

the Rhodoteller

North Island Rhododendron Society Vol. 40 Number 7 Mar 2026

Interesting winter foliage



Variegated leaves

R. 'Goldflimmer'

Photo by K. Haigh



Hairy leaves

R. 'Snow Lady' Photo by K. Haigh

Meetings and Events

Mar 4 Board of Directors Meeting @ A. Ferris 10:00am

Mar 10 General Meeting @ Comox United Church 7:00 PM (doors open 6:30 PM)

Goodies reminder – Thea Whyte

Diane Van Oostdam

Patty Matthews

Antje Guertler

Apr 21 – 25 ARS 2026 Spring Convention Rhododendrons & Companions in a Changing Climate

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.

Winter Aconite



Crocus



President's View

by Margaret Griffith-Cochrane

This Year, Spring is leaping forward quickly, and instead of thinking through my garden plans this past week I found myself mowing the lawn. It has been a mild winter for sure. I hope all of you are finding the lovely flowers in amongst the many fir cones and branches that have blown down over the winter.

We are looking forward to an exciting Spring with the ARS convention happening in Nanaimo/Parksville/Qualicum this year – April 24 – 25th. It will be preceded by a week of many scheduled garden tours from Victoria & Sooke to Cowichan and then to Nanaimo. I hope you will be able to take in some of the garden visits being offered.

Our March NIRS presenters: Geoff Ball, Jim Cadwaladr & John Deniseger will be presenting on the Milner Gardens and Woodland.

<https://milnergardens.viu.ca>

Happy gardening to all,

Margaret

Items of Interest

Snapweed

– **One Annoying Plant!** By Diana Scott

Cardamine hirsuta, also known as hairy bittercress, springcress, lambscress, popweed, shotweed, pepperweed, flickweed, snapweed and many other names that are best left

unsaid, is one challenging weed. A member of the mustard family (Brassicaceae) it is considered a winter annual/biennial native to Eurasia and likely was brought to North America as an edible bitter herb. If you've seen one in your garden – you'll likely see a million!



Snapweed, as it is commonly called in BC, is typically a brilliant green but looks almost purple in some places in my yard – particularly in the gravel.

Described as having a rosette of pinnately compound leaves, it sends up a stalk of tiny white flowers, then quickly goes to seed, often while producing more flowers. The seedheads are thin stalks which like many Brassica species, will burst explosively when touched, sending seeds flying far from the parent plant. Trust me – this is true.



Sadly, for those of us in the Pacific Northwest, it is not only one of the earliest flowering weeds, it will produce several generations in a season. It is frost hardy, can survive winter, and will flower as temperatures rise in early spring. The seeds remain viable in the soil for a long time, and any disturbance will bring more to the surface to germinate. On the plus side, Cardamine hirsute has a short life cycle.



That's it for the plus side unless you think the itty-bitty white flower is attractive. On the minus side, if you find one in your garden and don't remove it, you are in for a battle!

How did you get it? Hard to say – but many sites indicate that it is very common to find them on the surface of container plants in nurseries and garden centers and that it can be introduced unwittingly via container grown plants. It is so common here, however, that it will be rare for a garden NOT to have it.

So, how does one control it? As with all annual weeds it is critical to get rid of it before seed can be produced. Although typically larger, I have snapweed that flowers and goes to seed on plants smaller than a pencil eraser. I am open to any brilliant suggestions, but after trying all the typical methods, the only thing that I have found to be even marginally effective is to pull every one out when I see it. It is my priority in the early spring, and I have spent days on hands and knees with a garbage bag pulling the little guys out. I can't walk by one without thinking that if I don't pull it out now, I will have hundreds more to deal with. Makes for a busy day in the garden...

Classic controls are hand weeding, mulching to prevent germination, torching, and applying weedkillers (gasp!). One site suggests applying a mulch of organic matter 15 cm deep to help suppress the weed by preventing germination. Works well, although snapweed seeds are quite happy to germinate in the mulch if seeds from a plant nearby 'pop', and the seeds are viable for many years and will sprout once the mulch is disturbed. I have also tried a propane weed torch on the gravel paths in my previous garden; however it was typically raining or quite wet when the first round of snapweed flowered and went to seed so it took a lot more propane than is sensible to use. This technique was not very effective for me. My main strategy is labor intensive - picking and bagging as many as I can before they've gone to seed. In my experience, pulling and just leaving them on the soil results in wonky-looking but rerooted, flowering and seeding specimens. So - bag them.

Snapweed seems to love our climate. I have been trying to love it back, but to no avail. Once established, particularly in lawn areas, it is really difficult to eradicate. I believe that snapweed and I will continue to see a lot of each other. My advice: see it, pull it, bag it. Good luck!

NIRS Plant Sale and Truss Show

Sunday May 3, 2026 10:00am – 1:00pm
K'omok First Nation Band Hall, 3310 Comox Ave.

We will have our propagation rhododendrons for sale, our NIRS companion plant sales and vendors selling plants. We will also have a truss show to display our beautiful rhododendron flowers.

The sale is a fun event, we have many volunteers coming together, working together and interacting with the public. Volunteer sign-up sheets will be available at our next general meeting. If you can't make the meeting email Nadine @ ger.nadboud@shaw.ca

The companion plant table relies on plant donations from the club members. Please start looking around your garden for plants you could divide and pot or extra seedlings you may have started. Please keep in mind a healthy plant labeled sells better. Also, as a garden club we need to set the example of selling plants that will not aggressively take over our native areas and gardens.

I would like to thank Sheila Borman for volunteering to help organize this event.

We are looking for someone to take the lead for the sale. There are so many members that work the sale year after year, it makes the lead position a breeze. It is always good to get fresh ideas!

More information will be sent out as it gets nearer to the sale.
Nadine Boudreau ger.nadboud@shaw.ca



Rhododendron Garden Work party *by Maureen Denny*



R. 'Courtenay Queen' Photo by H. Wright

Spring could be around the corner! Although as I write this the forecast shows colder weather and some snow. Hopefully by mid-March the weather will warm up as the first Work Party of the year at the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden is planned for THURSDAY MARCH 12th at 10am. Work Parties are a combination of work and fun, and great way to get to know other members of the club. Please bring your own tools (rake, broom, secateurs, a bucket). We will be focusing on winter clean up. After the work we gather at the picnic table for decaf coffee and treats, (bring something to share). Please click on the link to learn about the CVRG.

Maureen

<http://www.nirsrhodos.ca/ws/cvrg/>

Community News

2026 Vancouver Island Seedy Saturdays

Seedy Saturday season is approaching! We will list dates for upcoming events as they become available. Keep an eye on this page in the coming months.

- March 1, 2026: Nanaimo Seedy Sunday. 10:00am - 3:00pm. NDSS (355 Wakesiah Ave)
- March 7, 2026 Comox Valley Seedy Saturday. 10:00am - 2:00pm. Florence Filberg Centre

The Mid-Island Floral Art Club

March 12, 2026 1:00pm – 2:00pm. St. Mark's Church hall. 138 Hoylake Road West, Qualicum. Guests \$6.00

Theme: 'Twig/Branch structure or clay flower frog'.

Denman Island Home & Garden Tour

Saturday, June 13, and Sunday, June 14 **Tickets On sale April 1** via the [Denman Conservancy Association website](#) and select island locations.

Revenue Table

by Judy & Maureen

Thanks to everyone who has donated plants and other garden related items to sell at the Revenue Table.

Funds from the sales are an important source of Revenue for the club. Wolfgang continues to be a generous donator to the table, and everyone is always excited to see what plant treasures he brings! Please bring something from your garden to share, as well as houseplants and any garden related items.

Thanks

Maureen and Judy

Membership

by Kathy Haigh

Our new name badges have arrived. By this time, all NIRS members should have received theirs, thanks to the club. About a dozen remain unclaimed after our Feb 10th meeting; please find yours at the membership table during our March 10th meeting. You'll want to wear it when you attend the convention and/or garden tours.

CVGSS Seedy Saturday is on March 7, and we need volunteers for the NIRS booth. The event is open 10 am to 2 pm at Florence Filberg Centre, and help is needed for set-up, to represent the club during the sale, and take-down. The purposes of our presence at Seedy Saturday are to inform gardeners of our club and to encourage them to become members of NIRS. Please contact me if you can help on March 7th.

Meeting Program

Geoff Ball, Jim Cadwaladr & John Deniseger – Current Actives and Plans for Milner Garden & Woodland.

Milner Garden & Woodland continues to grow, getting better every year, thanks in part to its strong connection to the horticulture community. The garden features over 600 rhododendrons including the original heritage collection, planted in the 50's and 60's, as well as the more than 200 rhododendrons in phase 1 of the Greig Rhododendron Species Garden (GRSG).

The GRSG Advisory group has been hard at work, laying the groundwork for our vision of an exciting new phase of the species garden featuring big leaf and tree-forming rhododendrons. You'll want to hear more about the plans for Milner and in particular, phase 2 of this beautiful rhododendron species garden.

<https://milnergardens.viu.ca/woodland>



On March 9th Geoff Ball, Jim Cadwaladr and John Deniseger will be presenting on Phase II of the Greig Rhododendron Species Garden at the Milner Gardens and Woodland. They will bring us up to date on this new phase of the species garden and will provide an overview of this important addition to the property.

Geoff graduated from UBC in 1991 with a BSc in microbiology and then the Horticulture Technician program at VIU in 1995. Soon after graduation Geoff became an employee of the same Horticulture program until transferring to Milner Gardens & Woodland in 1998 to take on the position of Horticulture Supervisor. In this role Geoff oversaw the management of the grounds while coordinating construction projects as well as students, and volunteers. Geoff continued to work in that role until 2006 when he took over the position of the Executive Director of the Gardens and continues in that role today.



Jim was born in Vancouver and studied Fine Arts at UBC and Horticulture at BCIT. In his work life he operated a design-build landscape firm and later crossed over into landscape architecture. Jim is a retired Landscape Architect and certified arborist. He was also coordinator and instructor in the Horticulture Technician Program at Malaspina University-College (now VIU). In that capacity, he was involved in the development of the G.R. Paine Horticulture Training Centre. Jim was also the founding Executive Director of the Milner Gardens & Woodland. He lives and gardens in Nanaimo with his wife Margaret.

John Deniseger is a retired aquatic biologist (BC Premiers Legacy Award, BC Hall of Excellence), outdoor enthusiast, and long-time member of the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society. He is past chair of the Milner Gardens and Woodland Society Board, and chair of the Greig Rhododendron Species Garden Advisory Group. John and his wife June received the ARS Silver Medal in 2021.

Azalea 'Peggy Ann'



A lovely little evergreen azalea with a distinctive bicolor bloom.

Flower is white with deep pink or bright pink edges.

Blooms in late spring

Height is up to 3ft.

Hardy to -21° C

Does best in dappled or afternoon shade.

Rhododendron 'Orange Prelude' X 'Cherries and Merlot'

It is a very intriguing rhododendron cross that does not yet exist in the trade. We don't have an image of it, but we can predict its traits from its parents, and we have the picture frame ready.

What will be get? This is the fun part. Orange crosses with deep red azaleas often yield one of the following colours:

- Coral red
- Orange-red
- Warm cherry with orange undertones

Occasional bicolor edging or throat flares

Expect something in the red–orange spectrum, not pure orange and not pure cherry.

Flowers: Likely single to semi-double, depending on Orange Prelude's influence.

Both parents bloom mid-season so hybrid will almost certainly be mid-season

Compact, rounded, evergreen.

Cherries and Merlot's foliage quality is excellent, so expect, glossy leaves, dense branching, good winter leaf retention and is hardy to -18 ° C.

It's a very promising pairing because:

- Both parents are compact, evergreen, and hardy.
- Colour genetics complement rather than cancel.
- Bloom timing aligns.
- Foliage quality should be excellent.

Picture Tour of Member's Gardens Behind the House

Barbara Simonson

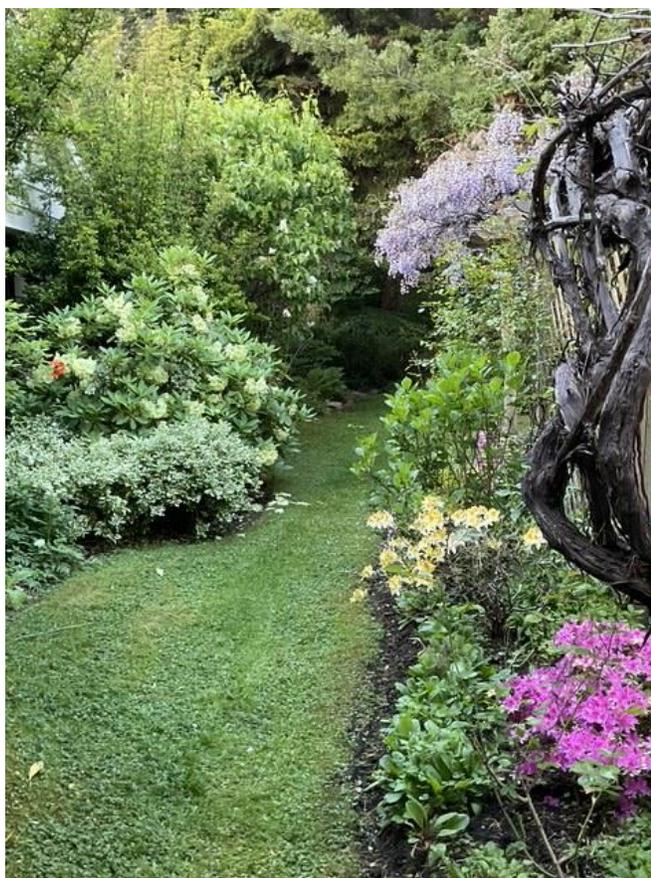
The house and ½ acre of land was purchased in 1989. Not much of a garden, firs, cryptomerias, a couple of 50+ yr old maples, hemlocks and a western cedar. Over the years the maples and 18 50'-60' evergreens. Barbara has a mostly spring/summer garden with rhododendrons, azaleas (deciduous & evergreen), hellebores & 130+ roses. Most of the rhodos are from Harry & Gwen Wright and about a dozen from Paul & Lynn Wurz.

This is 1 of 6 hellebores blooming now



The rhodo on the left is *R.* 'Haida Gold'

On the right you can just see the trunk of her 20+ yr old grape vine.





A lovely collection - Japanese maple, azaleas and rhododendrons





Back of house sitting area



Barbara, thank you so much for giving us a glimpse into your garden behind the house.

***Rhododendron 'Award'* (the Root Beer rhodo)**

This scented hybrid rhododendron was produced by D.W James in 1969 by crossing with *Rhododendron 'Anna'* x *Rhododendron 'Margaret Dunn'* Group.

It has attractive matte green, concave leaves, with bronze new growth. The 2-inch flowers are mostly white, with streaks of pink and a greenish yellow throat. It forms loose trusses of up to 15 flowers.

Bloom time is the middle of May.

What is remarkable, is that these scented flowers, actually do smell like Root Beer. It was what led me to order one from Harold Greer, when I lived in Ontario. It didn't do well there, though.

It is a vigorous grower, and you can expect it to be 6-7 ft high in 10 years. It likes full sun to part shade. I have my plant in part shade.

It is hardy to -18°C

Photo taken here in Fanny Bay, May 22, 2021, is of my plant.



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