

the Rhodoteller

North Island Rhododendron Society Vol. 40 Number 5 Jan 2026



Japanese forest grass, Moss & Stone Buddha

Photo by M. Denny

President's View

by Margaret Griffith-Cochrane



Skimmia Photo by D. Scott

It was lovely to see so many of you at the Christmas party – thank-you to all the volunteers, it was a great lot of fun.

Thinking of our gardens, and before chilly January comes ... perhaps all of you have been safely holed up during the recent wind and rain events, so if you haven't had a chance to mulch your rhododendrons or roses or any tender plants - you might consider when there is a break in the weather to protect the more tender plants. With the roots close to the surface, if we get a significant cold snap in January – well, could be trouble for some plants who are a bit confused by our mild December. I recently acquired a very large pile of arborist chips and would gladly share – drop me a line if you want to come by with some buckets to get some.

The Spring convention is - my goodness - only 3.5 months away, and **registration** opens in January. There is good information available in the current JARS publication. I also found an excellent summary of activities, speakers, tour itineraries etc. on the MARS (Mount Arrowsmith) website.

As someone who sometimes gets carried away with a purchase at a garden centre – I was totally reassured by an excellent article regarding planting bulbs in December, (December 2023 issue newsletter – MARS, pages 12-14).

This was a good reminder to check out other local Rhododendron society newsletters. There are some excellent advice columns in the older issues; we are fortunate to have clubs nearby in Victoria, Cowichan, Nanaimo and also Vancouver, of course ours is always the best!

We have 2 upcoming volunteer opportunities:

1) After many years of sending thoughtful and caring cards to NIRS members, our Sunshine Person Joanne Williams is stepping down from her volunteer position. Thank-you Joanne.

If you would like to consider this opportunity – please drop me a line.

2) I would appreciate someone to help with a column or blog on upcoming events in the gardening world here on Vancouver Island. It is easy to miss out on a fun seasonal event such as the Christmas Lights display at Milner Gardens in Parksville, or a garden tour on Hornby Island. Please contact me if you are interested.

I wish you all many hours of Happy Garden reading, and I hope, like the rhododendrons around us, you are having quiet moments, and recharging for the Spring.

Best regards, and Merry Christmas to all,

Margaret

Meetings and Events

Jan 7 Board of Directors Meeting @ Brian Storey 1886 Mallard Dr., Courtenay 10:00 AM Please RSVP Brian bstorey42@shaw.ca

Jan 13 General Meeting @ Comox United Church 7:00 PM (doors open 6:30)

Apr 21 – 25 ARS 2026 Spring Conven4on

SAVE THE DATE! Apr 21 - 25

American Rhododendron Society
2026 Spring Convention
Vancouver Island, British Columbia

Rhododendrons & Companions in
a Changing Climate

Activities and Tours

Please join us for this fabulous 5-day event on
Vancouver Island, British Columbia

Register for the **ARS Convention in Qualicum Beach** then choose one or all of the pre-and post-convention garden tours. Each day of garden tours is individually priced, lunch included. Dinners are optional.

- **Apr 21 Tuesday** – Pre-tour of gardens from Victoria to Shirley, BC with the Victoria Rhododendron Society (VRS)
- **Apr 22 Wednesday** – Pre-tour of public and private gardens in Victoria with VRS
- **Apr 23 Thursday** – Pre-tour of country gardens by car in the Cowichan Valley with the Cowichan Valley RS, starting late morning.
- **Apr 23 Thursday evening** – Early arrivals in Qualicum Beach are invited to join us for no-host beverages and/or dinner at the Shady Rest Pub on the Salish Sea.
- **Apr 24 Friday** – **ARS Convention & Rhododendron Species Foundation AGM at the Qualicum Beach Civic Centre:** Welcome breakfast, speakers, plant sale, prizes, lunch, Milner Gardens & Woodland tour, Rhododendron Species Foundation AGM, social time with friends, ARS Awards and optional buffet dinner. All organized by Mount Arrowsmith RS and Nanaimo RS; Plant sale managed by North Island RS.
- **Apr 25 Saturday** – Post-tour of gardens from Qualicum Beach to Nanaimo organized by the Nanaimo RS.

Optional dinner in the evening at a local restaurant.

Items of Interest

With the return of the winter rains, here is a 56 min British documentary – "The Front Garden" by Candida Lycett Green. You may want to sit down with a cup of tea have a look. Thank you for this find J. Walker.

The Front Garden <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGlakufX6hk>

Winter berries on
Nandina domestica

Photo by M. Denny



A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL

Our Christmas luncheon proved to be a good time again this year. We had close to 50 attendees, enjoying the buffet, draws and a trivia game.

Thanks to Judi Murakami for organizing the ticket sales and keeping the party going.

Thank you to Margaret and the board for the great Garden Works gift certificates given to the raffle draw winners and the trivia game winners. Ross had made a trivia quiz that had us thinking.

Members were also offered the lovely centerpieces made by some of the members that had gotten together. Janet had purchased the mugs, and the group all brought some greens to make the arrangements. Afterwards we had a lovely visit over coffee and treats.

Our lucky winner of the “win your membership if you sign up before November 15” was Julie Waller, congratulations Julie! What a great way to end 2025!





Mahonia Photo by A. Ferris



Mahonia & *R.* 'Taurus'
Photo by M. Denny



Here is a blast from the past this



Remember

Beauty?

*Where is
she now...*





American Bushtit birds Photo by N. Godfrey

FYI – Proper format for writing Rhododendron Names

I have never been sure how to properly write the names of the rhododendrons. I did some research and found some very specific International Code of Nomenclature for Plants. I thought all the details were a little over whelming so took the liberty of giving you a boiled down version.

Sheryl

General Rules for Scientific Names

- **Italicization/Underlining:** All scientific names (genus, species, variety, etc.) must be in *italics* when typed or underlined when handwritten.

- **Capitalization:**

- The **genus** name is always capitalized (e.g., *Rhododendron*).
- The **species name** is never capitalized, even if it refers to a person or place (e.g., *Rhododendron catawbiense*, not *Rhododendron Catawbiense*).

Rules for Cultivated Plants (Hybrids and Cultivars)

Cultivated plant names have specific formatting rules different from botanical names.

- **Cultivar Names:**

- Cultivar names are not italicized.
- They are enclosed in **single quotation marks** (never double quotes). ◦ Each word within the cultivar name is capitalized (except for conjunctions, prepositions, etc.).
- The cultivar name follows the species name or genus name:
- *Rhododendron catawbiense* 'Album Elegans'

- **Hybrids:**

- Hybrids between two species are indicated by a multiplication sign (×).

Meeting Program

Members Gardens Slide Show

Nadine Boudreau and Maureen Denny are pleased to present an evening slide show of photos of our member's gardens. Thank you to everyone who sent their photos to Nadine. Nadine has put them together into a slide show for all of us to enjoy. This will be a great way to spend a winter evening. We can all have a peek inside everyone's garden, see their favourite plants, and perhaps get inspired for next spring.



Ways and Means Raffle

by Aubrey Ferris

Rhododendron 'George Budgen'

R. 'George Budgen' is prized among vireya enthusiasts for its vivid tropical coloration and relatively small, manageable size. Compact shrub, reaching

about 0.8 × 0.35 m in 4 years. It is known for its striking golden-yellow to orange funnel-shaped flowers and compact growth habit. Come and see the flower buds it is already displaying.



Step-by-Step Guide for Comox Valley

Location & Protection

Outdoors: Only in frost-free microclimates (e.g., sheltered courtyards, south-facing walls).

Indoors/Greenhouse: Best option. A cool greenhouse or sunroom with good airflow mimics their native tropical highland habitat.

Winter: Must be protected from frost. Minimum safe temperature: ~10 °C.

Rhododendron 'Cream Glory'



Size: 3–5 ft tall and wide — ideal for borders or woodland gardens.

Flowers: Cream-colored clusters in spring, attractive to pollinators like bees.

Foliage: Glossy green leaves, year-round interest.

Resistances: Deer, rabbit, and verticillium wilt resistant.

Zones: USDA 6b–10a — suitable for mild

coastal BC gardens with protection.

Sunlight: Prefers dappled shade or partial sun.

(More information in Greer page 112)

Plant of the Month

by Ron Sutton

Rhododendron 'Tara Too'

This beautiful unregistered rhododendron hybrid, has made its way into few people's gardens, that is, if they shopped at Hidden Acres Rhododendrons. This is one of Lofthouse hybrid seedlings, that the late Paul Wurz inherited and grew, and named after his daughter Tara. He also named another hybrid

rhododendron after his daughter called *Rhododendron* 'Taralynn', which I'll write about at a later date. Neither of these rhododendrons, were ever registered with the ARS.

What I can tell you about *R.* 'Tara Too' is that it's a beautiful foliage plant when exhibiting its new growth, as seen in the photo.



The new leaves open a brighter maroon colour, then they darken to a bronze colour as seen in the photo, and then they gradually transition to green. The leaf petiole is a bright green, which contrasts attractively with the darker matte green leaves.

I never managed to get a flower photo of my plant, so my friend Alan Campbell, provided photo of his plant in flower. Thank you for that Alan. Information on this plant is non-existent, so I can only share my observations.

The plant forms trusses of 8-12 flowers, which are pink with pale yellow throat, giving them a bit of an orange hue. The new growth is about 3-4 inches a year, and the plant is expected to be about 3 feet high in 10 years, however it tends to spread more than grow upright, and I estimate about five feet wide in the same 10 years.



It's perfectly hardy here in Fanny Bay, as well as Campbell River, so its hardiness is probably good to -18°C.

This plant can take sun, as I saw at the nursery that grew it, but mine gets mostly high shade.

Since there are no business sources for this plant, the only way to get this one, is from the various private propagation enterprises on the island.

Theme for February Newsletter

Board of Directors & Committee Chairs 2025/2026

For the most part the

gardens are probably still sleeping but if you have pictures of interest – please send them in!



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Rhododendron 'Lee's Scarlet' Photo by J.



Newsletter submission deadline is the 15th of each month.

Pointse3a Photo by D. Sco<

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