

THE RHODOTELLER



Rhododendron 'Lee's Scarlet'. Photo by Jean Looy

Meetings & Events

- Mar 4 Comox Valley Seedy Saturday at Florence Filberg Centre
- Mar 8 Executive Meeting
- Mar 14 General Meeting at Comox United Church at 7:30 pm (treats reminder Patty Matthews, Bette Hopwood, Diane van Oostdam, Kelly Selden, Helen Stefiuk)
- Mar 16 Work Party at CVRG 10 am
- Apr 11 General Meeting at Comox United Church
- Apr 30 NIRS Rhodo Show & Sale at KFN hall
- May 9 AGM at McNabb's garden
- May 14 NIRS Mother's Day Garden Tour



Pulmonaria rubra photo by Jill Gould

Theme: Early Risers

Vice President's View

by Naomi Chester

Anticipation abounds! Whether we are starting seeds or watching for the “early risers” popping up everywhere, there’s so much to be inspired by as the gardens start to give us an inkling of the Spring that lies ahead. This transition from Winter to Spring, with its great awakening, is probably my favourite time of year (along with all the other seasons, of course....). Hearing the tree frogs, bees and the dawn chorus of the songbirds breathes fresh life into those of us who find winter dormancy challenging. The vibrant colour of late Winter/early Spring flowers enlivens all that take in their splendour. The scent of the gently warming wet earth, the wood prunings and blooms invigorate our senses. The touch of seemingly delicate new growth and petals leave us astounded at their ability to endure the varied weather that this time of year provides. It’s exhilarating!



Snowdrop 'Galanthus nivalis Flore Pleno'

photo by Naomi Chester

With Spring in the air (and maybe a spring in our step?) we are called back into our gardens. Let’s consider taking care by not tidying up too soon, as much as we might want to so that we may ensure our little “garden helpers” thrive and we encourage healthy ecosystems around us. The pollinators and beneficial insects will appreciate us leaving that rake alone for a little while longer. We’re also less likely to see imbalances in our gardens, i.e. “pest” problems, later in the season by letting ourselves rest longer – that’s a win-win!

Now is a great time to think about and/or start dividing plants in your garden in readiness for the March/April Revenue tables and our Rhododendron Show and Sale coming up on April 30th. Please contact Nadine Boudreau if you would like to volunteer or be a vendor at this event. A huge thank you to those of you who have already signed up. The contributions of our members are always greatly appreciated in making this event successful.

A huge thank you also to those of you who have kindly agreed to show your gardens on the Mother’s Day Garden Tour (May 14th). Carolyn now has enough gardens confirmed to ensure this fundraiser goes ahead. Having not had a Mother’s Day Tour since 2019, I’m sure we’re all very much looking forward to this. Soon Carolyn and Noni will be requesting volunteers to welcome the visitors to these gardens so please contact her if you’d like to put your name forward as a “sitter.”

On a final note, since Dave will be back to write next month's edition, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of our members for making this club the friendly community that it is. One where we can learn from each other and openly share our plant obsessions without judgement, indeed, with a good dose of encouragement...

Happy gardening and I'll no doubt see you in the nurseries soon ;)



Iris reticulata 'Katherine Hodgkin' and Lungworts or *Pulmonaria* photo by Antje Guertler

Rhododendron in cold weather

By Aubrey Ferris

Rhododendrons attempt to protect themselves from winter dehydration by curling their leaves, allowing them to hang down. Here are some Comox examples when the overnight temperature was -6°C on Feb 23, 2023



R. ficolatum



R. hodgsonii

NIRS Rhodo Sale & Truss Show

by Nadine Boudreau

Plans are in the works for the 2023 plant sale and truss show to be held on April 30th from 10 am to 1 pm at the K'omoks First Nation Band Hall - 3320 Comox Road. We will be selling NIRS propagation rhododendrons and companion plants, and Wolfgang Hoefgen will be a vendor. We are hoping to sell some of our club's used books, a further memo will confirm if some member-donated books could be added to the book sale.

Our plant sale is a great time for members to get together and share our knowledge and admiration of Rhododendrons (all plants really) with the public. The success of the sale is largely due to volunteers. There are many positions to help out with, from hall setup to cashiers, to loaders, and the truss table. Please contact Nadine at ger.nadboud@shaw.ca if you can join the fun and help out.

The NIRS companion plant table features plants that are donated by the members. This is a popular table with the public. Now is a good time to look in your garden at what could be divided or seeded that you could donate. We try and have good quality plants that are labelled, if possible, as these sell quickly. If you do not know the name of the plant we will try and identify it for you, if it looks good and healthy, please bring it along.

*Photos from previous show & sale
by Nadine Boudreau*



Program March 14 Lloyd Gilmore: Hybridizing on Vancouver Island



On Tuesday, March 14th, the NIRS chapter will feature Lloyd Gilmore from the Victoria Rhododendron Society as our guest speaker. Lloyd's presentation is entitled "**Hybridizing on Vancouver Island**". Lloyd is the current President of the Victoria Chapter and has participated in "Breeder's Roundtable" events at ARS National Conventions and ARS Western Regional Fall Conferences in the past. We will hear about hybridizing goals and successes on Vancouver Island. Lloyd will bring some display plants as well as some seedlings for sale and/or raffle.

Doors will open at 7 PM and the meeting and presentation will begin at 7:30 PM.

*Waxbill dwarf rhodo Glendoich hybrid
(grown during winter in indoor
low-heated greenhouse).
Photo by Connie Prain*



*R. 'Airy Fairy' buds
photo by Jean Looy*

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



Get your tickets to win on March 14th

R. 'Cunningham's White'

A robust evergreen shrub grows to 2.2m tall, with dark green foliage and loose trusses of funnel-shaped white flowers opening from mauve buds in late spring. (Page 113 in Greer)



R. 'Scarlett Wonder'

Flower is broadly funnel-shaped, 2½" across, wavy-edged, strong red with some very faint brown spotting in throat. Flat truss has 5 -7 flowers. Blooms in midseason. Leaves are heavily textured, about 2" long, dull, dark green. Upright habit. Grows twice as wide as tall. Height: 2 feet in 10 years. Hardy to -21°C (page 193 in Greer)



R. 'Vuyk's Scarlet'

Produces masses of crimson red, funnel-shaped flowers in early May. This evergreen Azalea forms a neat, compact shrub. The low, spreading branches are cloaked in small, glossy evergreen leaves that provide year-round colour in acid borders and containers. Height: 90cm (36"). Spread: 120cm



R. 'Sir Charles Lemon' *[donated by Garth Wedemire]*

An evergreen shrub, usually to about 2m high, sometimes 3m in ideal conditions. An upright, tree-like habit, and elliptic, dark green leaves with a cinnamon-coloured felting on the undersides. New leaves unfold covered with fine white wool. Rounded clusters of bell-shaped, pure white flowers, with sparse dark red speckles on the upper petals, in mid spring. May take some years to flower. (page 196 in Greer)

CVRG

By Maureen Denny

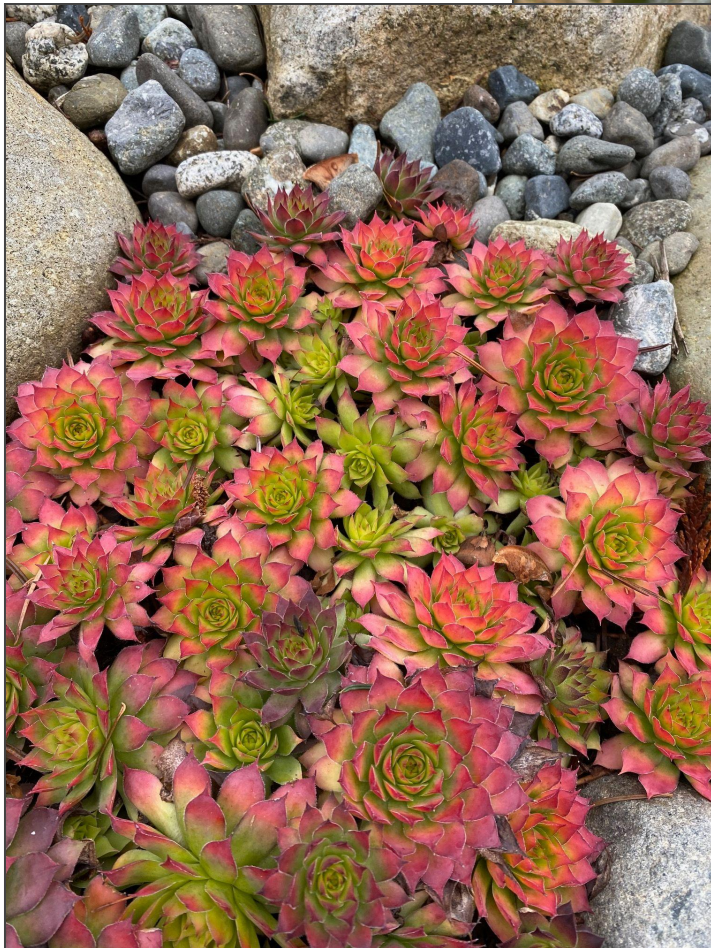
Snow is on the ground today as I write this to announce that the first work party at the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden (CVRG) for the season will be Thursday March 16th at 10 am. This will be a general clean up session which usually involves raking, weeding, sweeping, and picking up branch litter from the trees. If the weather is warm enough we gather afterwards for coffee and goodies at the picnic table. Work parties are (mostly) more fun than work and a chance to get together with club members. Everyone is welcome!

As we await full-on spring, take a look at the [history of the CVRG](#) and a video tour of the garden in bloom with Garth and Sue.

Looking forward to seeing you March 16, weather permitting.

Hamamelis x intermedia 'Jelena'

photo by Jean Looy



Sempervivum 'Orange Glow'

photo by Nadine Boudreau

Plant of the Month

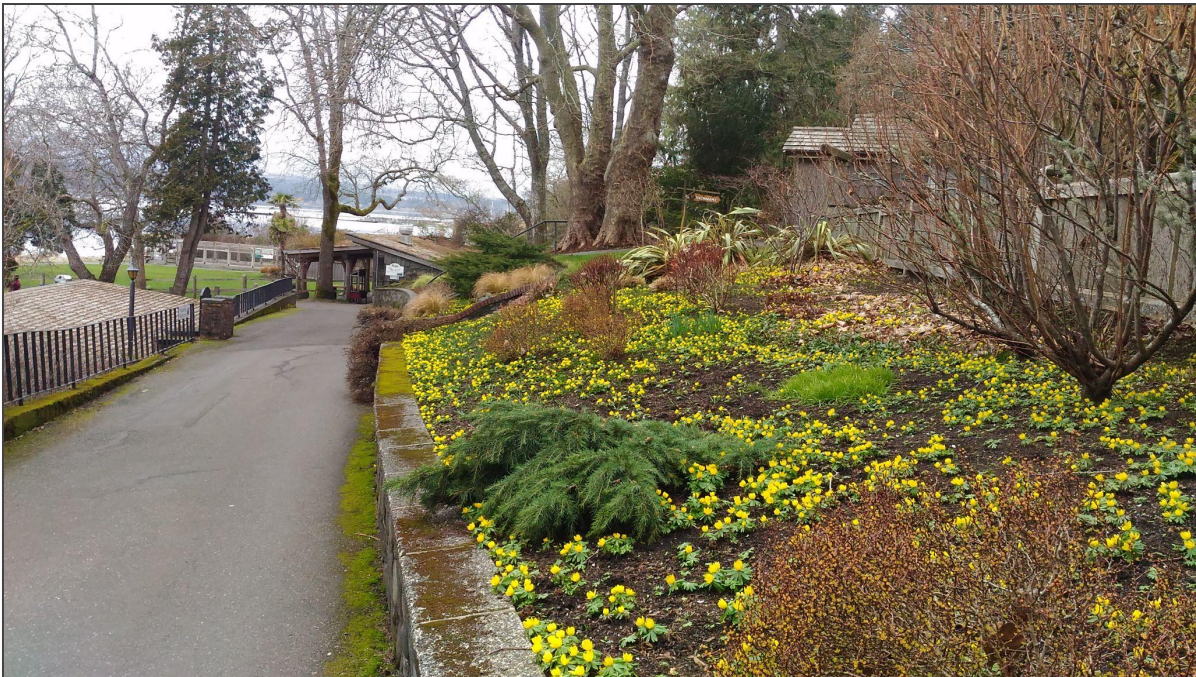
by Ron Sutton

Rhododendron 'Canby' (name changed to 'Starbursts')

Here is a wonderful rhododendron from the Frank Fujioka hybridization program. There is very little information available for it, but it does have R. 'Starbright Champagne' as part of its genetics. The flowers are quite distinctive with shell pink elongated petals, resting on dark green leaves. In early to mid-May it produces trusses of 9-10 flowers.

Classed as a dwarf rhododendron, it will grow to approximately five feet high by 5 feet wide in 10 years. It likes full sun and is hardy to -18°C, USDA zone 7. My plant, seen in the photo taken May 13, 2022, gets a great deal of full sun and grows well.

I purchased my plant in 2019 from Whitney gardens in Washington. Regarding the name, it was sold to me as R. 'Canby', but I have since learned the name is being changed to R. 'Starbursts'. To my knowledge, the name change hasn't been registered yet. Definitely recommended - if you can find one.



Winter Aconites photo taken at Filberg Park by Antje Guertler

Milner Gardens Update

By Jill Gould

As I mentioned at our last meeting I attended a meeting of the Species Garden Advisory Group at Milner Gardens on February 1. Milner Gardens is a partnership with Milner Gardens & Woodland and Vancouver Island University.

Five years ago, the Species Garden was opened. Some of you may have been in attendance at the ceremony. Phase One of the garden was planted by that time, but Phase Two was still just on paper. Phase One is now looking splendid, though some plants have died and will need replacement, avoiding too-tender species if possible.

The focus for future development is Phase Two (Big-Leaf species), which will extend eastwards down the slope toward the shoreline. To this end, Jim Cadwaladr, a retired landscape architect who drew up the original Species Garden plans, attended the meeting and presented copies of his drawings from 2014, 2018 and 2019 for us to view.

Several obstacles are present: The slope to the beach is very unstable, (sandy soil and steep bank) and large trees have to be preserved. Each tree has to be measured, identified and tagged. Some may have to be removed. Also, “weed” species have to be eradicated, if possible without endangering the terrain. There is a service road to the beach, which is not open to the public. It is intended to keep it that way; therefore stairs to the beach are not an option. Any future public access to Phase Two will be by Milner guided tours only, and no access by the general public from the beach will be permitted for security and safety reasons. The plan necessitates consultations with archaeologists (possible artifacts), arborists, experts in slope stabilization and other consultants.

Jim said that the timeline to completion is about five years with limited access possible within two years. A viewing platform above Phase Two is already in place. Jim then announced that since he was retired, this was his last project! A tremendous and valuable job and we are very grateful for his years of work.

This spring, a special opening day will be announced for members of all Vancouver Island ARS clubs (that's us!) to celebrate the five-year anniversary. The date is still under discussion. I will let you know.



Hellebore mixed planter photo by Kathy Haigh



Iris reticulata 'Harmony'

Photo by Garth Wedemire



R. 'Olive'

Photo by Judy Walker



Cyclamen

Photo by Judy Walker



Double snowdrops

Photo by Judy Walker

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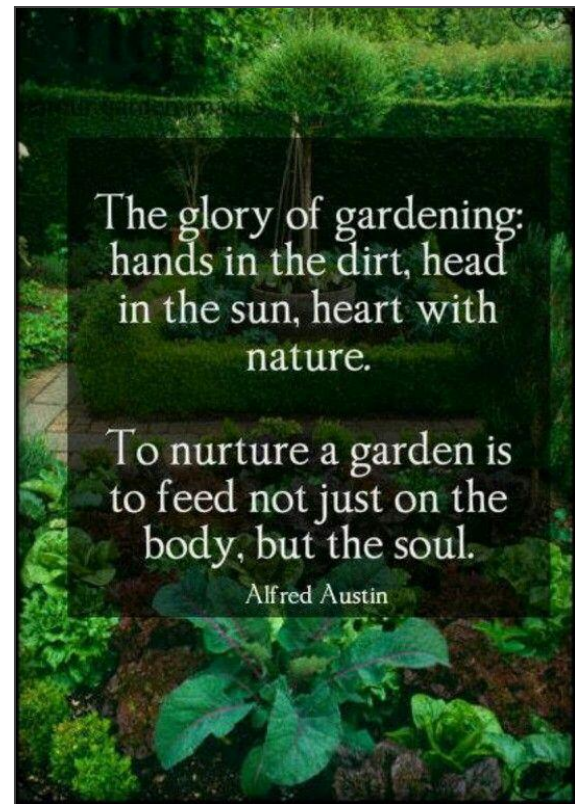
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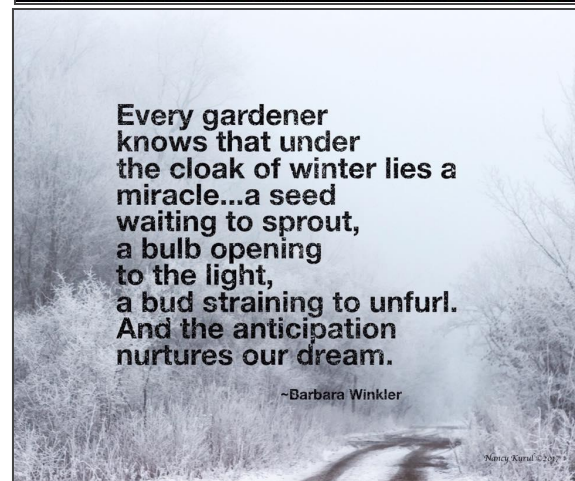
<http://www.nirsrhodos.ca>



The glory of gardening:
hands in the dirt, head
in the sun, heart with
nature.

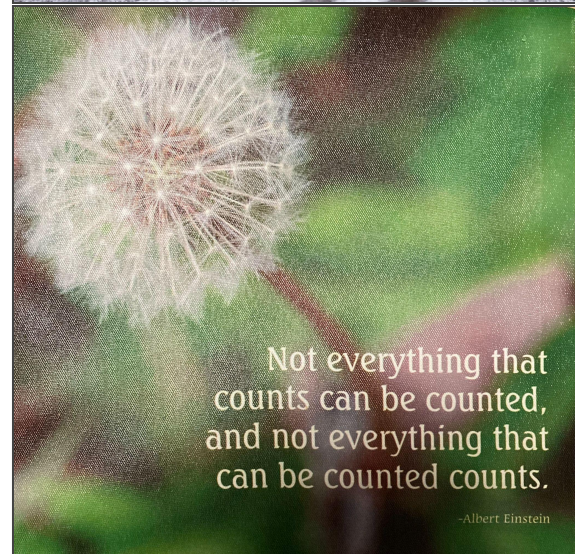
To nurture a garden is
to feed not just on the
body, but the soul.

Alfred Austin



Every gardener
knows that under
the cloak of winter lies a
miracle...a seed
waiting to sprout,
a bulb opening
to the light,
a bud straining to unfurl.
And the anticipation
nurtures our dream.

-Barbara Winkler



Not everything that
counts can be counted,
and not everything that
can be counted counts.

-Albert Einstein