

THE RHODOTELLER



Meetings & Events

View from Mount Washington photo by Diana Scott

Feb 6 Executive Meeting

Feb 20 Rhodos recommended by NIRS Members by Chris Southwick

Feb 24 Wolfgang demo on propagating evergreens and conifers

May 2-5 ARS Spring Convention in Bellingham, WA

*That darned snow on our poor Rhodos!
photo by Naomi Chester*



President's View

By Naomi Chester

*"The February sunshine steeps your boughs and tints the buds and swells the leaves within."
William Cullen Bryant*



Snow on my Rhodos by Naomi Chester

It is a beautiful sunny snow day as I write this. The rhododendrons in the garden are glistening with their dustings of sparkly snowflakes. Just a few days ago the same rhododendrons were showing their cold weather leaf droop and curl as minus temperatures were with us day and night. This thermotropic movement in response to the change in temperature can look very dramatic in rhododendrons and in some varieties more than others. The leaves curl in on themselves to protect themselves from the moisture loss that occurs with cold winds. It is a similar coping mechanism to how we humans wrap our arms around ourselves or animals huddle together in order to conserve warmth. Indeed, the leaves on the rhododendrons outside the kitchen window will often provide more information about the outside weather conditions than the thermometers or barometers. It can look a little worrisome for those

new to rhododendrons (I know I was concerned many years ago) but this adaptation is one of the great features that makes rhododendrons so well suited to our climate here on the north island.

It was wonderful to see so many of you for January's "Panel of Experience". The feedback was very positive, and I think we all learned something new that evening. I would like to thank Wolfgang Hoefgen, Judy Walker, and Maureen Denny for sharing their knowledge with us.

Our February meeting will take place on Tuesday 20th with doors opening at 7pm. A reminder that the Church has requested that we lock the main entrance door at the start of our meeting at 7.30pm. Most of us can not hear the doorbell once we're inside the hall so please be on time for the meeting or be prepared to stay outside for a few minutes... Thank you for your understanding. Our February presentation with Chris Southwick is likely to inspire your rhododendron collections further!

Thank you to those who have submitted their lists of species and hybrid rhododendrons to me. It is never too late to get them in to me for inclusion in the database so whenever you have a few moments please email them to me or hand write them for me to collect at a future meeting. We'll be making a start on entering them into the database this month.

Enjoy your February and I look forward to seeing your favourite rhododendrons at the meeting!

Very best wishes, Naomi



Snow on my Rhodos by Naomi

Members' Question and Panel Answers by Dave Godfrey

For our first meeting of 2024, we featured our first-ever "Panel of Experience". Members were asked to submit garden related questions for our panel to provide an answer, and so they did.



Panelists Judy Walker, Maureen Denny, and Wolfgang Hoefgen all have extensive gardening experience and did their best to give answers based on their experience as long-time gardeners. Moderator Naomi Chester kept the questions flowing throughout the meeting.

For those members unable to attend the meeting, here is a sample of some of the questions asked and the answers provided:

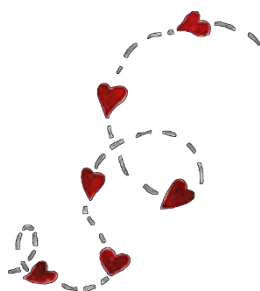
1. When transplanting a rhodo, how far from the stem should one dig, which months are best, and when do you fertilize after transplanting. A. It depends on the size of the plant, but typically around the 'drip line'. Usually when the plant is dormant from November to February, and best to 'hill' the mulch around the root ball, not to dig a deep hole. Bone meal and Osmocote are good light fertilizers for transplanting.
2. Which months are best for pruning a large hazelnut tree with multiple trunks and how far back should one prune? A. The tree will be dormant from November to February, so best then to prune out dead branches or stems, and thin as needed.



Panel photos by Nadine Boudreau

3. How do you tell the difference between a growth bud and a flower bud on a rhododendron? A. Flower buds tend to be fatter while growth buds are usually thinner and longer. Also, there is generally more colour to a flower bud.
4. Will rhodo flower buds survive the very cold weather in the forecast? A. This depends a lot on the variety. However, most will survive fine. Any that don't, can be picked off later.
5. When do you fertilize rhodos and with what? Do they really need fertilizer? A. Well established rhodos don't necessarily need fertilizers. Those that do should be fed with a good all-round fertilizer early in the season before blooms start to open and after flowering.
6. Should I rake or not rake the leaves from under my rhodos? A. It is not necessary to rake as the leaves provide some root protection and nourishment. Some members believe the leaves may harbour pests and disease and therefore prefer to rake them up.
7. How do you prevent or eradicate weevils from rhodos? A. One of the most effective treatments is to use nematodes which attack the weevil larva. Keep soil moist as weevils like dry soil and move the plant out from under large trees. Use Tanglewood tape around large rhodo trunks.
8. My rhododendron is wilting despite plenty of water. Why? A. The plant usually dies one section at a time due to Phytophthora, a root disease. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to save the plant. Remove it and don't plant another one in the same place.
9. When can I take cuttings for my rhododendron? A. Usually after early flowering through until the fall. Take new growth stems which can bend easily. Do not use woody stems.

In partnership with Milner Gardens, Master Gardeners from the VIMG Association operate a "Garden Advice Line" at Milner Gardens, which is an email-based FREE service. If you have any garden related questions you need answered, research will be done by one of the Master Gardeners and an answer will be sent back to you. Submit your question to GardeningAdvice.MilnerGardens@shaw.ca. Try to be as specific and clear as possible when asking your questions. Master Gardeners happily pass on their expertise and enthusiasm to the various garden clubs on Vancouver Island.



As many of you know, there is a lot of information available on our club's website (www.nirsrhodos.ca) including dozens of photo galleries from past events and activities. Be sure to check out the site on a regular basis for any updates. I try to keep the "Events" page as current as possible.

With help from our District 1 Webmaster, Garth Wedemire, we have slowly been getting the "Special Gallery Archives" up and running. A recent switch to a different gallery program (NexGen) caused the many archived photo galleries to stop working. With some changes in format, these galleries are slowly coming back online. Thank you, Garth!

Webmaster, Dave Godfrey

Biodiversity for the Rhododendron Collector

by Judy Walker

Alleyne Cook, the brilliant rhododendron expert who created the “Ted and Mary Greig Rhododendron Garden” in Stanley Park in Vancouver, was once told by a British nurseryman where he was working, that “Alleyne, you are getting boring, there are plants other than rhododendrons”. Which Alleyne took to heart, and created magnificent gardens with choice

groundcovers, trees and shrubs to go with his beloved rhododendrons. I often think of this when I see unrelenting collections of rhododendrons- yes, they are incredible plants that can offer a long blooming season, superb variation in leaf shape and colour, delightful indumentums, be breathtaking giants or tiny little



dwarfs...but really...they are most spectacular when they are in with all their friends in a shared habitat. Look at all the crazy plant collectors- yes, they are looking for rare and undiscovered rhododendrons but they can't help themselves from collecting the wonderful companion plants that surround the rhododendrons. The rhododendrons are just part of the whole ecosystem and creating that mix makes for a healthier and more interesting landscape.

And after watching the Beth Chatto Conference 2022- “Rewilding the Mind”, https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLrWeAIwB-hAFtsSl_JixjRUrpAfDu77Pk, I am more convinced than ever of our responsibility as gardeners to provide rich habitats for not just the plants but for all the insects, lichens, mosses, birds and other wildlife. While sadly we do not have adorable hedgehogs or dear crabby badgers, we do have our own wildlife- and many of the insects and bird populations are suffering from loss of habitat- parks that are bereft of any “wild” areas, commercial landscapes that no self-respecting butterfly could find any source of nectar, road verges mowed to within an inch of their life, and then us



gardeners.... While many of us will have moved to smart organic growing practices, doing more “chop and drop” when tidying up, “leaving the leaves” and other practices that provide for better soil health and habitat for insects, I think we could do better with our choice of plants in our gardens and making sure we are providing layers- perennials, groundcovers, shrubs and trees that will create good habitat and food sources. Fergus Garrett says in his Great Dixter presentation, that they have a mix of native and non-native plants, but Dave Coulson pointed out, in his presentation on insects, the native plants often provide the necessary food for the caterpillar stage - so just providing flowers for nectar isn't enough- we need to think of feeding all the life stages of the insects. So, it is clear that providing a wide variety of habitats, with a long season of food, using organic best practices, and a wide variety of plants will go a long way to increase the biodiversity in our gardens. And while we might not convince our lawn-crazed, neat-freak neighbour, we can all start at home!



Hamamelis by Diana Scott

Mahonia 'Charity'
by Diana Scott



Ways & Means

By Aubrey Ferris

February 2024 Raffle Prizes

Rhododendron 'Yeti'

Yeti is not a registered rhododendron, so it was difficult to find information on it.



("Yeti" is a term used to describe an ape-like creature that was believed to inhabit the Himalayan Mountain range in Asia.) But we did find one mention of the plant online. It was from a MARS Newsletter. The "Yeti" rhodo was "Best in Show" at the 2014 Mars sale and show.

Followed up with a 'Yeti' plant owner; she described it (with picture) as a spectacular plant, fragrant with a light lemony scent, hardy, floriferous (flower is 8 lobed), it will grow to about 5 feet in 10 years and has won many awards and ribbons over the years. It blooms reliable and heavy every year.

Rhododendron Yeti (Fawn x Crest) x (Fawn x Crest) (sibling) cross of Dr. Carl Phetteplace

Rhododendron 'Lavendula'



Flower is intensely lavender colour.

Plant is aromatic and has dark green leaves that turn bronze coloured in winter.

Compact grower and low growing. Flowers are disproportionate to the size of the plant.

Hardy to -21°C

Page 154 in Greer

Membership Report by Noni Godfrey

Thanks to Nadine Boudreau and Lois Clyde for filling in for us on the membership table while Margaret and Dan are basking in the sunshine 'down South'.

NIRS membership total to date for 2024 is 75, which includes 8 Associate members. (Associate members have a current membership in another chapter.)

This year a lot of our members have renewed through the treasurer via e-transfers. This is a most convenient way to get the payment to the club, however not so convenient for our members to get their membership card. Please ask at the membership table at the next meeting you attend to collect your membership card. If not already made out, we can have one ready for you before the meeting is over.

Please also notify us if you have any changes in your email address, phone number or mailing address so updates can be made to the club's data base and the annual members' yearbook.



Bringing Goodies for February:

Patty Matthews
Ruth Fowler
Lynn Gray
Katharine Gotto
Joanne Williams



Bringing Goodies for March:

Connie Prain
Gwen Wright
Diane Van Oostdam
Monica Dahl
Antje Guertler



CHOCOLATE

Our Program for February 20, 2024, Meeting:

“Rhododendrons Recommended by NIRS Members”

presented by Chris Southwick

Our February program will be a little different, and we hope that you all will enjoy this different format. The idea is for NIRS members to share with other NIRS members some information about a rhododendron, azalea, or a plant that they really enjoy.



Asking people to pick their “favourite” is almost impossible for plant lovers. So, get creative and think of a plant or two that you think others, particularly new members, might enjoy in their own gardens. This is a Rhododendron Society, so the emphasis should be on those plants, but if you are eager to share a special companion plant or a special tree, for example, that is fine too. Just ensure you tell me why you chose those plants.

How does this work? Well, once you have thought about which plant(s) you'd like to share, please send me an email at: csouthwick99@gmail.com with a) the name of the plant, b) the reason you have picked this plant and c) a jpeg photo(s) of the plant (one closeup and one of the whole plant). If you don't have a photo of it, I will do my best to find one.

I would like to have all the information from folks by the end of January, so that I have enough time to put together a PowerPoint presentation. Once I have completed the PowerPoint, the photos will be projected at the February meeting. I will ask each member who submitted plant photos and names to say a few words about each plant they have submitted. If you are too shy, I could also do that part for you. If you can't attend that night, you could still submit your choices to me, and I will do the rest.

Thanks, I hope to hear from most everyone. Chris Southwick, NIRS Associate member.

Our Program for March 12th, 2024, Meeting: Keith Russell on “Bonsai”

Our Program for April 9th, 2024, Meeting: Margaret Cadwaladr “Paths to a Garden”



Hello Dolly winter buds, Photo by Maureen Denny



Photo by Diane Van Oostdam

20th Annual Qualicum Beach
Seedy Saturday
'Seeding the Future'

Qualicum Beach Civic Centre
Saturday, February 3, 2024
10 am – 3:30 pm



- Seed Swap
- Speakers: Bonnie Zand, Michalina Hunter
- Master Gardeners answering questions
- Seed and Plant Vendors
- Informational Exhibitors
- Nursery Displays
- Door Prizes
- Seedy Café
- 50-50 Draws (cash only)
- No ATM on site

Bring
your seeds
for the
seed swap!

Admission by Donation

Qualicum Beach Seedy Saturday Association
www.qbseedysaturday.ca • info@seedysaturday.com

Plant of the Month

By Ron Sutton

Rhododendron 'Contina'



Here is a wonderful floriferous hybrid lepidote rhododendron.

It's a cross between hybrid R. 'Chief Paulina' (R. concinnum Pseudoyanthinum Group selection) and R. augustinii 'Barto Blue'

The hybridizer is C.H Phetteplace. This is one of Steve Hootman's favourite rhododendrons. The foliage is unremarkable, but the flowers are an intense rich purple colour that open in late April to early May. The photo of my plant was taken on May 5.

The plant has an upright growth habit and will grow to be 4-5 feet in 10 years. It can handle full sun, and is hardy to 0°F/ -18°C

Propagation Workshop 10 am Saturday, Feb 24th

On Saturday, February 24th, at 10 am, Wolfgang Hoefgen will provide a demonstration on "how to propagate cuttings of conifers and other evergreens".

This free workshop will be held in the large greenhouse/hoop house area at the Smith's property. Please dress appropriately for this outdoor event.

As this is a demonstration only and not a hands-on workshop, attendees are asked to bring a folding chair to be able to sit during the demonstration. Hope to see many of our members there!

Email to nonigod@shaw.ca if you need directions to the Smith property.



SAVE THE DATE !
ARS 2024 Spring Convention
Bellingham, Washington
May 2-5, 2024

Four Points by Sheraton, Bellingham
 Hotel and Conference Center
 714 Lakeway Drive, Bellingham, WA, USA, 98229
 Phone: +1 360-671-1011

Highlights:

- Pre-Tour: **May 1: Private Gardens around Seattle**
- Convention: **Tours * Seminars * Workshops * Banquets**
- Post-Tour: **May 5: Gardens around Vancouver, Canada**

Time to check your Passport!

Plus:

Plant Sales * Auctions * Raffles * Photo Booth * Poster Session

Help get the message out!

**Please forward to friends and gardeners in
 your community and around the globe.**

Visit ARS2024.org for more information and to register.



Protecting the vulnerable by Nadine Boudreau



One happy clematis plant....by Nadine Boudreau



Pieris frost by Diana Scott

Board of Directors & Committee Chairs 2023/2024

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- Library**
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Kathy Haigh 250-702-4311

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

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<http://www.nirsrhodos.ca>



Viburnum 'Pink Dawn' photo by Diana Scott



Trumpeter Swans photo by Diana Scott



Winter aconite photo by Diana Scott



Winter scene photo by Diana Scott