson of the MARS chapter will present "Iceland – Land of Fire and Ice."

Thank you to members who provided articles and photos taken in May in the Comox Valley for this newsletter.



*'Pauline Braelit' by Lois Clyde*

## President's View

by Dave Godfrey

Well, here we are again at the end of another busy meeting season. With our major fundraising events behind us, I would like to thank Nadine Boudreau and her team for another successful Sale and Show; and Carolyn Chester & Noni Godfrey for all the behind-the-scenes work they did to bring us the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Mother's Day Tour. Plus, a big thank you to all the other members who made these events another tremendous success. It helps that the weather cooperated too!



Congratulations to Tim Tessier of Comox, the winner of the Plant Sale draw for *R. augustinii*, and to Deborah Camp (left) winner of "Jim's Blueberry Jam" for the Garden Tour draw.

It was wonderful to have 36 members attend our AGM on May 9<sup>th</sup> to hear the year-end reports from the various committee chairs. As I mentioned in my report, it is only through the support of the executive members and the membership as a whole, that it made my position that much easier. Thank you one and all, and in particular special thanks to Vice President Naomi Chester for all her support.

During the meeting, it was announced that the executive has given a donation to the BC Council of Garden Clubs for their scholarship fund. The \$500 provided will go towards supporting a student enrolled in a post-secondary Horticultural program.

Special thanks again to Judi Murakami for being our nominations chair for the election of officers for the coming term. It was a pleasure to present Judi with an NIRS Bronze Medal for all her contributions to our club over the past 11 years (see separate article in this newsletter).

As always, we will wrap up our season with a potluck picnic in June. This year the picnic will be held on Saturday, June 17<sup>th</sup> in the gorgeous garden of Robert Argall on Wireless Road in Comox. For those planning to attend, please bring your lawn chairs, cutlery, and your favourite dish (enough for 8) to complement the dinner. The club will provide a sliced ham to go with the salads, desserts and other foods brought by our members and guests. Coffee, tea and lemonade will also be provided - so don't forget your drinking vessels. There will be games to play and opportunities to socialize with others. We hope to see many of you attend this fun-filled gathering.

At the close of the AGM elections, I announced that, for various reasons, I will be stepping down as your President after three years. Vice President Naomi has agreed to become President on July 1<sup>st</sup>. I will be her VP for the coming year, providing her with all the support she will need.

As such, this will be my final "President's View" article. I'd like to take the opportunity to again thank all our members for your continued support over the past 3 years. I know the first two were challenging during the Covid pandemic, but we managed to get through it and came out stronger. Thank you all!

## Plant of the Month

by Ron Sutton

### Rhododendron kiangsiense

People who know me, know that I am a collector of species rhododendrons and other unusual plants. I like many hybrid rhododendrons also, but have a special affinity for Maddenii rhododendrons.

R. kiangsiense belongs to the maddenii group of rhododendrons, however, don't reach for your Greer Guide or Rhododendron species books for this one, as it is a fairly new introduction, and won't be in them. Not much information is available on this plant.

Rhododendron kiangsiense is a species that comes from China and is found in Fujian, Hunan, Jiangxi regions in very limited numbers, growing on cliffsides or rocky outcrops. It has shiny small green leaves and produces fragrant white flowers in pairs, in early May here on the island.

Considered a dwarf, its expected size in 10 years is only 2 feet high by 2 feet wide.

My small plant surprised me, by flowering after a cold winter that saw a low here of minus ten degrees twice. I put a plastic flowerpot over it during the coldest periods, and it came through unscathed. The Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden lists its hardiness at 5°F/ -15°C; it is where my plant came from.



Given how it grows in the wild, good soil drainage is essential. It can probably handle a lot more sun, than the part shade, where my plant is positioned. This photo of my young plant was taken on May 5.

# Membership

By Dan Ryan

Thirty-six members attending our May AGM. We welcome Katherine Gotto and Robert Walton, as well as Becky and Bret Walters as new members. We currently have 78 members including 7 associates.



*'Lemon Dream' photo by Lois Clyde*



*'Windsor Lad' photo by Jean Looy*



*'Moon Wax' photo by Dan Ryan*



*'Grandmothers Hat' photo by Patty Matthews*

## Tales of the MARS Bus Tour

By Kathy Haigh

Seven NIRS members took part in the MARS bus tour of eleven gardens on May 3rd and 4th, which was organized by the very capable Linda Derkach.

After everyone boarded the full-size tour bus at the Qualicum Beach Civic Centre, we departed for Nanoose Bay where we visited two beautiful waterfront gardens on opposite sides of the same street: Wolfgang's and Deb's. The next stop was at Chris's woodland garden just outside of Nanaimo. Then off to Cowichan Lake to see Verna's and Don and Lousie's large rural gardens.

The last stop on day one was for a deluxe BBQ dinner at Ken and Madeline's garden in Saanich.

Most of us tourists stayed at hotels in Victoria's inner harbour, though some took the opportunity to visit with friends or family. We toured three public gardens in Victoria on day two: Government House, Abkhazi and Finnerty at the University of Victoria. That afternoon we visited Al and Liz's, then Jan's gardens - both in Cobble Hill. Each of the gardens we saw was unique and with beauty to behold, especially in early May with so many blooms.

The bus driver managed to squeeze the behemoth through a few very tight spaces, with some unsolicited advice from behind him. He even took ill-advised instruction from property owner

Jan which meant driving into his long, narrow driveway and turning around in his sheep pasture. The sheep clearly thought that the bus was herding them as it manoeuvred an about-face. All in all, he was a proficient driver with a sense of humour. We were happy not to be driving.

During the two days, there were opportunities to buy plants from our hosts. The bus storage area quickly filled with newly acquired rhodos and other plants. I, for one, managed to come home empty-handed with only happy memories and pretty photos as reminders of the lovely garden tours.



## Rhododendron 'Mrs. Charles E. Pearson'..maybe

By Jill Gould

I had a nice surprise when I glimpsed something bright pink behind my apple tree. When I investigated, I found a rhododendron, planted three years ago, which had bloomed for the first time. The trusses weren't big, but they were lovely. Here is the story.

A few years ago, the charity Habitat for Humanity acquired a building lot across from the Lake Trail School. It was the site of the old McQuillan farm, and the house had been demolished. The site was due to be cleared and housing units built. Maureen Denny and I did a prowl-around and rescued some plants: Autumn Crocus, a peony, roses, primroses and (yum-yum) a loganberry. There were several rhododendrons in bloom that spring that caught my eye. I took a picture of one beautiful pink one which the late Paul Wurz tentatively identified as 'Mrs. Charles E. Pearson'. Research showed this to be a fairly old introduction, so the fact that it was at the old farmstead made sense. I later took some cuttings of it, and another pink rhodo.



*'Mrs. Charles E. Pearson'*



"Greer's Guidebook to Available Rhododendrons" has this to say about Mrs. C. P: "This hybrid is another 'oldie but goodie' that has stayed around and kept winning awards through the years. It was developed in 1909, received an Award of Merit in 1933 and then a First Class Certificate as late as 1955....Super vigorous ..." I couldn't say it better.

I am not 100 % sure this is the right name, as there was an unfortunate tag mix-up between the two pink rhodos while re-potting was going on. However, if all you knowledgeable people think I am wrong, please let me know! Meanwhile, I'm enjoying the show.



*Unknown Rhodo photo by Barb Barker*

## President's Report for AGM 2023

by Dave Godfrey

I would like to start by thanking the members of the executive board and the various committee chairs for their continued support throughout the past year. Your commitment to the club and to the ARS organization makes my position so much easier.

During the past year, I attended the District 1 meetings on the club's behalf and gave reports on our activities and progress. The NIRS hosted the last Presidents' meeting here on March 30<sup>th</sup>. I am very proud of our accomplishments over the years. Through some of the comments I have received, I can tell you that we can take great pride in our website, Facebook page and newsletters. I wish to thank Kathy Haigh and Garth Wedemire for their continued support in these areas. Even though Garth & Sue will be moving back to the mainland at the end of this month, he has assured me he will continue to assist as a technical advisor for our website.

One of our proudest accomplishments is the ongoing Propagation Group's success. Thanks to the many hours of hard work of several members, in particular Antje Guertler, our propagation efforts have kept us financially afloat these past few years. There is some optimism that the sale of the Smith property may go ahead in the coming months, with the possibility of us continuing our propagating activities.

Another source of pride is our 'Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden' and all the work that is required to keep it maintained in its maturity. I would especially like to thank Maureen Denny for overseeing the garden and her close liaison with the city parks department. Thanks to all our members who attended the monthly work parties to help keep the gardens looking their finest for all to enjoy.

I look forward to working with you in the future.



*'Denali' photos by Lois Clyde*

## CVRG Report for AGM

by Maureen Denny

Thanks to all the volunteers who have attended the work parties since last fall and this spring. Since 1996 the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden has been jointly maintained by NIRS volunteers and the City of Courtenay Parks Department through "The Partners in Parks Program".

I would especially like to thank Tyler Johns who is our liaison with the City Parks Department for his involvement and support. I would also like to give Antje a special thanks for faithfully supplying the coffee and many delicious cakes.

Last year the gardens were subject to several rounds of vandalism; damage was done to Rhododendrons and signage. I am happy to report that this year, so far, there has been no damage to any Rhodos and only one incidence of graffiti on one sign which was easily cleaned off.



Some really good news is that the carved wooden NIRS sign is now fully restored, repainted and is back up in place in the "Stump Bed". It has been moved a few feet in the bed and now faces the lawn and the former Chamber of Commerce building. This small move was necessary after the Canoe Club expanded its storage area.

This garden is a great addition to our community and greatly appreciated by all who walk and cycle through the gardens. We regularly receive many thanks and compliments while we are at work. Our efforts have not gone unnoticed!

Starting in June work parties will switch to every second Tuesday evening of each month at 7 pm for June, July, and August. Dave will send a reminder to all, as there is no newsletter for July and August.



*'Gwendolyn Wright' photo by Lois Clyde*

## Revenue Table Report For AGM

By Judy Walker & Naomi Chester

The revenue table provided income for the NIRS year from September 2022 to April 2023 of \$654. Donations include plants propagated and divided by members and by the propagation group, tools, garden art, books and magazines, and garden produce - all of which make for some good shopping at break time.

These generous donations by members provide funds each year that go directly towards society activities, such as hall rental, Christmas Party and the June Picnic. Judy and Naomi thank all the members for making this such a fun and important addition to our society.



*'Angel's Dream' (double) photo by Jean Looy*

## Ways & Means Committee Report for AGM by Aubrey Ferris

Post-Covid, we had more opportunities for members to win raffle and door prizes.

We managed to bring in \$850 dollars in revenue and at the same time offer members the opportunity to buy garden accessories at cost. As a club, we can get better deals by purchasing in large quantities.

We need to look to new ways to raise funds as the rhodo raffle will be ended since we only have enough plants to supply next year's plant sale. We hope to replace raffle prizes with other items (maybe items from the revenue table).

Special thanks once again to Antje for getting the raffle Rhodos from the garden to each meeting; Garth Wedemire for supplementing raffle prizes with some excellent plants; Noni for doing the books; Valerie for making sure we were prepared for each meeting; and special thanks to all who participated in the raffles.

## Propagating Group Report for AGM 2023

by Noni Godfrey

Seven years ago, in May of 2016 we were invited to the Smith's property to carry out our Rhododendron propagating activities and we inherited a few hundred plants from 'Charlie' to get us started. This great opportunity of facilities and space for our club enabled us to take cuttings and propagate for several years. Because of this generous opportunity, the propagation group has filled the coffers of the club quite nicely. Our latest plant sale on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April brought in \$4,145.00 from our propagated rhodos alone!

Unfortunately, with the passing of the Smiths, and the uncertainty of the property's future, the group has not been taking cuttings or mass-producing plants. We purchased some plants and some cuttings from Lynn Wurz's; however, those are nearly all gone now. We estimate there are enough plants for the annual plant sale next year, but not enough to have draws during the year. Different arrangements will be made for those draws.

There is currently a prospective buyer for the Smiths property, and we may be able to resume propagating again soon. Several other chapters on Vancouver Island are now into propagating and will possibly sell some of their stock to our club to tide us over for a few years. All this depends on whether we have a place to store any stock. Time will tell and we will notify members of the progress.

From our very first meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2015 at Helena Stewart's house to the present day we have had many club members involved in growing and caring for our 'stock' of rhododendron babies. This past year we have had people watering, potting up plants, putting on shade cloth etc. No one has done more than our very own Antje Guertler, who deserves a medal for her continued and enduring patience and hard work!

Here's hoping we can re-invent our propagation group and continue to make money for our club!



*'Nancy Evans' photo by Lois Clyde*

## Membership Report for AGM By Noni for Dan & Margaret Ryan

We are pleased to report that our total memberships for 2023 is 78, including 7 associate members. Associate members are regular members of one of the other ARS chapters either on the Island or the Mainland.

We welcome Becky and Bret Walters, Bruce and Raine Eaton, Lori and Pat Parfenow, and Katharine Gotto with Robert Walton (Dick Bonney's property) as our newest members. All four couples joined after April 1<sup>st</sup> and before July 1<sup>st</sup> so they qualify for the ARS 18-month membership.

Hopefully, everyone has received their 2023 membership cards and annual membership booklet. If for any reason you did not receive it, please let us know.

On the back of your membership card is a list of local gardening businesses that provide a discount to our members. Be sure to use the card when shopping at the listed merchants and help save towards your next year's membership renewal.



*Chilean Potato Tree*  
(*Solanum crispum* 'Glasnevin')



*Japanese Kerria*  
(*Kerria japonica* 'Pleniflora')



*Jack-in-the-Pulpit*  
(*Arisaema triphyllum*)



*Mouse Plant (Arisarum proboscideum)*. Photos by Trevor Strother-Stewart

## Library Report for AGM

by Noni Godfrey

I guess you could say, "Modern technology has caught up with our library". The monthly sign-outs of our library books have decreased substantially so we have had to re-evaluate the whole library system. The executive felt that many of our members are using the Internet for gardening information as is the norm these days. So, after careful consideration, the team of Judy Walker, Maureen Denny, and Ruth Fowler, culled the books down from 173 to 81. We felt we couldn't let go of the last 81 at this time. We have sold or given to the Rotary Club the 92 that deserved new homes.

The remainder of the books are retained in our locked cabinet at the church and are still available to members. The current listing of those books is posted on our website for perusal. Anyone wanting to sign out books henceforth is asked to request preferably before or at the meeting and they will be located and signed out to you.

Our three magazines, "The Garden", "Gardens Illustrated" and "Fine Gardening" continue to be very popular with the members and I have renewed all three for the coming year. These will continue to be signed out as usual at the front of the meeting room.



'Nelda Peach' photo by Bette Hopwood (above)



*R. dichroanthum* subsp. *herpesticum*  
photo by Jean Looy (right)

## ARS Bronze Medal Presentation to Judi Murakami

It was with great pleasure that President Dave Godfrey presented the American Rhododendron Society Bronze Medal to Judi Murakami on May 9, 2023. The ARS Bronze Medal is awarded for outstanding contributions to a Chapter and is the highest commendation awarded by a local Chapter in the Society.

Judi joined the North Island Rhododendron Society in November 2011 and quickly became a contributing member of the club, attending meetings and participating in our tours and activities. She has been a strong supporter of our fundraising efforts each year, helping with the plant sales and our Mother's Day Garden Tour, and assisting with the promotion of these events.

Judi took on the role of Social Committee Co-Chair in 2015-2016 and for many years graciously helped prepare the main course for our June Picnics and Christmas parties. Judi ably served as our President from 2016 to 2018, guiding the club through the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden, a visit by our friends from the Pilchuck chapter, and the hosting of the 2017 District 1 Presidents' meeting in her home.

Judi attended the 2018 ARS Convention in Bremen Germany and shared her experiences with the club at our March 2020 meeting. While at that Convention Judi connected with Lionel de Rothschild and invited him to speak in Courtenay prior to the Portland Conference in 2020. Due to COVID, the event was cancelled but through her efforts, Lionel was able to present to us in April 2022.

We thank Judi for her many contributions to the Club and congratulate her on being awarded the ARS Bronze Medal by the North Island Rhododendron Society.

The Bronze Medal was presented as part of a framed certificate stating:

"The American Rhododendron Society North Island Chapter Recognizes Judi Murakami for the Bronze Medal Award for her many years of service and continued dedication to the Society"



# Board of Directors & Committee Chairs 2022/2023

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**Director: Revenue Table**

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**Propagation:**

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*'Mrs. W. C. Slocock' &*



*'Cunningham's Blush' photos by Bette Hopwood*