

the Rhodoteller

North Island Rhododendron Society

Vol. 40 Number 9 May 2026



R. 'Chattaroy'
It is a Jim Barlup hybrid named for Roy Blackmore of the Victoria chapter
Photo by D. Godfrey

Meetings and Events

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

Goodies reminder – B. Simonson, J. Murakami, L. Gilbert, M. Nelson, A. Bayles, & A. Guertler

NIRS Plant Sale

Spread the word



North Island Rhododendron Society

RHODODENDRON SALE AND SHOW

SUNDAY – 3rd May 2026

10 a.m. until 1 p.m.

***K'ómoks First Nation Hall
3320 Comox Road (Dyke Road)***

**Great selection of Rhododendrons
Companion plants and
other garden items for sale!**

Free Admission - Free Raffle Draw - Free Parking



R. 'Canadian Sunset' Photo by K. Haigh



R. 'Snow Lady'
Photo by K.
Haigh

President's View

by Margaret Griffith-Cochrane

Isn't April a glorious month; it is invigorating and exhausting. Spending long hours out in the garden getting all plants and garden beds in some assemblance of order. Beyond the beauties that are emerging in our own garden, Vancouver Island has some of the most beautiful gardens in the world. I feel privileged to be visiting many of these historic and vibrant sites in the coming days. The ARS 2026 Spring Convention has garden tours in Victoria, Cowichan and the Nanaimo-Parksville areas.

The lush temperate rainforest we call home ensures we all have too many jackets with hoods and too many pairs of boots in our closets. However, it provides us with a rich landscape to explore and be inspired. The rhododendrons are literally bursting forth this month.

Along with many of you, I will be attending the ARS Spring Convention in Parksville this week. It is hosted by our five Vancouver Island Rhododendron chapters and the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden of Washington State.

On May 12th we will be having our AGM at the regular NIRS May chapter meeting at the Comox United Church. The program at the meeting is "Bring and Brag". We are expanding the "Show and Tell" to invite all our members to show off some those wonderful flowers and plants from your gardens. Bring your beauties and/or the interesting stories behind them. We will have a number of tables set up to showcase these lovelies from your gardens here in the Comox Valley.

Happy gardening to all.

Margaret

Items of Interest

Fertilizing Rhododendrons

Fertilizing rhododendrons correctly is key to maintaining their vibrant blooms and evergreen foliage. Because they have shallow, sensitive roots, they are "light feeders" and easily damaged by over-fertilizing.

Best Time to Fertilize

The most effective times to feed rhododendrons are during their active growth stages:

- **Early Spring:** Apply fertilizer just as flower buds begin to swell (typically March or April) to provide nutrients for the upcoming bloom.
- **Post-Bloom:** Apply a second light dose after the flowers have faded to help the plant develop new growth and set buds for the following year.
- **Warning:** Do **not** fertilize after **July 1st**. Late-season feeding encourages soft new growth that can be easily killed by winter frost.

Choosing the Right Fertilizer

Rhododendrons are **acid-loving plants** and require specific nutrient ratios:

- **Specialty Blends:** Look for fertilizers labeled for azaleas, camellias, and rhododendrons.
- **NPK Ratio:** A complete, balanced fertilizer like **10-8-6** or **10-10-10** is generally suitable.
- **Organic Options:** Organic fertilizers or cottonseed meal are often preferred because they release nutrients slowly and are gentler on shallow roots.
- **Avoid Lime:** Do not use lime or alkaline fertilizers, as these will raise the soil pH and prevent the plant from absorbing iron, leading to yellowing leaves (chlorosis).

How to Apply

1. **Water First:** Never fertilize when the soil is bone dry, as this can shock or burn the roots.
2. **Spread Evenly:** Sprinkle granular fertilizer around the **drip line** (the area directly under the outer edge of the branches) rather than right against the trunk.
3. **Use a Light Hand:** Use approximately one level tablespoon for every foot of plant height, or follow the specific dosage on the product label—often halving the recommended rate is safer for these sensitive plants.
4. **Water Again:** After applying, water thoroughly to help the nutrients reach the root zone.
5. **Mulch:** Maintain a 2–3 inch layer of organic mulch (like pine needles or wood chips) to regulate soil moisture and naturally replenish nutrients over time.

Rhododendron Garden Work party by Maureen Denny

Our favorite time of the year is finally here, the time when the Rhododendrons bloom! The Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden (CVRG), will be reaching its peak bloom time. The garden is very much appreciated by people who stroll the Airpark walkway. Work Party volunteers from our club regularly receive positive comments about the garden as well as inquiries about Rhododendron care.

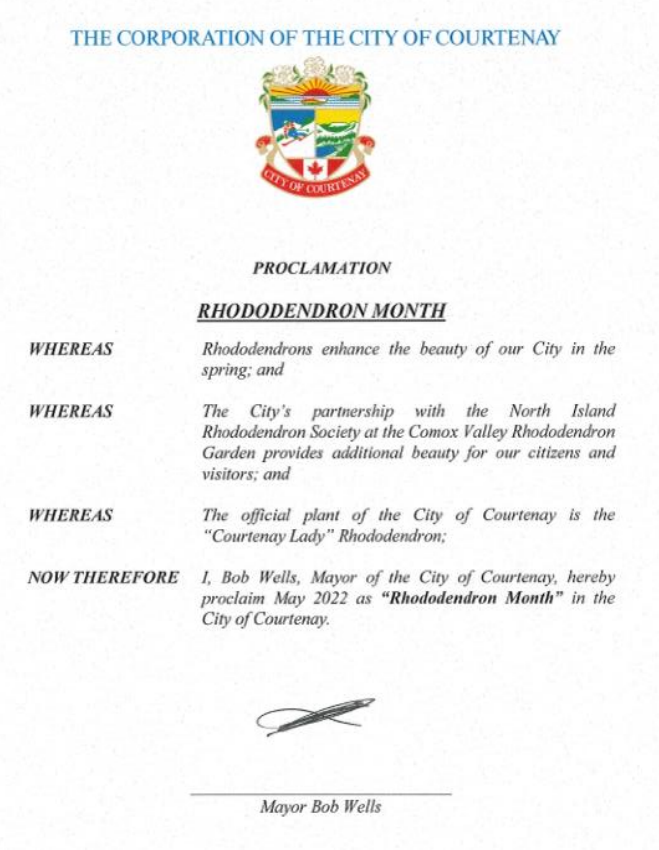
The May work party will be held at 10 am Thursday May 14. Please bring your own tools (secateurs, rake, broom, trowel and a bucket). We will be doing a general clean up as well as some deadheading if the Rhodos are ready.

Did you know May is officially “Rhododendron Month” in The City of Courtenay? This Proclamation was declared in 2007 by Mayor Starr Winchester. The Rhododendron ‘Courtenay Lady’, hybridized by Harry Wright, was declared as The Official Plant of The City. R. ‘Courtenay Lady’ is one of the ‘Courtenay Five’ group of Rhododendrons, all bred by Harry Wright.

The CVRG has a special garden bed known as “The BOVI Bed”, (Born on Vancouver Island), where all the rhodos have been bred by Vancouver Island hybridizers.

Come and join the fun and work. Coffee and treats at the picnic table when the work is done.

R. ‘Courtenay Lady’ Photo by D. Scott



Axl & Maureen made some excellent purchases



Meeting Program

“Bring and Brag”.

We are expanding our regular “Show and Tell” into “Bring and Brag”. This will allow us to share all the wonder and awe we are experiencing in our gardens this month!

Please bring and share some of the beauties from your garden, either trusses, blooms or plants.

We will also have our regular AGM during the meeting.

Community News

Denman Island Home & Garden Tour

Saturday June 13 and Sunday June 14

Tickets available on the website denmanconservancy.org



R. bureavii (Lem's Form)
Photo by K. Haigh

Membership

by Kathy Haigh

Linda Webb rejoined NIRS at the March meeting. Be sure to say “hi” and get reacquainted if you knew Linda during her earlier times with the club.

We currently have 77 members:

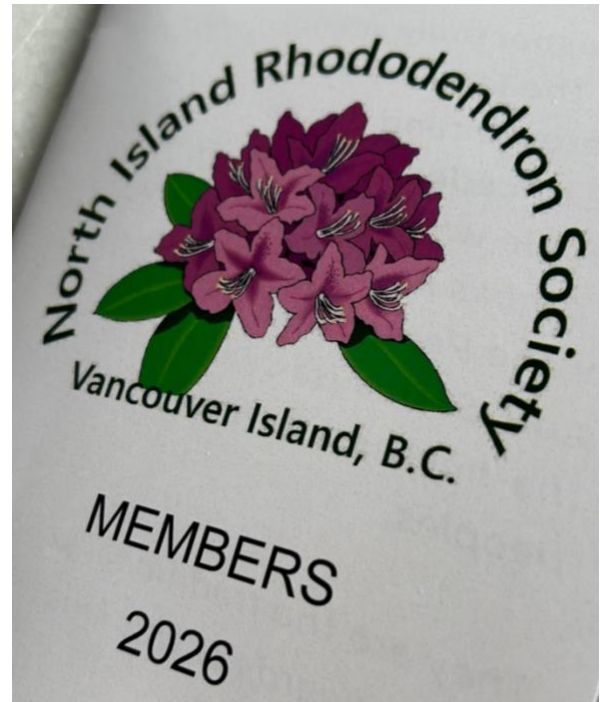
Regular: 66

Associate: 7

Honorary Life: 4

The new 2026 membership booklets were distributed at the April 14th meeting. If you did not get yours, please come to the AGM next month to pick one up, or contact me for other arrangements.

Also of interest, the NIRS Facebook page now has 352 followers.



Primula kisoana Photo by M. Denny



R. 'McKees Blue' Photo by D. Godfrey



Rhododendron 'Elizabeth Lockhart'

Here is a seldom seen hybrid that has very attractive foliage. It produces shiny, reddish brown new leaves, that eventually turn green. It is a hybrid produced by R.D Lockhart of Scotland in 1964. He crossed *Rhododendron haematodes* with *Rhododendron williamsianum* to make this plant. The flowers arrive around the end of April to early May and are dark pink to red, in lax trusses of three or four flowers.



This plant is great for small gardens, as it will only be about three feet wide and two to three feet tall in 10 years.

It has compact, dense, growth habit and is hardy to -18°C/ 0°F. It can handle sun to light shade.

This rhododendron looks great planted next to silver leaf rhododendrons such as R. 'Golfer' or R. pachysanthum or any other contrasting foliage plant.

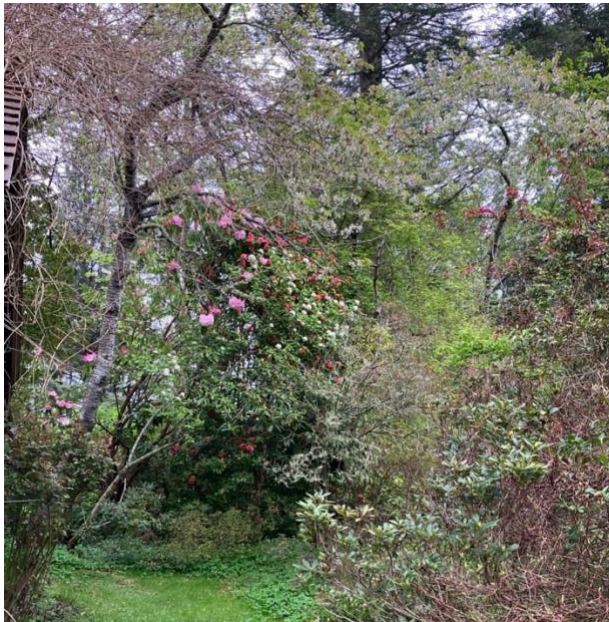
First photo is from the internet, and the second one from my garden.

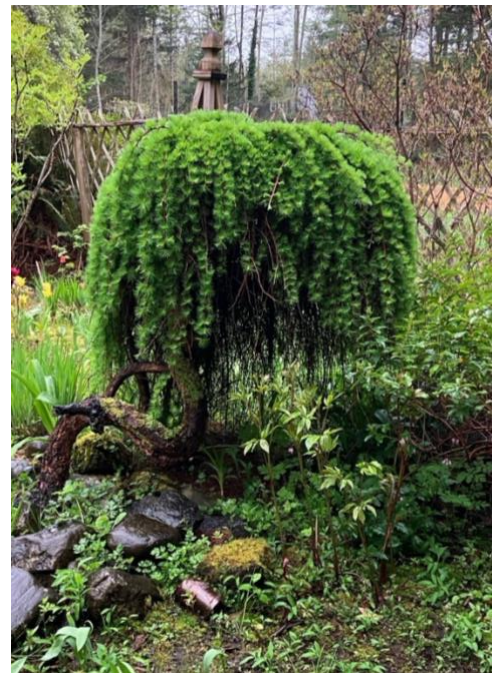
Picture Tour of Member's Garden Behind the House

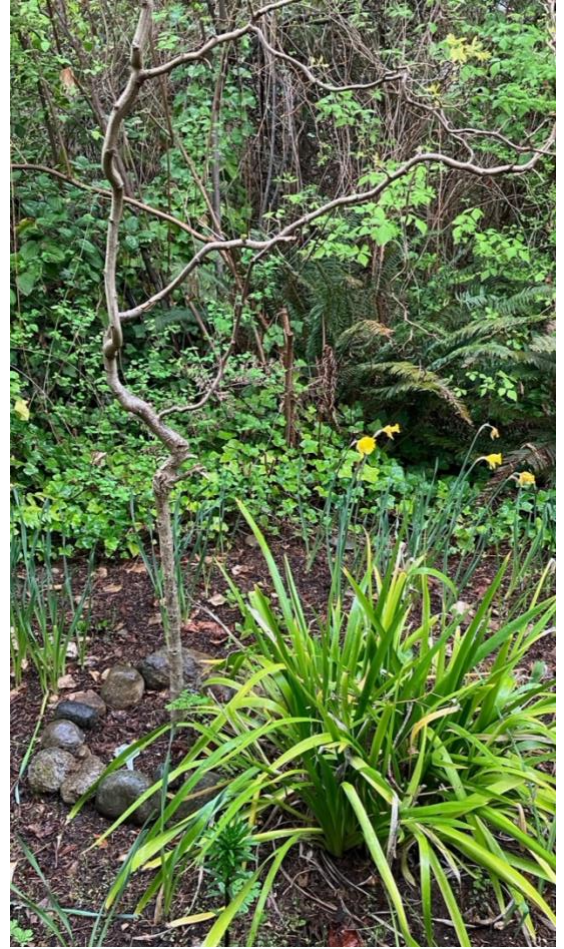


Susanne purchased the property from Robert Argall about a year ago. She and Steve Meier (gardener there of 10+ years) have been waging a war on the ivy that had taken over the gardens. Many treasures were found under the ivy making it worth all the work. Husband Kevin has been busy on clearing detail. Much sweat and a couple of dump trucks of mulch, and the gardens are being transformed into what you see in the photos below. Definitely a work in progress and a labour of love.

Susanne & Gardener Steve Meier







Thank you Susanne & Kevin for the picture tour of your garden.

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R. 'Ginny Gee' Photo by K. Haigh



R. 'Shamrock' Photo by M. Denny

Newsletter submission deadline is the 15th of each month.

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