

# *the Rhodoteller*

*North Island Rhododendron Society*

*Vol. 39 No. 4 Dec 2024*



*R. pachysanthum new foliage photo by Diana Scott*

## *Meetings and Events*

- Dec 4 Executive Meeting @ Comox United Church 10 am
- Dec 10 Christmas Party - advance tickets only - 11:30 am (no General Meeting in Dec)
- Jan 8 Executive Meeting @ Comox United Church 10 am
- Jan 14 General NIRS Meeting @ Comox United Church 7:30 pm (doors open at 7 pm)

## *This Month's Theme: Tomentum*

Many rhododendrons have felt-like coatings on the top or bottom of the leaves. Composed of small hairs, the coatings can be white, tan, reddish brown or dark brown coloured. Tomentum is a coating of hairs on the top surface of leaves. Stems and flowers can also be hairy, and this is generally referred to as "tomentose". All featured rhodo photos in this issue have tomentum.

See [the ARS website](#) for more information about tomentum and indumentum. Note that some plants have both of these sought-after features! Next month's issue will feature rhododendrons with indumentum.

As we enter the holiday season, we're preparing for one of the highlights of our social calendar, the NIRS Christmas party. This year we're changing things up quite a bit to make our gathering even more accessible to our members by making it a lunchtime event at a restaurant, thereby relieving us all of the work that goes into bringing a homemade dish. No more worries if our dish is going to be cooked in time! A massive thank you to our Christmas party committee (Kathy Haigh, Patty Matthews and Judi Murakami) for all of their ideas and for making the arrangements. We hope that you'll enjoy this opportunity to come together in community and cultivating friendships with your fellow members all whilst indulging in a full buffet. Our traditional gathering for creating table centrepieces, ready for the lunch, will still be going ahead albeit with a little twist.

A huge thank you to everyone who has already donated to the club's two chosen charities, Comox Bay Care Society Care-A-Van and Comox Valley Food Bank. It is immensely heartening to see the already incredible generosity of our gardeners being extended to the vulnerable in our community. Donations will continue to be accepted until December 10<sup>th</sup> either by cash at the Christmas party where we'll have a donation box or by e-transfer to our Treasurer Noni

([nonigod@shaw.ca](mailto:nonigod@shaw.ca)) so that we may present the cheques to the charities before Christmas.



As we close out the year, it's important to reflect on the past 12 months and set our intentions for 2025. We have accomplished a great deal this year with our numerous events and the very exciting restart of our propagation activities. A great way to celebrate 40 years of the NIRS! Your Executive Committee is already planning Spring 2025 events, however, we welcome your ideas and input to keep our membership learning and growing together.

Whichever holidays you are celebrating this festive season, I wish you love, contentment and garden centre gift certificates. ;)

*R. bureavii*  
photo by Naomi Chester

## Items of Interest

### Flower Power: Milner Gardens & Woodland receives national recognition

<https://news.viu.ca/flower-power-milner-gardens-woodland-receives-national-recognition>

Thanks Naomi and Dave for submitting this news article from Vancouver Island University.

### The Word “Polyploidy”

<https://www.rhododendron.org/blog/default.asp>

Thanks Maureen for pointing out this ARS article for all those logophiles out there.

### Layer by Layer: Simplifying Naturalistic Planting Design

[Meristemhorticulture](https://meristemhorticulture.com/)

I came across this article in my free subscription email from Boaz Frankel called Rootbound. Even though he is based in Pittsburgh, I find many of his gardening articles (and links to others, including UK-based ones like this) relevant. KH

### Stepping Up for Pollinators: Butterflies

<https://katebradbury.substack.com/p/stepping-up-for-pollinators-butterflies>

Another good article from a free subscription on Substack. You'll need to download the Substack app on your cell phone for this one and it's worth it. Follow the easy instructions when you click on the link. This gardening author is UK-based, as you'll gather when read or listen to her. KH

### Ericaceae of the Pacific Northwest: *Rhododendron* and close relatives from Alaska to Northern California

<https://rhodygarden.org/events/>

Join the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden's Horticulturist and Assistant Curator, Will Clausen, for this captivating tour of the striking plants from Ericaceae that he has seen and photographed over the past 14 years living in the region. He will also offer tips on differentiating difficult species, share interesting facts about the plants, and give ideas on where to see them for yourself.

**When:** Thursday, December 19, 2024, at 6 p.m. PST

**Where:** Zoom *\*You must pre-register using the link\**

**Price:** \$15 for RSBG members

(NIRS members are ARS & RSBG members!)



*Vireya 'Saint Cecilia'*  
photo by Sheryl Murakami

*"This is a plant I purchased from the club,  
and it flowered last month."*

## Dec 10 Christmas Party Lunch Buffet

by Kathy Haigh

The heavy frost the other morning was a good reminder that winter and the festive season are upon us. The NIRS Christmas party has transformed this year, and we hope you'll be pleased with the changes.

On Tuesday, Dec. 10th we will have a lunch party at the Driftwood Chinese Buffet, 1130 Cliffe Avenue, Courtenay. There is plenty of parking at the back, and the restaurant is accessible. Please plan to arrive at 11:30 am, and the lunch buffet will begin at noon. Due to limited space, **you must have purchased an advance ticket to attend.** Thank you to everyone who took it to heart when we said that \$10 would hold your place and promptly paid up. We are almost at capacity! If you have not yet purchased your ticket and wish to attend, please email me to see if we can accommodate you. [kathyhaighcomox@gmail.com](mailto:kathyhaighcomox@gmail.com)

A few members will be making fresh Christmas table centrepieces on Saturday, Dec. 7th at 1:00. If you are crafty and would like to help out, please contact Nadine Boudreau no later than Dec 5th. [ger.nadboud@shaw.ca](mailto:ger.nadboud@shaw.ca)

There will be a donation box for cash and cheques for our club-chosen local charities [Comox Valley Food Bank](#) and [Comox Bay Care Society Care-A-Van](#).

HO HO Hope to see you there for festivities, food and fun with friends at lunchtime!



*R. yakushmanum* has both tomentum (left) and indumentum (right). Photos by Jean Looy.

## *Greig Rhodo Species Garden Advisory Group* by Jill Gould

Here are some highlights of the Oct 29th Greig Rhododendron Species Garden Advisory Group Meeting. Unfortunately, I was unable to get this report in the last Newsletter, because it had “gone to press” by the time of the meeting!

Treasurer Geoff Ball announced that the ARS had provided a \$5000 US (approx. \$6700 Can.) grant for plant labelling in the Species Garden. Also, the Endowment Fund for the Species Garden now sits at about \$163,000; interest will go towards the care of Rhododendrons.

The Long Meadow Shade House, erected on site last year for Greig Species Garden acquisitions, will over-winter Rhodos. There are approximately 50 species plants there, previously purchased from RSBG. MARS has supplied about 20 plants but provenance (very important!) will have to be verified.

**Phase 1:** A midden layer under the Milner site means there will be delays in any renovations/changes until archaeological assessments are completed. Installation of benches and signage has to consider this, as digging down may not be permitted. Bark mulch will be ordered for secondary paths in Phase 1 to keep anyone from wandering through the planting areas.

**Phase 2:** Jim Cadwaladr, our landscape architect, provided updated drawings showing a cedar rail fence in strategic places to prevent public access to off-trail areas. Certain trees still have to be removed but some stumps will be retained to aid Rhodo planting.

Glen Jamieson mentioned that many nurseries are closing down. Much propagation is now done by individuals or chapters, not nurseries. Retail nurseries do not supply many species Rhododendrons, just certain popular plants, mostly hybrids. Consequently, we at NIRS should concentrate on endangered species especially those that do well in our area. Our Plant Propagation Group is aware of this. (Please remember Naomi Chester’s request for members’ plant lists!)

Chris Southwick, in charge of plant selection, said bigger plants (larger pots) survive the winter better. Steve Hootman of the RSBG may be able to provide these. Glen Jamieson noted that since smaller-sized species (dwarf) may be more popular for smaller gardens, dwarf species from RSBG should be showcased. This fits in with Linda Derkach’s presentation on Dwarf Rhododendrons at the Nov. 12 meeting of the NIRS.

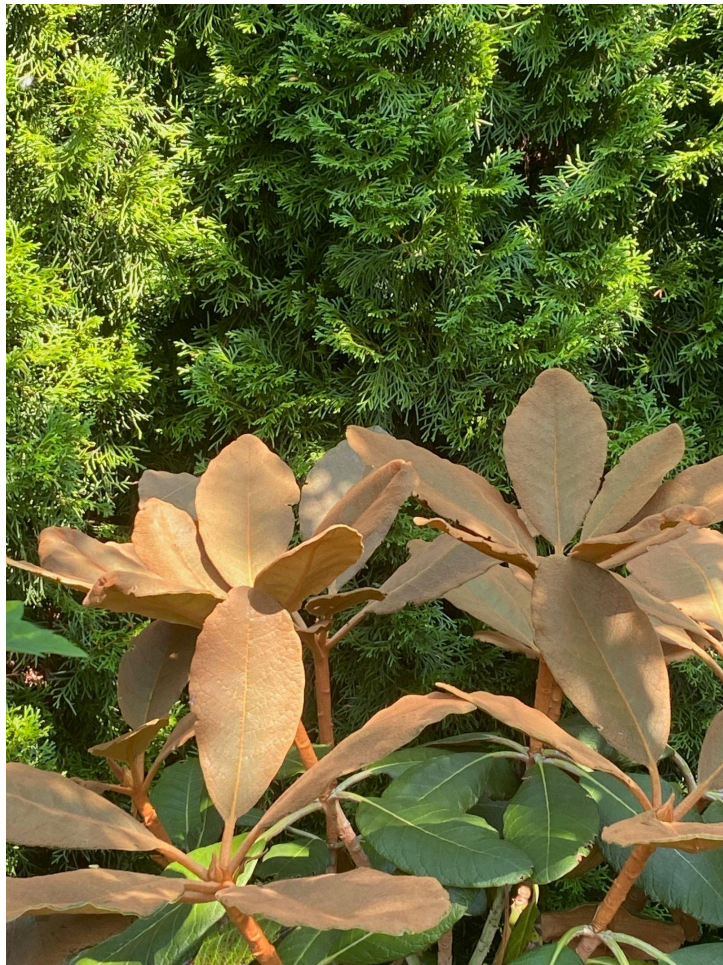
Many of us mourn the collapse of the Hirsutum website. A new effort, [rhododendra.com](http://rhododendra.com) is being created. Check it out! The Greig advisory group wishes to link to it. More information will be brought up at the next Advisory Group meeting.

### ***The Rhododendron Database***

Welcome! This website displays thousands of rhododendron species and hybrids from contributors across the globe.

Explore the entries in the [Rhododendron Index](#) to discover a wealth of photos and information.

*This website is very early in its development. Stay tuned as functionality and data are being added regularly.*



*R. falconeri* (left)  
photo by Nadine Boudreau



*R. 'Silver Skies'* (right)  
photo by Naomi Chester



*R. 'Hansel' (above), R. 'Golfer' new growth (below) photos by Diana Scott*



### Rhododendron 'Golfer'

Here is a wonderful hybrid rhododendron with attractive foliage. It is quite popular with rhododendron enthusiasts for the white tomentum that covers the new leaves. It even has pale grey indumentum. The tomentum wears away very slowly, to reveal dark green leaves. It really stands out in the garden, when the leaves are covered with tomentum.

'Golfer' is a hybrid cross done by hybridizer Warren E. Berg, of species *R. degonianum* ssp. *yakushmanum* and *R. pseudochrysanthum*.

In mid-spring it produces clusters of up to 13 clear pale pink flowers which eventually fade to white. It is a slow, compact grower, to 2.5 feet in 10 years. It is hardy to -10°F/ -23°C, and can handle full sun to part shade.

'Golfer' isn't readily available because of its slow growth and difficulty to root. While researching this plant I found that Art's Nursery in Surrey lists it on their website.

My plant, seen in the photo on the right, taken July 23, 2022, hasn't flowered for me yet, probably due to too much shade in its location.



*R. kesangiae*  
photo by Diana Scott

## ARS 2025 Convention Information

Join us in Nova Scotia, Canada for the American Rhododendron Society Convention, “Emerging Trends for Rhododendrons” in Wolfville, a town known for its beauty, food and gardens. June 5 to 8, 2025.

Take advantage of this exciting opportunity to learn about growing, breeding and gardening with rhododendrons. The 2025 American Rhododendron Society Spring Convention will be offering presentations, plant sales, garden tours, and networking opportunities!

Speakers include Dr. Hartwig Schepker of the Rhododendron Park and Botanical Garden in Bremen, Connor Ryan from the Holden Forests and Gardens, and Joe Bruso President of the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society.

Garden tours will include the Kentville Research Centre as well as private gardens. Networking opportunities will include the Breeder’s Roundtable where you can hear about the latest trends in rhodo breeding, and social events that feature the seafood, cider and wine from our local producers.

To see more of the rhododendron gardens of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick join us for a five-day, four-night pre-convention coach tour of the gardens of Halifax and South Western Nova Scotia and a five-day, four-night post-convention coach tour of gardens in New Brunswick and northern Nova Scotia. We look forward to welcoming you to our gardens!

For further information view our Convention website [ARS2025.org](https://ARS2025.org)



*R. pachysanthum* photo by Diana Scott

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Newsletter submission deadline is the 2nd  
Saturday of each month.

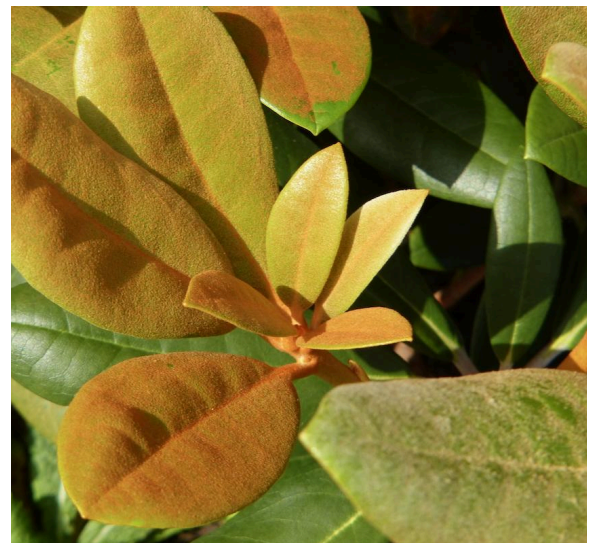
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*R. pachysanthum 'Buckskin'*  
photo by Maureen Denny



*R. 'Neato'* photo by Diana Scott