

the Rhodoteller

North Island Rhododendron Society Vol. 40 Number 10 June 2026



Winners at the Rhododendron Sale and Truss show
From Left to Right 1st Lem's Cameo, 2nd Seaview Sunset & 3rd Point Defiance.

Meetings and Events

Board of Directors Meeting June 9, 2026 at Nadine's home

General Meeting September 15, 2026 @ Comox United Church 7:00 PM (doors open 6:30 PM)

NIRS Potluck Picnic

Sat June 6, 2026 @ 4:00 PM @ 1922 Greenwood Crescent, Comox



R. 'Gwendolyn Wright' Photo by D. Godfrey

President's View

by Margaret Griffith-Cochrane

What a full-on busy Spring our NIRS members have had. Between planning, coordinating and participating in the ARS plant sale in Qualicum, hosting our own plant sale (and growing a huge lot of companion plants for that sale!), we have all had fully booked agendas.

As well, on the home front we have been managing gardens that leapt forth quickly this Spring, therefore I am passing along to all the membership a very grateful thanks for your multitasking as you managed your home gardens, hosted two very successful plant sales, and then attended our May AGM. The expanded Show and Tell at the AGM, aka Bring and Brag was so much fun. We are an amazing group of gardeners!

Since the last newsletter our new propagation team has been busy with the previous year's many propagated rhodo babies, transplanting them into bigger pots, and fertilizing them for their summertime growth. We will have an excellent showing at our 2027 plant sale!

Over the summer we will be taking a break from our newsletter.

If you are planning to host an open garden tour for the NIRS, please send me a note and I will forward your invitation to the membership.

Have a safe and fun summer.

Happy gardening.

Margaret

Annual General Meeting

President's Report AGM May 12, 2026

As this year closes, not forgetting the upcoming annual June picnic I feel so fortunate to have raised my hand a year ago to volunteer and then been elected to the president role for our NIRS. It has been a year of making new friends and challenging my brain to hone the computer skills that have sat on the side of my desk for many years. The highlight of the year was the ARS convention in Qualicum. I met ARS members from all across North America both at the convention and on the well-organized garden tours. With so much tension in the air from world politics and climate change it was lovely to sit and chat with individuals who have a common love of everything rhododendron and everything gardening.

In January we lost our beloved NIRS friend and secretary Carolyn Chester. Carolyn was a knowledge holder in the NIRS; she had been my kind and knowing mentor who sat beside me in the secretary chair.

Moving forward, I am giving a very grateful thanks to all the members of the board, to Judi who stepped in as interim secretary, and all who helped out as we moved forward with all the tasks: from organizing plant sales, monthly meetings, kept up the social media sites, reviewed bylaws, brought goodies to the meetings, maintained the membership roster, sought speakers, organized and participated in the CVR garden cleanups, the propagation team, those who put up banners for Rhodo Month, those who put up/down the shade cloths for the baby rhodos, and much more! For a smallish group of avid gardeners with a special interest in rhododendrons, we accomplished a lot. Again, thank-you and looking forward to 2026-2027.

Happy Gardening
Margaret

AGM Election Results

With one nomination received for each position, our Executive Officers for 2026/2027 are as follows:

President - Margaret Griffith-Cochrane

Vice-President - Nadine Boudreau

Secretary - Judi Murakami

Treasurer - Brian Storey

Director - Kathy Haigh

Director - Aubrey Ferris

Director - Maureen Denny

Director - Brenda Desrochers

Please give a warm welcome and thank you to our new leadership team!

Members shared their blooming Rhodo trusses at our AGM.

Interestingly, most of these pictured were hybridized by NIRS co-founder Harry Wright. His daughter Debbie Wright brought them in, along with some of her own! (The red one is not labelled because it is a mystery.)



AGM Reports

Membership Report

Total membership numbers are remaining fairly constant in the North Island Rhodo Society this year. While there have been some non-renewals, they have been covered by new members. As of today, NIRS has 78 members, consisting of 67 regular, 7 associate and 4 lifetime honorary members.

During this past year, the ARS offered the choice of digital or printed journals, with an extra fee for the printed versions. Within our NIRS club, most members chose to have the

digital version emailed to them, and only 4 chose to have the printed journals. The ARS is now creating only 3 journals per year, with the Spring issue just released.

The 2026/27 NIRS membership booklet was distributed to members in April. It has a slightly new format, and we used a new, less expensive printer. Please notify me of any errors or omissions. Any members who did not get their booklet may contact me for one.

Kathy Haigh
NIRS Membership Director

Propagation Report

I would like to start by saying the past year's accomplishments would not have been possible were it not for the many volunteers from the club.

We had excellent success with the cuttings and the continued maintenance of the young rhodos.

After the April plant sale, we sorted and repotted some 2-gal into 3-gal and the 1-gal rhodos the club had purchased into 2-gal pots. Where needed labels were rewritten and plants fertilized. They were all placed in the outside beds. We should have a good selection for the next 2 years.

The watering crew took over care for the summer. With 14 volunteers paired up, the commitment was to water ever 2nd week.

Next, was the caring of the new cuttings. All the dwarf or slow growing varieties were potted into 4-inch pots and placed back in the propagation greenhouse, with plans to move them into 1-gal pots.

The rest of the cuttings were repotted to ½-gal pots. They will be moved to 2-gal pots and placed in the back greenhouse.

In total there should be about 350 plants. We should be happy in knowing the next couple of years are taken care of.

The watering, shading & weeding was all taken care of by our crew of volunteers. Without them we would not have a propagation group.

Now we start a new cycle.

I am positive that with the dedicated group of volunteers; the future looks bright.

Propagation Group

Social Media Report

The NIRS Facebook page now has 362 followers and is growing. We had a record number of viewers on April 29th when the NIRS Rhodo Sale and Show was posted, with 693 views!

Please email or use Messenger to send me any story links or rhodo photos you'd like to post on NIRS's Facebook. People love to see the Azaleas and Rhodos that grow here!

If you haven't already, please follow, like, and share our Facebook posts to help us reach a wider audience.

Kathy Haigh
NIRS Social Media

Program Coordinator Report

We had another successful year of providing interesting speakers for our General Meetings. We restarted the tradition of taking the speaker or speakers out for dinner before the meeting. This is a fun way to get to know the presenter. The dinner is usually attended by the Program Chair(s) and others from the BOD.

Speakers last Year were:

September 2025

Judi Murakami: ARS Conference Wolfville N.S. 2025

October 2025

Tyler Johns: Composting

November 2025

Glen Jamieson: House and Garden Arthropods: The Good, Bad and Beautiful

January 2026

Nadine Boudreau, Maureen Denny: Members Photo Night

February 2026

Ron Sutton: Azaleas

March 2026

Geoff Ball, Jim Cadwaladr: Current Activities and Plans for Miner Gardens and Woodland

April 2026

Barrie Agar: Some Irish Gardens

Maureen Denny and Judy Walker

NIRS Program Coordinators

CVRG Coordinator Report

Thank you to everyone who participated in the monthly work parties since September 2025. And a special mention of thanks to Antje for faithfully supplying coffee and treats. It was an uneventful year at the gardens, meaning there was no vandalism to the Rhodos. The gardens are jointly maintained by our club and the City of Courtenay Parks through "The Partners in Parks Program". The City of Courtenay Parks is responsible for irrigation, maintenance and storage of the wooden sign, tree pruning, mulch delivery and path repair. The club has a fund of \$607.31 dollars. In the past these funds have been used for sign acquisition and repair.

Starting in June the work parties will switch to a Tuesday evening schedule.

The dates are as follows:

June 9, 7pm

July 7, 7pm

August 11, 7pm

Maureen Denny
NIRS CVRG Coordinator

Treasurer's Report

Members may request to see the financial report; it will not be posted on the internet.
Brian Storey

Items of Interest

Presentation of Bronze Medal to Kathy Haigh

I am delighted this evening to present the bronze medal award to Kathy Haigh. Kathy has been in our sights for several years, but every time we scheduled giving her an award, she has been away on an adventure, leading a kayaking tour in Haida Gwaii or kayaking round an island in the Caribbean - finally we have caught you.

Over the past several years Kathy has held important board positions: Vice President, and as a Director she has also been a committee chair as membership secretary, newsletter editor, and social media coordinator. Kathy has also volunteered to coordinate the annual Christmas party and more recently has assisted in the review of our bylaws and constitution. Kathy we so appreciate your skills in organizing, ensuring we have a fun time at parties, and also make sure the details are attended to in our board meetings - thank-you.



NIRS June Picnic



Many thanks to Aubrey and Valerie Ferris for hosting our June Picnic

Saturday June 6, 2026

4 p.m. Potluck (dinner will be at 5 p.m.).

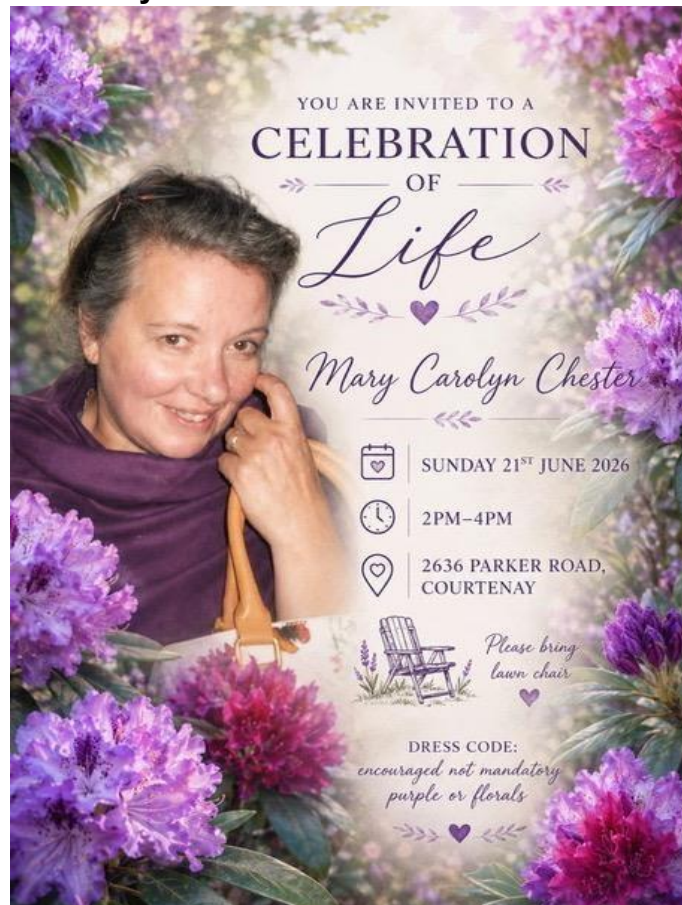
Please bring enough food for 8-10 people.

Please bring your own chair, cutlery, plate and cup.

Address:

1922 Greenwood Crescent, Comox (One block north of Ryan Road, off Anderton)

Celebration of Life – Carolyn Chester



Propagation Updates

Volunteers have been busy repotting, cleaning the beds and laying down new landscape fabric in preparation for the summer's growing season.

Watering has started with every 2nd day and when the summer heats up, to every day. If you are interested in helping with the summer watering, contact Sheryl Murakami.



Rhododendron Garden Work party by Maureen Denny

Starting in June Work Parties switch to a Tuesday evening schedule.

The dates are as follows:

June 9, 7pm

July 7, 7pm

August 11, 7pm

Maureen Denny

Coordinator CVRG

Community News

Denman Island Home & Garden Tour

Saturday June 13 and Sunday June 14

Tickets available on the website denmanconservancy.org



2026 Fall into Gardening

"Gardening on Vancouver Island is Different"

MARS (Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society), NRS (Nanaimo Rhododendron Society), and VIMGA (Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association) are pleased to offer a day of education and enjoyment with internationally recognized gardening experts.

Tickets: \$30 in advance or \$35 at the door
See NRS website for details about how to register: <http://nanaimorhodos.ca/>

- Date: **Sunday, September 27, 2026**
- Location: Qualicum Beach Civic Centre
747 Jones St. Qualicum Beach, B.C.
- Time: 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Speakers:

John Deniseger & Glen Jamieson: "Gardening on Vancouver Island is Different"

Janis Matson: "Vancouver Island's Diversity: The Uniqueness and Distinctiveness of our Green Spaces"

Linda Gilkeson: "Harvest More from Your Garden All Year Round"

Christine Quist: "Starting Native Plants from Seed: A Practical Demo for Home Gardeners"

Paul Spriggs: "Cracks and Crevices: The Art of Rock and Crevice Gardening"

Information Booths:



Refreshments: coffee, tea, and treats will be provided. **Please bring your own bag lunch.**



Rhododendron 'Thai Dragon'

This is an unregistered hybrid, of unknown parentage, that I picked up at Greer Gardens, during a west coast trip back in 2012.

Even though Harold Greer sold it, he had little knowledge about it.

After many years, with occasional searches, there has been no other mention of it. It's a beautiful rhododendron though, and not a very fast grower. However, it has spent all of its life in a pot. I gave it to a friend when we moved to the west coast, and they gave it back to me some years later. It's less than 3 feet high after many years.

It blooms here in early May, producing 2-inch dark red flowers with a black blotch on the upper petal. There is a matching calyx which also has a black blotch, that stands out from the flower. The flowers themselves form tight ball trusses of up to 14 flowers, or as little as two.

The foliage is distinctive with stiff shiny concave leaves that are approximately 4-5 inches long by 2 inches wide. They form in groups of 5 at the end of the stem and curve downwards.

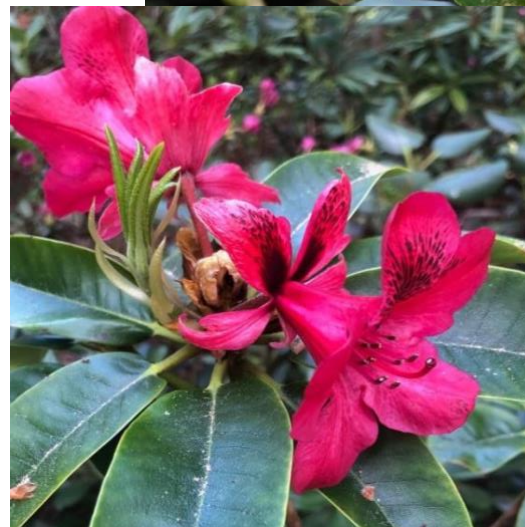
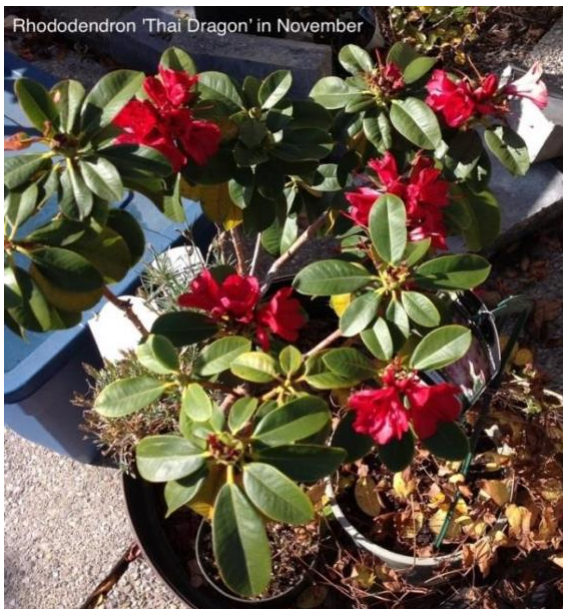
I don't know how hardy it is, but I'm guessing at least zone 8 or colder. It was protected in our

garage during the winter in Ontario.

It can handle full sun, as that is what it received

back in Ontario. It is capable of blooming twice. It bloomed for me a second time, back in Ontario, in November. See photo of plant taken November 2015

The other photos were taken this May 2026

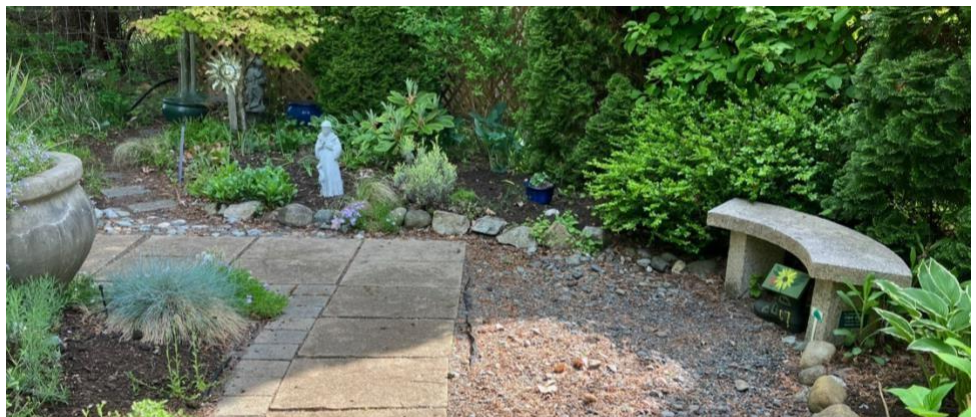


Picture Tour of Member's Garden Behind the House



The Anderton Therapeutic Gardens Society operates The Gardens on Anderton. They operate solely on donations, grants, sponsorships and their member volunteers. The gardens are located directly behind Anderton Nursery.







Thankyou Dawn (volunteer at Gardens at Anderton and member of NIRS) for a tour of the Gardens at Anderton.

Newsletter submission deadline is the 15th of each month.

[Follow us on Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/nirsrhodos)
<http://www.nirsrhodos.ca>



Rodgersia foliage with Primula japonica
Photo by M. Denny

'Gibraltar' Azalea
Photo by D. Godfrey