

THE RHODOTELLER



R. calophytum x repens photo by Diana Scott (above)

R. calophytum photo by Jean Looy (right)

Meetings & Events

- April 3 Executive Meeting
- April 9 General Meeting: Margaret Cadwaladr
- April 11 CVRG work party
- April 28 Annual Rhododendron Sale and Show
- May 12 NIRS Mother's Day Garden Tour
- May 14 AGM at McNabbs

<http://www.nirsrhodos.ca>



President's View

By Naomi Chester

"April is the kindest month. April gets you out of your head and out working in the garden."
Marty Rubin

March certainly gave us a taste of every season with glorious Spring-like days after the snow and rain. Our hearts are imbued with the longing to be out gardening after witnessing the late Winter/early Spring blooms. The bees are already active and bird song fills the air. Personally, I love every season but there's just something so special about early Spring with the bright colours of the blooming bulbs, forsythia and, of course, the rhododendron flowering season really gets going now!

It was wonderful to see such a great turnout for our March meeting. Thank you again to our member, Keith Russell, for taking the time to put together such a great presentation on "Bonsai". We very much enjoyed hearing about his life-long (almost!) passion for the art and viewing the engaging display of specimens at various stages.



CVRG work party - photo by Noni Godfrey

Thank you to Judy Walker for recently opening up her garden to view her stunning display of naturalized Chionodoxa. Thank you also to Robert Argall who has offered to open his garden for us all to enjoy the splendid Spring bloom display over the coming weeks (date to be announced). If you would like to open your garden to the membership please let me know. A minimum of a few days' notice would be much appreciated.

[continued...]

Thank you to those of you who made it to the first work party of the year at the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden. Remember, each time you come to a work party, your name will be entered into a prize draw that will take place in September. The more times you help out, the greater your chances are of winning! The next work party will be Thursday, April 11th at 10 am.



Judy Walker's Chionodoxa - photo by Valerie Ferris

April 28th will see our annual Rhododendron Plant Sale and Show at the K'ómoks First Nation Hall in Comox. This is a hugely popular event and an important fundraiser for the club. It is also a fun, social event for our volunteers. If you would like to volunteer please contact Nadine Boudreau. There are many different roles available with something for everybody. Thank you to those who have already put their names forward. As ever, plant donations for the companion plants tables are most welcome.

Volunteers A.K.A. Garden sitters are also needed for the Mother's Day Garden Tour coming up on May 12th. The role involves "sitting" one of the gardens that are on the tour for a 3-hour shift, welcoming visitors and counting/validating tickets. Volunteers receive a complimentary garden tour ticket to be used before or after their shift. Please contact Carolyn Chester or Nadine Boudreau to sign up, thank you!

I look forward to seeing many of you at the upcoming meeting, on Tuesday, April 9th.

Wishing you all a very happy Spring!

Naomi

R. 'Pink Snowflakes' photo by Naomi Chester



CVRG

By Maureen Denny

Thank you to all 14 volunteers who participated in our first work party of the season on March 14th. What a great turnout!



Volunteers snacking - photo by Noni Godfrey

The next work party will be held on Thursday, April 11th at 10 am - hope to see you there. We gather at the picnic table for goodies (please bring some to share if you wish) and coffee when the work is done. Bring your secateurs, a bucket, a rake, and a trowel. If you can bring a wheelbarrow please do.

The Rhododendrons are all covered in lots of buds and looking healthy - we can look forward to a great show of flowers.

Greig Rhododendron Species Garden at Milner

By Jill Gould

On March 19, I attended our “irregular-regular” meeting of the steering group for the Species Garden, held in lovely Milner House. There has been no work done this winter on the Garden but volunteer “Work Parties” will commence later this month, as a big clean-up and weeding will be necessary.

Milner Gardens is having some upgrade work done on the driveways to enable electrical conduit to be run for future lighting, and paving of certain parts of the driveway as funds permit. Right now, things are a bit torn up and access limited.

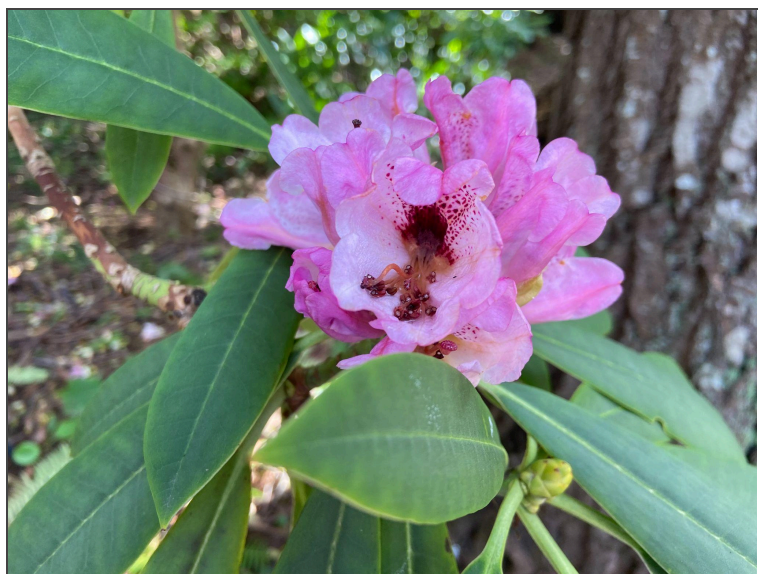
Over the winter, some of our plants were lost, but as of today’s date, several rhododendrons are starting to bloom. Over at the propagation/nursery/growing area (completed last year), some smaller plants were also lost, but most survived.

The main push right now, as far as the Species Garden is concerned, is the construction of Phase Two, which will contain big-leaf and shade-loving Rhododendrons. This area is the slope to the east of the existing garden (towards the shoreline) which has a 35% grade, so it will be tricky to plant. Discussions as to slope stabilisation and planting on a slope are ongoing. Help has been sought internationally, from UBC, the USA and even New Zealand as to the type of plants we have to order, and how they will be sited. Advice ranges from “use lots of large woody debris” to recommending wattle fences to hold the soil, and rebar to anchor the root balls on larger plants.

The species to be selected is a large list, which is still subject to some discussion, especially dealing with availability. There is a possibility of trying to get “Red-listed” or rare Rhododendrons in order to preserve the species. It is also recommended to buy multiples in case of plant loss.

In the meantime, some clearing of unwanted trees has been carried out, mostly Big-Leaf Maple, Balsam (Grand) Fir and some ailing cedars. It has made a real difference in opening up the area. Now, from the “Viewing Platform,” one can see down towards the property edge and the beach, and envision where the Rhodos will go. As you can imagine, this is a long-term project!

This spring, another “open garden” for all Rhododendron clubs will be held, the date to be announced. I’ll let you know, as a lot of you will want to see the Rhododendrons in bloom.



R. praevernium photo by Jean Looy

Member-to-Member Offer

by Ann Bayles



These “heritage” daffodils are reliable bloomers and have been here for many years. The sepals fade to almost white when they mature. They clump up fairly quickly, hence I have lots of non-blooming clumps that need dividing. If you are interested, they are free for the digging and taking! Please send an email to Ann at hcfnuts@shaw.ca, which I check daily.



Mahonia photo by Jean Looy



R. 'Peter Falk' photo by Jean Looy

April 9 Presentation: “Paths to a Garden”

by Dave Godfrey



For our meeting on April 9th, guest speaker **Margaret Cadwaladr** explores the influences of Irish garden writer William Robinson and his associates on Veronica Milner, a British aristocrat who developed gardens in Ireland and Qualicum Beach. Her Canadian garden continues to thrive as Milner Gardens & Woodland in Qualicum.

Robinson, known as the “father of the English flower garden”, promoted natural-looking plantings, the use of native and Alpine plants and

rhododendrons established in woodland settings. His ideas are commonplace today but were revolutionary in his time. Two of his books “The Wild Garden” and “The English Flower Garden” are still in print after more than one hundred and fifty years.

A graduate of UBC, Margaret Cadwaladr is the author of “In Veronica’s Garden: the Social History of the Milner Gardens and Woodland”, “A Secret Garden: The Story of Darts Hill Garden Park” and “Food Floor: My Woodward’s Days”. Margaret was born in Vancouver and currently lives in Nanaimo where she is a member of the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society. The meeting begins with her presentation at 7:30 pm in the Comox United Church hall.

Ways & Means April 9 Raffle Prizes

By Aubrey Ferris

R. *williamsianum*



This compact evergreen shrub grows to a height of 1.5 meters (4.9 feet) and has a similar spread. The leaves are rounded and matte green, with a bronze hue when young. In spring it produces charming **bell-shaped flowers** in soft rose-pink hues. These blooms are approximately 5 cm (2 inches) wide and appear in small trusses.

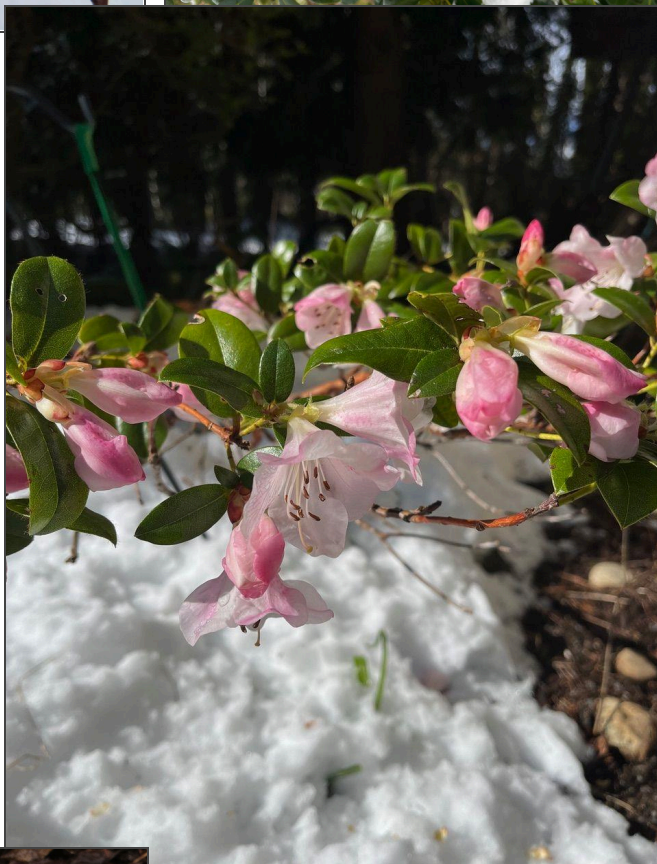
In the UK, *Rhododendron williamsianum* has earned the **Royal Horticultural Society’s Award of Garden Merit**. *Greer book pages 68 and 74.*

R. ‘Betti Maiden’

[photo unavailable]

One of Doug Kitt’s Rhodos he donated to NIRS. We could not find any information about it. Have a look at it before the meeting starts and share your ideas or guesses. Do you have one in your yard?

Spring Snow in our Gardens on March 2nd



Photos clockwise from top left:

Hamamelis x intermedia 'Arnold Promise'
(Witch Hazel) - Jill Gould

Pink Camellia - Jean Looy

R. 'Rosa Mundi' buds - Jill Gould

Tete a Tete daffodils - Jill Gould

Centre photo:

R. moupinense - Katharine Gotto Walton



Rhododendron Sale and Show

by Nadine Boudreau



Our annual Rhododendron Sale and Show will be held on Sunday, **April 28th** at the K'ómoks Hall. The sale runs from 10 am until 1 pm. We will have our propagation rhododendrons for sale, companion plant table and Wolfgang will be a vendor selling plants.

Additionally, a beautiful truss show will be set up, attracting lots of customers to view all the varieties. As the sale nears, please check your garden for trusses to complement our show. If you know the name of the Rhododendron, please write on the back of the leaf with a marker, the night before or the morning of the show when you cut your truss. If you have a nice truss and don't know the name, we can use it in a bouquet for the Ways and Means table.

We will also have our NIRS companion plant table. Please pot up some divisions or seedlings of plants for the sale. Label the plant if possible, and any information you can, ex: flower colour, shade/sun, herbaceous. It would be much appreciated if you have some plants you could divide and pot up for the sale.

This event is a good time to spend with fellow members, whether you are at the plant tables, cash, truss show or with our very important loaders! It's all fun with lots of chit-chat in the kitchen over snacks.

Thank you to those who have already signed up; an email with more details will be coming. If you would like to volunteer, please email me, Nadine, at ger.nadboud@shaw.ca.

Camellia japonica 'Extravaganza' photo by Jean Looy



R. coeloneuron photo by Dave Godfrey



Plant of the Month

By Ron Sutton

Rhododendron grande

I chose this potted plant because it's blooming right now for me, and is the first time I've seen it do that. I had protected it in an unheated garage during freezing temperatures this winter.

I acquired it from Fearing Farm's rhododendron nursery. It is a 2-foot-high plant, that has been very slow to open its bloom buds. The cool temperatures have something to do with that.



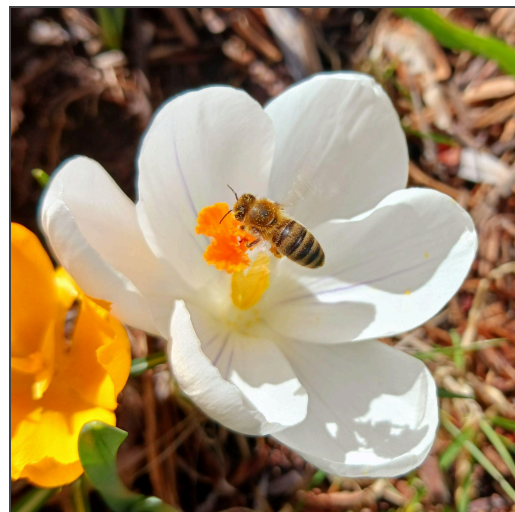
Classified as a big leaf species rhododendron, the leaves on my plant are not as big as they will be, given that my plant is young and small right now.

Rhododendron grande belongs to section Ponticum, subsection Grandia, and is a tender species, hardy to only -12°C. It grows natively in regions of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan, at elevations of 2500 to 3000 metres. The large leaves are medium green with a textured surface, and elliptic in shape with off-white indumentum. The creamy white campanulate flowers with dark purple nectar pouches form dense trusses of 15 to 25 flowers. It will grow to an eventual tree size of 30 feet, in part shade and optimal conditions.

This photo of my plant was taken March 19, 2024.



Pulsatilla 'Violet Bells' photo by Naomi Chester



Bee in Crocus vernus photo by Naomi Chester

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Narcissus 'Jet Fire' photo by Nadine Boudreau



Christmas fern, Polystichum acrostichoides photo by Naomi Chester