

THE RHODOTELLER



Rhododendron 'Mrs. Charles E Pearson' photo by Jean Looy

Meetings & Events

- Sept 6 Executive Meeting
- Sept 12 Chapter General Meeting at Comox
United Church 7:30 pm
- Sept 14 Work Party at CVRG 10 am

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

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



Maureen and Judy at Filberg Park "Living the Garden Life" event. Photo by Naomi Chester

President's View

by Naomi Chester

After what has been another challenging summer across the province, I am sure many of you will join me in welcoming the return of cooler temperatures and, hopefully, some rain. I look forward to speaking more with you all about what you found worked well for you in your gardens with the heat/drought and what your concerns and/or challenges are going forward.



Our community spirit was certainly evident at our Summer Picnic where we had probably the best rain of the summer and a lot of fun. I would like to thank everyone who came together to share food, laughter and umbrellas! Thank you to Robert Argall for hosting us in his picturesque garden once again. The picnic gave us an opportunity to present Antje Guertler with a token of our appreciation for her ongoing work with the club and also to thank Dave Godfrey for his time and efforts as President.

The NIRS was represented at Filberg Park's Living the Garden Life event in June. Thank you to Maureen Denny, Judy Walker and Carolyn Chester for joining me in volunteering to host our table. A very enjoyable day was had by all.

As well as looking after our own gardens, it was wonderful to see several new members at the summer work parties at the Comox Valley

Rhododendron Garden (CVRG) along with our stalwart members. It was lovely to hear from these new members, in particular, about how much they enjoyed the social and community aspects of maintaining this beautiful area that is very much enjoyed by the public. The garden is looking very healthy and that is down to all those who attended the parties so thank you everyone. Special thanks to Maureen Denny for organizing us all and to Antje Guertler for making sure we have goodies afterwards. As we enter September we say au revoir to our summer evening work parties and resume our monthly Thursday morning gatherings instead.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our reliable watering team who took fantastic care of the propagation rhododendrons this summer and who will be continuing to do so until sufficient rains arrive. In no particular order: Antje Guertler, Cathie Arnold, Joe and Helen Stefiuk, Judy Walker, Carolyn Chester, Dan Ryan, Dave and Noni Godfrey, Diana Scott, Sheryl Murakami and Patty Matthews. Special thanks to Diana who has been organizing the watering schedule for over 6 years now.

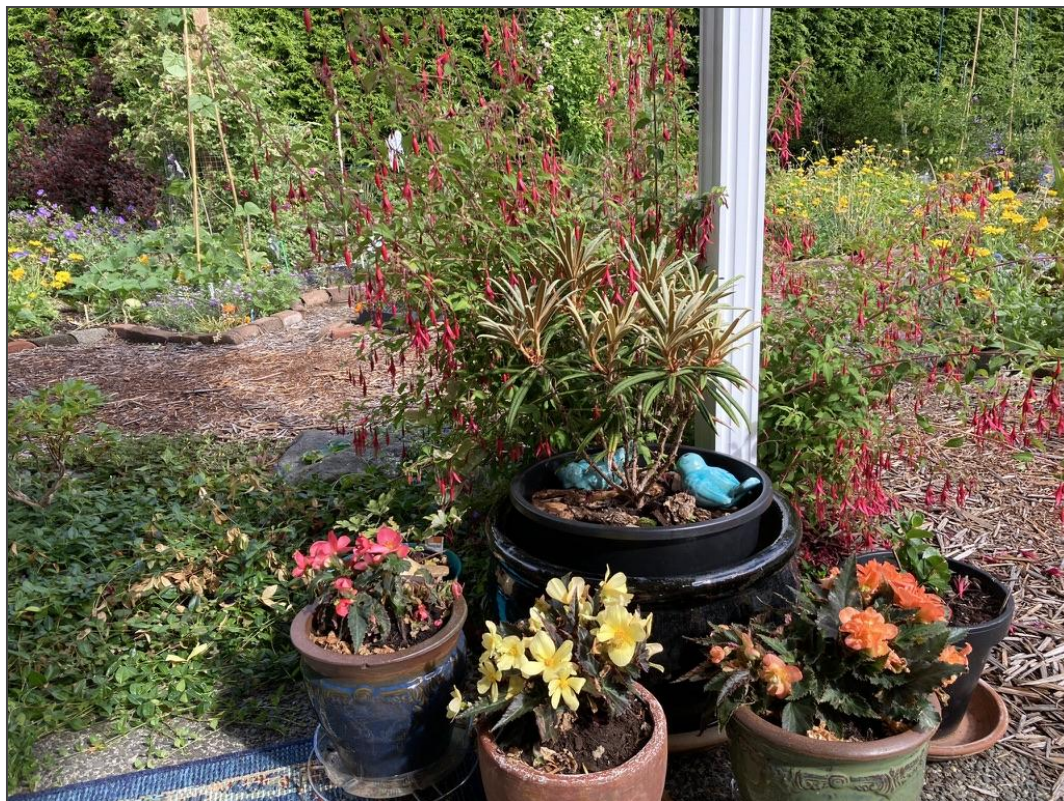
Much gratitude is also extended to Doug Kitts of the MARS Chapter who generously donated over 100 of his propagated rhododendron plants to our chapter further bolstering the efforts of our propagation group. These will be ready for sale in the next year or two.

I'm looking forward to seeing you all at our September 12th meeting where we will be joined by Glen Jamieson, our District 1 director and editor of the American Rhododendron Society Journal (JARS), who will be presenting our program for the evening. Word is that there will be some hard-to-come-by plants at the revenue table too....

Until then,
Naomi



*"Bumblebees love leek
flowers."
Photo by Jill Gould*



*'Makinoi'
surrounded by
begonias and
hardy fuschia.
Photo by Kathy
Haigh*

News Flash! Vireyas!

By Diana Scott

The club has acquired a number of small hybrid vireya plants from Doug Kitts of the MARS Chapter in Parksville and will be offering them for sale at our Revenue Table in the fall. A vireya would be an exceptional addition to the collection for any of our Rhodo enthusiasts!



Vireyas are a tropical/semi-tropical rhododendron, native to southeast Asia with one species found in Australia. Like lepidote rhododendrons they have scales, but they don't look much like other rhodos. Vireyas are both epiphytes and terrestrials, with different species found growing in mossy clefts of tree branches and others on rocks or growing in the ground. They can vary in size from dwarf to shrubs or even trees. The foliage ranges from foot-long blades to tufts that resemble pine needles. The flowers may be white, through

vibrant yellows, oranges, pinks and reds, and come in shapes from small open cups to spidery clusters of long tubes. The flowers are exquisite, and many are fragrant. Since they come from tropical areas where there is no frost they would not survive year-round in our Vancouver Island gardens. According to Bovees Nursery in Oregon, you can grow Vireyas in a bright spot indoors in the winter, moving them to a dappled shade area or covered patio in the summer (<https://bovees.com/vireya-rhododendrons/>).



To see some species vireyas in bloom, check out the following video where Atsuko Gibson from the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden gives a private tour of the Conservatory:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2h4pt2kAcA>

The following video from the Botanic Gardens of Sydney Australia shows a number of beautiful hybrid vireyas - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zzyUnHkGd4It>

A PDF entitled 'Growing Vireya Rhododendrons' (courtesy of Bovees Nursery in Portland Oregon): <http://rhodyman.net/VFARSGrowingVireyas.pdf>

What a wonderful opportunity to grow one of these beautiful vireyas. The small plants we have are:

- **'Aravir'** – konorii x ('Pink Delight' x jasminiflorum); white wavy lobed flowers; fragrant (Shrub 0.6x0.6m in 8 years.)
- (triumphans x javanicum) x leucogigas - large fragrant red flowers. May be **'Cair Paravel'**
- **'Calavar'** – konori x zoelleri; deep pink with yellow throat; carnation scent; Vireya of the Year 2003 (Compact habit, 0.6x0.8m in 9 years.)
- **'Cape Cod Cranberry'** – konori x viriosum; tubular pink with carnation scent; ARS 2007 ROY Southern Californian/Hawaii (Shrub 0.8x0.9m in 15 years.)
- **'Charlotte Jane'** – parentage unknown; tubular wavy edged-orange (yellowish pink) (Shrub 1.5x1.0m in 6 years.)

- **'Dr Hermann Sleumer'** – pink with creamy white throat; carnation scented (Shrub 1.0m.)
- **'Elizabeth Ann Seton'** – ('Dr. H. Sleumer' x 'Pink Delight') X ('Pink Delight' x jasminiflorum) very light pink; narrow tubular; fragrant (Shrub 0.81x0.66m in 10 years.)
- **'Java Rose'** – 'Salmon Sensation' x javanicum; colours range from red-orange to red; sometimes considered a 'double'
- **'Princess Alexandra'** – jasminiflorum x 'Princess Royal'; long white tubular blush-tinged flowers; ARS 2019 ROY Southern Californian/Hawaii (Dwarf, compact habit.)
- **'Saint Cecilia'** – konori var. phaeoepelum X leucogigas; pink bud opening tubular white with pink markings where petals meet; fragrant; ARS 2009 ROY Southern Californian/Hawaii (Shrub 1.2x0.9m in 10 years.)
- **'Shantung Pink'** – {(konori var phaeochitum x viriosum) X leucogigas} X laetum; ruffled pink with yellowish pink throat; scented (Shrub 2.0m.)
- **'Veronica Maureen'** – (christianae x viriosum) x zoelleri; inside yellow fading to orange at edges; ARS 2017 ROY Southern Californian/Hawaii (Shrub 0.6x0.5m in 10 years.)
- **Unknown** (no label) – has 2 buds!
- **Unknown** (no label) – has flowers that look a bit like **'Shantung Rose'** or perhaps **'Veronica Maureen'**
- **'Purple Lace'** – I couldn't find any information on the one with this label.

If the unknown is **'Shantung Rose'** ((konori var. phaeoepelum x viriosum) x leucogigas) x laetum. Flowers tubular funnel-shaped, deep pink (Shrub 1.0m tall.)

Sept. 12 Guest Speaker



Dr. Glen Jamieson has a B.Sc. in Agriculture from McGill University and a M.Sc. and Ph.D. in Zoology from University of British Columbia. He worked for Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) as a research scientist for 31 years, both in the Maritimes (5 years) and at the Pacific Biological Station in Nanaimo, B.C. (26 years.)

He retired from DFO in 2008 and became editor of the Journal of the American Rhododendron Society in 2009. Earlier, in 1995, he had joined the American Rhododendron Society.

Glen lives in Parksville with his wife Dorothy, where they maintain a garden that is periodically on the garden tour of the local ARS chapter, Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society (MARS). He has an extensive vireya collection that is possibly the largest in Canada. As well as serving as the editor of JARS, he also created the online journal of Rhododendrons International.

Iceland, the Nordic, most sparsely populated European country, has become a very popular tourist destination in recent years. For two weeks in June 2022, Dorothy and Glen circumnavigated the island by car, visiting all the main tourist sites and many interesting remote locations.

Glen's presentation **"ICELAND – Land of Ice and Fire"** will showcase their travels, illustrating the country's history, scenery, communities, biodiversity, rhododendron gardening, and food. Doors open at 7 pm and presentation begins at 7:30 pm.

Native Plant

by Jill Gould

Camas (*Camassia quamash*)

Camas is a BC native plant with universal appeal! Once widely established in the Comox Valley, it has been largely eradicated in the wild by agricultural and residential development.

The range of Camas is vast: from southern Canada (including Vancouver Island) to the northwest US, and from BC east to Montana. On Vancouver Island it was associated with the Garry Oak ecosystem, with “meadows” of Camas, cultured by indigenous peoples who used the plant’s bulbs as a major food source.



Camas is a perennial bulb with flower stalks 20 – 120 cm tall. Grassy, long shiny leaves appear in spring. The lovely blue flowers appear in late spring or early summer. After flowering the foliage dies down and the bulb becomes dormant, much like daffodils. Camas’ native habitat is grassy meadows; it can be naturalized in meadows and woodland gardens, or planted in groups in a more formal garden. It prefers moist, well-drained humus-rich soil. Plant camas in full sun to part shade.

Camas became a popular garden plant after its “discovery” by the Lewis & Clark expedition (1804-1806). Seeds were sent to Europe. Bulbs can now be purchased in garden centres, shipped to us by European growers. The native habitat of Camas in the Comox Valley has been reduced to small areas such as Point Holmes.

My bulbs were a rescue from a site near Comox Airport. As Camas will self-seed freely I was able to increase them. Camas seed will take three years or so to reach flowering size. This fall, seed from these plants will be available at NIRS meetings for you to start your own Camas garden: the real deal, native plants from native source!



Further information can be obtained from the Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team website. (www.goert.ca/propagation)

Clematis buds and blossoms.
Photo by Dan Ryan

Plant of the Month

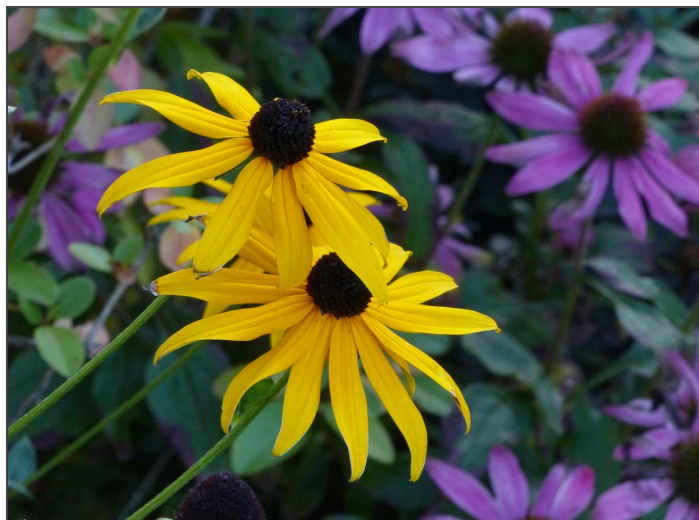
by Ron Sutton

Rhododendron trichostomum is an interesting dwarf lepidote species rhododendron that everyone can find room for. It is one tough small rhododendron that can take -20°C and full sun. I grew one in southern Ontario, and I'm growing one here in Fanny Bay. Of course, it does better here than in Ontario.

This plant belongs to section Pogonanthum and is native to Yunnan and Sichuan China. It is a slow-growing dwarf shrub and will only reach 2 feet in height in 10 years. In early May it will produce small tight trusses made up of 10-12 pink florets, that look like Daphne flowers. The flowers are not fragrant, but the leaves when rubbed, give off a faint scent.

This rhododendron is kind of unique, of the many that I grow, with its small dark shiny leaves and small pink pom pom flower trusses. This photo of my plant was taken on May 16.

The problem is that it isn't easy to find in the nursery trade. I got my first plant in Ontario from Greer Gardens, and the current one from the now-closed Fearing Farm Nursery. A quick check of the nurseries that grow species rhododendrons, the RSBG and Chimacum Woods, shows no listing for it.



Rudbeckia 'Goldsturm' Photo by Diana Scott

Membership By Dan Ryan

NIRS currently has 81 members, including 7 associates and 2 lifetime members.

Welcome new members Luana Carlson & Allan Cartwright, Sandy Lipovsky, and Scott & Brenda Lougheed.

Membership renewals for 2024 will begin at the September 12 regular meeting at the Comox United Church. Doors open at 7 p.m. See you there.

Ways & Means

by Aubrey Ferris



Raffle Prizes for Sept 12:

'Royal Purple'

Flower small, deep purple with a yellowish blotch. Ball-shaped truss has about 12 flowers. Leaves glossy, deep green. Grows to height of 4 feet in 10 years.

This photo was taken by Harry Wright.

Page 187 in Greer's Guidebook



'Heart's Delight'

Showy shrub that likes full sun to partial shade. Very nice as a cut flower. Large trusses of light vibrant red with a deeper marking. Deep green leaves give dense leaf cover. 1.6m in height. Great shaped plant.

Page 139 in Greer's Guidebook

CVRG

By Maureen Denny

Thank you to all the club members who came out to the evening work parties over the summer. And special thanks to Antje for cheerfully bringing treats and coffee for each meeting.

Despite the drought, the Rhodos are doing quite well, just a few showing signs of stress with droopy leaves. They will all appreciate the cooler weather that is forecast for the next few weeks (as well as the gardeners who look after them!). The work parties will now change to a morning schedule. The next work party will be held Thursday, September 14th at 10am. This will be a general clean up session, weeding raking, and some pruning. Please bring your own tools and a bucket. We gather after one hour of work at the picnic table for decaf coffee and treats.

For any new members, The Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden is located along Cliffe Avenue just beside Comox Valley Kayaks, accessible by the main parking lot for the Airpark Walkway. We always have fun...come and join us!

Board of Directors & Committee Chairs 2023/2024

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'Vulcan' and

Styrax tree in bloom photos by Valerie Ferris



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<http://www.nirsrhodos.ca>