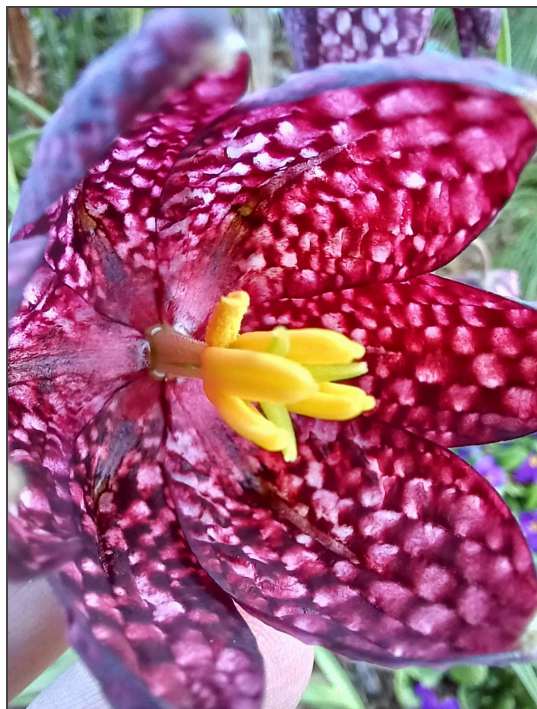


THE RHODOTELLER



R. 'Goldstrike' photo by Jean Looy

Inside Fritillaria meleagris by Naomi Chester



Meetings & Events

- May 1 Executive Meeting
- May 7 Members' Garden Tour
- May 12 NIRS Mother's Day Garden Tour
- May 14 AGM at McNabb's 7:30 pm
- May 16 CVRG Work Party 10 am
- June 5 Executive Meeting at Godfrey's
- June 22 Club Picnic

President's View

By Naomi Chester

How are we heading into May already? Spring, despite being a “slow” season, tends to move all too quickly for the enthusiastic gardeners amongst us. It is easy to get overwhelmed with all the “To do” lists and jobs that need to get done in the garden. When I find overwhelm arising I take the opportunity to pause, breathe and remember the famous Lao Tzu quote: “Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished.”. Slowing down helps us to enjoy our gardens and to notice all the changes that are happening on a daily basis.

Following on from the April plant sale, May brings several events for our members including one of our largest fundraisers. On May 7th we have our members' garden tour and a huge thank you goes to John Deniseger, June Bouchard, Ron and Rea Sutton for opening their gardens to us. May 12th sees our annual Mother's Day Tour which is always a beautiful day out. Thank you in advance to all of the garden hosts and our volunteer garden sitters.

May 14th we hold our annual AGM at Adrienne and Robert McNabb's. We have a few positions becoming available on our Executive Committee for the next term and elections will be held that evening. If you are considering joining our team and participating in the running of the club then please speak with me or our Elections Chair Dave Godfrey. On that note, may I take this opportunity to offer heartfelt gratitude to Dave and Noni Godfrey, who are relinquishing some roles after many years of dependable contributions yet staying on the committee. Thanks must also be extended to Dan and Margaret Ryan who are not standing for the next term but who have been an integral part of our executive committee in recent years.

We have also received the proclamation from the City of Courtenay that May has been declared Rhododendron month. Our banner can be seen by the historic train building on Cliffe Avenue next to the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden (CVRG).



May the April showers provide you with plenty of May flowers!

Happy gardening and I look forward to seeing you at our events in May,

R. spinuliferum photo by Naomi Chester

CVRG

By Maureen Denny

In 2007 the month of May was officially declared “Rhododendron Month” by then-Mayor Starr Winchester, and the Rhododendron ‘Courtenay Lady’ was chosen as the official plant of The City of Courtenay. This beautiful Rhodo was hybridized by Harry Wright, a founding member of the NIRS, and late husband of our honoured member Gwen Wright. R. ‘Courtenay Lady’ is planted in the BOVI (Born on Vancouver Island) garden bed at the CVRG, and refers to the fact that all the Rhodos in this bed were hybridized by growers from Vancouver Island.




R. ‘Courtenay Lady’ by Diana Scott

For more information about Harry Wright’s ‘Courtenay Five’ click [here](#).

Many Rhodos at the CVRG are now coming into bloom, so this is the time to take a walk at the Airpark and see this wonderful display of our favourite plant.

Our next work party at the CVRG will be Thursday, May 16 at 10 am. We work for one hour and then gather for treats (bring something to share) and coffee at the picnic table. Please bring your own gardening tools and a bucket. Come join us for a morning of work but mostly fun.


City of Courtenay
Proclamation
 Rhododendron Month
 May 2024


WHEREAS: the Rhododendron, with its vibrant blooms and lush foliage, stands as a symbol of beauty and resilience in our natural landscape; and

WHEREAS: the Rhododendron represents a cherished part of our horticultural heritage, captivating the hearts and minds of gardeners, botanists, and nature enthusiasts alike; and

WHEREAS: the Rhododendron serves as a vital habitat and food source for various wildlife species, contributing to the ecological diversity and balance of our ecosystems; and

WHEREAS: by celebrating Rhododendron Month, we honor the significance of this remarkable plant and recognize its profound impact on our environment and culture;

NOW THEREFORE: I, Mayor Bob Wells, do hereby proclaim the month of May as Rhododendron month. I urge all citizens to promote awareness, conservation and appreciation of the Rhododendron.



 Mayor Bob Wells

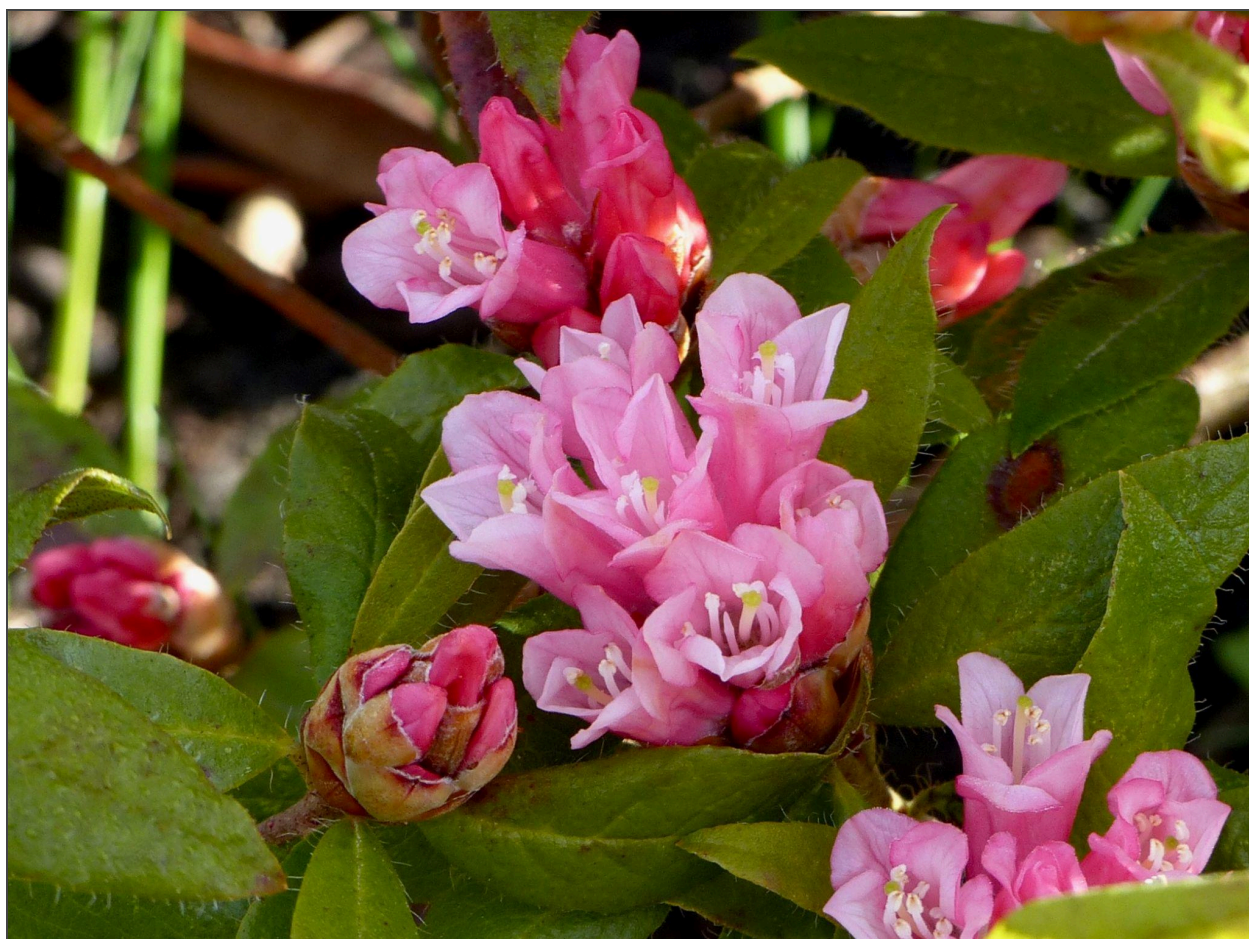


Pleione orchids photo by Nadine Boudreau

Notice of AGM & Call for Nominations by Dave Godfrey

This is to notify all members of the North Island Rhododendron Society that the Annual General Meeting will be held at **7:30 PM on Tuesday, May 14, 2024**. Once again, we thank Adrienne and Robert McNabb for graciously hosting this important meeting in their Royston garden at 14 Little Bear Way.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: As most positions on the executive board are for a two-year term, we have several positions coming up for election this year. We are seeking nominations for the following positions: President, Vice President, Director (membership) and Director (Revenue table). Some incumbents are willing to put their names forward to fill these positions. However, we need a member to fill the position of Membership Director, as Dan and Margaret will not be continuing in that role. If any member wishes to put forward their name or to nominate another member for one of these positions, please notify me by email to davegod@shaw.ca by May 7, 2024.



R. 'Razorbill' photo by Diana Scott

Rhodo Sale and Show Success

by Naomi Chester



We had another fantastic turnout at our Rhododendron Sale and Show on April 28th. This highly successful event was made possible by all of our incredible members who volunteered their time, donated plants and bought them later! Thank you! Special thanks must go to Nadine Boudreau who facilitated the event from start to finish. Our thanks also goes out to the members of the public for supporting the club by buying plants and giving our volunteers wonderful feedback. The enthusiasm to learn the difference between species and hybrid rhododendrons was evident. Wolfgang's specialty plants and our diverse companion plant tables have an established reputation amongst the North Island's gardening community and it was a joy to see all the happy buyers clearing the tables of plants.

We welcomed 3 new members to our club, who signed up on the day, and the Mother's Day Garden Tour ticket sales are off to an encouraging start. The truss show led to a lot of "Wows" being heard from the shoppers and, from counting the votes, the winners were: 1. Biskra, 2. Teachers Pet, 3. Rim Fire.

The stunning draw prize of a R. 'Horizon Monarch' in full bloom was won by Wayne Ogilvie of Courtenay. We donated the few leftover plants to Vanier School's Explore program garage and plant sale that takes place the Saturday after our sale.

Another enjoyable sale was had by all, and now we take a rest before we start considering what plants in our gardens will need to be divided/propagated ready for next years sale... ;) Thank you again everyone!



Photos by Naomi Chester

As if Nadine wasn't busy enough, she took these photos at the plant sale too.



Greig Rhododendron Species Garden at Milner

By Jill Gould

On April 2, the first “Garden Cleanup” was held at the Greig Rhododendron Species Garden at Milner. After a winter hiatus, there was a lot of weeding! Seedling maples, ivy, holly and Diana Scott’s least favourite weed, Snapweed (*Cardamine hirsuta*) were rooted out and the Forget-me-not was persuaded to get back into its allotted space.



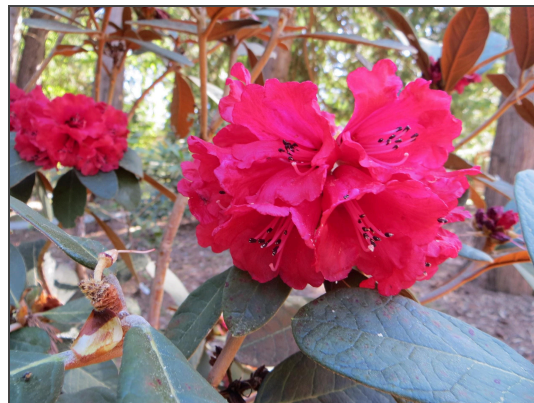
The Trillium area was full of bloom. I have never seen so many Trilliums in one place, providing one long glorious swath.

Trillium ovatum

Various early-flowering species Rhododendrons were in bloom, too. *R. species nova*, *R. mallotum*, *R. irroratum*, and *R. pachysanthum* were showing their finest.



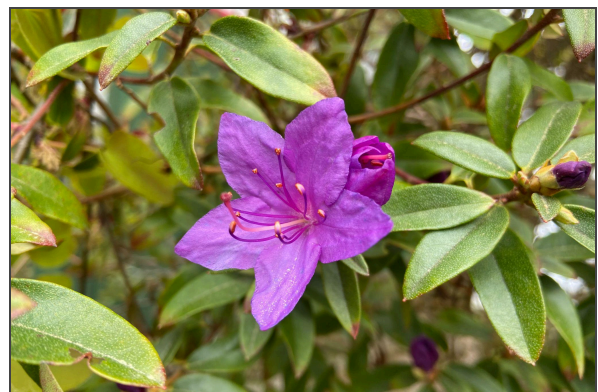
R. pachysanthum



R. mallotum

Some of our group opened up the Propagation hoop-house (located in a different area), rolling up the plastic sides. It will be left that way for the season.

The cleanup of the Species Garden is an ongoing project, as you gardeners will understand, and will continue throughout the spring and summer. Volunteers from Nanaimo, MARS and sometimes from NIRS and Victoria turn up on Tuesdays (weather permitting) as their commitments allow. My own garden is calling out to me, but I can’t resist joining up occasionally with these friendly, dedicated people.



R. 'Vibrant Violet' photo by Jean Looy

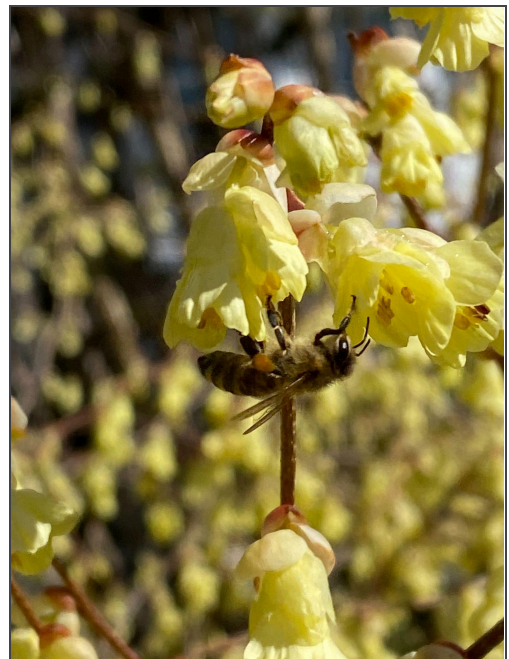


R. 'President Roosevelt' and *R. augustinii* photo by Don Law



R. boddaertianum photo by Jean Looy

Bee on *Corylopsis pauciflora* by Nadine Boudreau



Mimulus guttatus (Yellow Monkey Flower) By Jill Gould

This attractive and variable plant is native to western North America. Its natural habitat is wet areas, stream banks and seeps. It is tolerant of flooded areas and is common in Comox Valley riparian zones.

Blooming in July-August, the flowers are tubular, an attractive bright yellow, snapdragon-like, sometimes with small reddish spots on the lower lip. The base of the plant is a mat of small green leaves, opposite, round to oval, and coarsely toothed. The upper leaves clasp the stem. Flower stalks appear in summer. In mild areas it is perennial.



The species is genetically variable; hence has been a source of many scientific studies on evolution. It has very few pests or diseases and is deer- and rabbit-resistant.



Swampy field of Mimulus guttatus

While Mimulus can be self-pollinated, it is a favourite with bumblebees. Propagation can vary: from seeds, rooting from leaf nodes, or by rhizomes. The plant can form a mat of leaves, persisting in winter, and sections can be pulled up and moved in the spring. It makes an excellent pond plant and a good garden plant, bearing in mind that in a fertile site the plant can get quite tall: range from 10 to 80 cm. I've tried it, as I love the colour, but it's definitely for the back of the border! Right now, I leave it by the pond.



*Double Bloodroot
photo by Doug Williams*

Plant of the Month

By Ron Sutton

Rhododendron latoucheae

This month I chose *R. latoucheae*, a plant I'm finally seeing blooming after three years of growing it.

Rhododendron latoucheae belongs to a subgenus of rhododendrons called *Choniastrum*, previously *Azaleastrum*. They fit in between *Azaleas* and *Rhododendrons*. The section *Choniastrum* supposedly comprises eleven species, however I could only find 6 that are documented. These are, *championae*, *ellipticum*, *hancockii*, *latoucheae*, *moulmainense* and *stamineum*; I have 3 of them.

These plants have shiny, smooth, scaleless green, evergreen leaves. *R. latoucheae* is found in Guangdong, Jiangxi and Zhejiang regions in China.



It started blooming here in the second week of April, producing small trusses of 3 to 5, 1.5-inch pale bluish-pink flowers. They are documented to be fragrant, but I couldn't detect it, probably due to the cool outside temperature.



It isn't particularly fast-growing, but is supposed to be 1 to 3m high in ten years. The remarkable trait of this plant, however, is the new leaves will open a colourful peach colour, before turning green, and then in early fall, change to purple and bright red.

It can handle full sun, but my plant gets some afternoon shade. *Choniastrum* plants are listed as being somewhat tender. The Pocket Guide to Rhododendron species, has them all rated as H 1-2 The ARS page has *R. latoucheae* listed hardy to -12°C Mine has never been protected, or damaged, even after exposure to -10° cold. Same can be said for *Choniastrum R. stamineum*, also in the garden. *R. latoucheae* is rare in the trade. The only current source is the RSBG, and it is seldom offered.



I found this triple flower bud on a R. Polarnacht! It also has lots of doubles on the same plant, which I know can happen but never seen a triple before. I'm excited to see how it blooms. By Naomi Chester



R. 'Moira' photo by Doug Williams



R. 'Rosalie Hall' photo by Jean Looy



R. huanum photo by Ron Sutton

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Asarum caudatum - Western Wild Ginger
photo by Sheryl Murakami (above)



Tulipa sylvestris photo by Nadine Boudreau