

THE RHODOTELLER



Rhododendron 'Whisperingrose' photo by Kathy Haigh

Meetings & Events

- Oct 4 Executive Meeting
- Oct 10 Chapter General Meeting at
Comox United Church 7:30 pm
- Oct 12 Work Party at CVRG 10 am
- Oct 14 Newsletter submission deadline

Oct 19-21 ARS 2023 Fall [Conference](#)

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



Japanese Anemones photo by Jean Looy

President's View

by Naomi Chester

As I write this the Fall Crocus are in full bloom and the garden is offering glimpses of the glorious fall colours to come. It's so easy to get overwhelmed with all the gardening tasks to do at this time of year as we prepare for winter that I keep reminding myself, and my fellow gardeners, of the Lao Tzu quote, "Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished."



It was so lovely to see so many of you in attendance for the September meeting and I look forward to seeing you at the October 10th meeting when Kerry Ann Griffiths of Church Street Urban Farm will be joining us to speak about "No Dig Gardening." I don't know about you but anything that minimizes/eradicates the need for digging is something I'd like to learn more about! Please see the article in the newsletter for more details.

Last month I shared our gratitude to the watering team for looking after the propagation rhododendrons and am pleased to report that it was unanimously decided at the Executive meeting that each person would receive a rhododendron as a token of our appreciation.

We're currently looking for volunteers to assist in the organizing of the 2024 Mother's Day Garden Tour and a Members Bus Tour. If you're interested,

please send me (or Carolyn Chester) an email or give us a call. The Executive committee is there to offer support/work together and we would very much appreciate other members joining us to help provide these events for the membership/public.

Lastly, if anyone is planning on attending the 2023 Fall Western Regional Rhododendron Conference in Florence, Oregon October 19-21 please let us know. If you are interested in finding out more about the conference, please go to page 139 of your Summer ARS Journal or go to www.siuslawars.org

Happy Fall gardening!



*Photos: (above) Colchicum autumnale by Jean Looy,
(right) hardy hibiscus "Cherry Choco Latte"
by Naomi Chester*

Remembering Bernie

By Garth Wedemire and Sue Grant

He had one of those smiles that lit up the moment he made eye contact with you. No matter the setting – in his garden, at his front door, out shopping, at a plant sale or a rhodo club meeting, when he met you he would look right at you, call you by name and immediately ask how you were doing.

We knew **of** Bernie before we actually **knew** Bernie. After retiring from the RCAF in 1977, Bernie decided to get serious about one of his hobbies, gardening. Inspired by his father-in-law's membership in the Alpine Garden Club of BC and after hiking in the local hills, he decided to get involved in alpines and rock gardens. His membership in the AGCBC as well as the Scottish Rock Garden Club allowed him access to their seed exchanges. He planted the seeds and in turn a seed was planted to begin a small nursery producing plants for sale. Bernie sold his plants (along with their stories) at community plant sales and to the Horticultural Center of the Pacific.

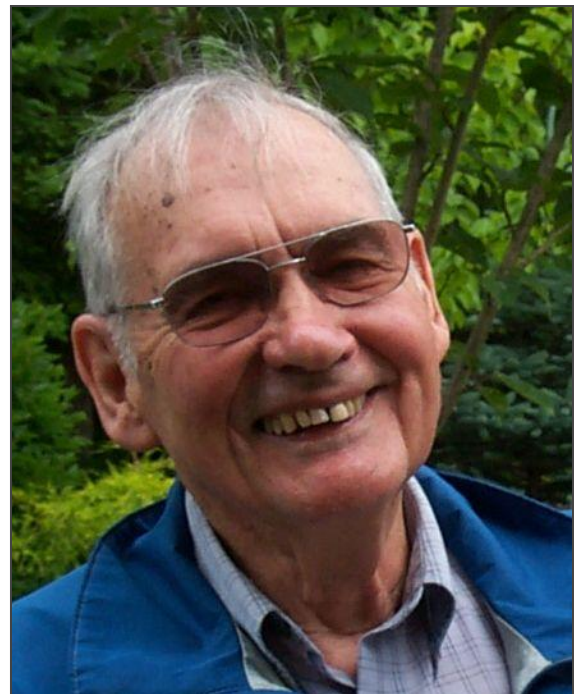
Bernie's new career in the nursery business brought him in touch with other nursery people in the Comox Valley who felt they should have a garden club. Together they started the Comox Valley Horticultural Society with Bernie as its first President.

Bernie worked for Harry Wright in his landscape maintenance business and Harry inspired him to consider dwarf rhododendrons for a rock garden he was constructing. Bernie was an early member of the North Island Rhododendron Society and was involved with moving the remaining Greig rhododendrons from Royston to Filberg Lodge. Subsequent to that, he was instrumental in designing and planting the Courtenay Rhododendron Garden. (*Ed. note: Now known as the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden.*)

Bernie was always looking for ways to give to the community and to his friends. For example, when Ucluelet decided to honour George Fraser, Bernie donated and helped collect and deliver the rhododendrons to Ucluelet for the George Fraser project. And whenever friends would drop over to chat and take a peek at Bernie and Gloria's Garden they were usually gifted with a plant or two from the nursery before they went home.

Bernie loved to share his knowledge of plants – writing and speaking on various topics throughout the years. Favourite topics included:

- The Wildflowers of Strathcona
- Paradise Meadows
- The Smaller Rhododendrons
- Companion Plants: Rhodos and Gentians



Bernie Guyader in 2014

As well, Bernie contributed to the Journal of the American Rhododendron Society – with his own photos as illustrations.

Bernie had several favourite plants – among them were Gentians, Hepaticas, Erythronium and dwarf rhododendrons. Highlights of Bernie's garden include:

- 'Sir Charles Lemon',
- R. parvifolium 'Ocelot',
- R. pachysanthum,
- Daphne tangutica, and
- many Harry Wright rhododendron hybrids.

In May of this year, the Qualicum Garden Club toured the Guyader 'Alpine Meadows' garden and noted the following in their newsletter: *"On May 6 we visited Bernie Guyader's beautiful and interesting garden. He has lots of troughs, rock gardens, an alpine meadow, bonsai, a pond and rhododendrons amongst other things! Some of his rhodos are from seed. We enjoyed our tour on a very hot day and were glad of a sit-down on Bernie's patio with ice cold lemonade and a view of Comox Glacier."*



When Bernie received the NIRS Bronze Medal in May 2000 he was said to have been generous with his time and knowledge in assisting with chapter activities, such as plant sales, garden tours and helping with committee positions. This was as true in 2023 as it was 23 years ago.

Bernie Guyader, your love of life and of plants was contagious. We'll treasure the plants you shared with us even as we remember your friendship with great fondness.

R. 'Eunie' photo by Jean Looy

CVRG

By Maureen Denny

Weather permitting, our last Work Party of this year will be held Thursday, October 12th at 10 am. Meet at the parking lot at Courtenay Marina/Comox Valley Kayaks & Canoes. This will be a general clean up, please bring your own tools and a bucket. Come join the fun, goodies and coffee afterwards. Everyone welcome!

Work Party Volunteers

In order to encourage new members to join us at the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden (CVRG) work parties along with our committed work party volunteers, we have decided to trial a prize draw.

How it works: Show up to a scheduled work party and check in with Maureen, Dave or Naomi. We will maintain a list of volunteers for each work party. Each time you go, your name will be entered into a draw for a gift certificate. The more work parties you show up to the greater the number of entries you will have in the draw. The draw will take place in September 2024, so there will be several opportunities to join us for either the fall/spring mornings and/or summer evening work parties.



Acer japonicum 'Aconitifolium' photo by Jean Looy

Oct. 10 Guest Speaker Kerry Ann Griffiths: 'No Dig' Gardening



Kerry Ann will be our speaker for the Tuesday, October 10th meeting. She is a local food-based educator and grower who is passionate about food security and inspiring others to 'grow your own'!

She has built a 'No Dig' demonstration garden on her urban lot in Comox called Church Street Urban Farm.

Her focus lies in education around the benefits of healthy soil life, such as increased fertility and water retention, decreased pest pressure and attracting beneficial pollinators to the garden. She continues to build a local community of people who value biodiversity and looks forward to sharing her experiences transforming a once barren space into a lush, food-producing oasis.

Be sure to join us for this educational presentation. Doors open at 7 PM and meeting/presentation begins at 7:30 PM.

Membership

By Dan Ryan

At the September meeting there were 33 members and 1 guest. We received 16 renewals.

We welcomed Henrie Beaudoin and Patrice Guillo as new members. There are now a total of 82 members, including 7 associates.

It's time to renew! The dues for Membership are; regular \$40.00 and \$10.00 for an Associate. You can mail your cheque, payable to NIRS, to P.O. Box 3183 Courtenay B.C. V9N 5N4 or e-transfer \$40.00 to the Club Treasurer Noni Godfrey (nonigod@Shaw.ca) or you can bring cash or cheque to the October meeting.



Lace cap hydrangea and Butterfly bush 'Buddleia davidii' photos by Valerie Ferris

Ways & Means

October Raffle Prizes

by Aubrey Ferris



Rhododendron cinnabarinum ssp. xanthocodon

Pretty pale or creamy yellow campanulate flowers in May and June. This plant is easily grown and has wonderful small leaves with grey-green foliage. It will perform best in open light shade, and it does need good drainage. Height about 4 feet in 10 years. Small Leaved. Habit: upright.

Recommended for great foliage and pretty flowers. Easy to grow.

R. 'Yummy Yak'

Dwarf hybrid rhododendron from Sandy, Oregon, known as much for its rounded growth habit and attractive indumentum foliage as for its richly pink flowered trusses. Hardy to -10°F/-23°C when protected from windchill, this midseason bloomer does well in full sun to partial shade.



Watering our Rhodo Stock – Thank you! By Diana Scott

Our club houses several hundred rhodo and azalea plants at the Smith Gardens. Over the past few years a small team of members has taken on the job of keeping them all well watered and weeded over the summer and fall. We had teams of two and each watered on a particular day of the week which meant that most only had to be on site every second week. It worked beautifully and many hands made for 'light work'. Once the weather turned really hot, Dave and his team rolled out the shade cloth which kept the leaves from burning and the pots from drying out so quickly. As fall approached the shade cloth was taken off. The plants are looking good and many have budded up nicely for next spring.

A big "THANK YOU" goes to Antje who heads up the plant care and does double duty on the watering, and to the teams who tended our stock so ably again this year:

- Cathie Arnold and Joe and Helen Stefiuk
- Carolyn Chester and Judy Walker
- Dan Ryan and Dave and Noni Godfrey
- Antje Guertler and Patty Matthews
- Diana Scott and Sheryl Murakami

The group was delighted when the NIRS Executive showed their appreciation this fall by allowing each of us to pick one of the rhodos. What a lovely surprise! Thank you!

Database help needed

by Naomi Chester

Database for species and hybrid rhododendrons

At recent ARS District 1 meetings, where representatives of each chapter from the island and lower mainland gather, we have been discussing the creation of a database for the rhododendrons that we have in our gardens. With the destruction of their native habitat, there are many species rhododendrons that are now considered endangered or vulnerable and are, therefore, a matter of conservation. Likewise with the reduced number of hybrids being propagated in commercial nurseries many of the older varieties are no longer propagated, except perhaps amongst our club propagation groups/individuals.

As a result, we are looking to get an idea of which rhododendrons we have amongst our memberships so that we can potentially gather seed/propagate from those rhododendrons that are rarer (with consent of course). It will also give us more information about where the gaps are in our diverse collections so that we may take steps to remedy that as a District.

How you can help: Please make two separate lists, one of your species rhododendrons and one of your hybrids. Please include only those that have definite identifications since most of us have a few “Unks” (unknowns) in our gardens and we need to be as accurate as possible for this. You can make your lists in a Word document (or similar) and email it to me at naomichester@yahoo.com or handwrite your list (capital letters please) and hand it to me at a meeting or mail it, I’m not fussy. ;) Alphabetical order would be amazing but not essential. Your privacy is important so no names or addresses will be on the database itself.

I would very much appreciate receiving these lists by January 31st, 2024 so that I (**and maybe a volunteer or two?**) can create our database before the March District 1 meeting. Thank you and a huge thank you to those of you who have already submitted your lists!



Rosa 'Topaz Jewel' (last rose of summer) photo by Jean Looy

Plant of the Month

by Ron Sutton

Rhododendron gongshanense

Here is a desirable and rare rhododendron that died on me, but I would like to try growing again. I purchased my plant from the RSBG, back in 2019, but it only lasted two winters.

The RSBG says that this plant is a fairly recent discovery. It is found growing wild in Gaoligang Mountains of NW Yunnan, China, and is threatened by habitat destruction. It is somewhat tender, as I discovered, listed hardy to only 10°F/-12°C.

The growth rate is approximately 5 feet in 10 years. It's long narrow, up to 10" leaves have veins embossed on the surface, and the new growth is bronze in colour. The red flowers, which arrive in early spring, form tight trusses.

The first photo is of my plant recently planted. The second photo is *R. gongshanense* in flower, which I took inside the RSBG greenhouse, on March 25 of this year.



The RSBG isn't the only source for this rhododendron, it can also be purchased from Chimacum Woods, a nursery in Washington. This is what they wrote regarding hardiness, "*Because the flowers and new growth come very early – January or so – this plant is best suited for the milder areas. One of our seedlings growing in the garden, has shown good hardiness, coming through some nasty winters unharmed over its 20 years. It also seems to do well in a container.*"

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'Moser's Maroon' with a bee, photo by Dan Ryan



Bee on Japanese Anemone, photo by Valerie Ferris

<http://www.nirsrhodos.ca>