

the Rhodoteller

North Island Rhododendron Society Vol. 41 Number 1 Sept 2026



Blue Poppy (*Meconopsis betonicifolia*)
by M. Denny

R. pachysanthum with Cape Fuchsia (*Phygelius*)
by M. Denny



NRS Meeting & Events

Board of Directors' Meeting September 9/26.

General Meeting September 15/26 Comox United Church @ 7:00 PM (doors open 6:30 PM)

Meeting Program **Azaleas**: By Chris Southwick and Sue Klapwijk.

CV Rhododendron Garden work party September 17/26 @ 10:00 AM

Gardening Events

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/>

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.

President's View

by Margaret Griffith-Cochrane

This summer I embraced the message in the quote from Audrey Hepburn: "To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow." In late May I had knee replacement surgery, and my goodness, did I ever enjoy my garden. Our garden provided me with a lovely setting to heal, and the encouragement to get on with my physiotherapy, as the plants were thirsty! The garden provided me with the functional exercises to gain back my stability, strength and flexibility, along with the beauty and a vast array of bird and insect visitors to entertain me.

While I was keeping my physiotherapist happy, the NIRS had a busy summer. Thank you to the individuals who shared their garden for afternoon tours, to the monthly CV Rhododendron Garden cleanup gang, and to the dedicated group on the propagations team who are working at the Smith's Garden to maintain the current plants for next year's sale and prepare for our next group of rhodo cuttings.

There are so many others on committees who work behind the scenes to prepare for the coming year. Thank you to you all. Looking forward to seeing you in September.

Items of Interest

Rhododendron Sale and Truss Show



Yoka Hart winner of the Rhododendron
"Goldflimmer" door prize donated by Bette
Hopwood

NIRS Annual Potluck Picnic



NIRS volunteers at the Horticultural Society's Summer Social



Rhododendron Garden Work Party

by M. Denny

A hot dry summer continues, and fortunately the water system at the Comox Rhododendron Garden has been adequate to keep the Rhodos healthy. Volunteers from the club have met in June, July and August for Tuesday evening Work Parties, deadheading, weeding, pruning and raking. Thanks to all who came to help out and a special thanks to Antje for faithfully providing her fabulous cakes and coffee to go with it. Fall Work Parties will continue in September and October in the morning, Thursday September 17 and October 15, at 10am. Come join us, we have fun.

Photos by M. Denny & D. Van Oostdam



Propagation Updates

by N. Boudreau

The propagation group has had a busy summer looking after the Rhododendrons. Under Wolfgang's guidance, the plants look great!

We had a few work parties; repotting the plants into larger size pots, fertilizing, repairing the posts for the shade cloth, taking inventory, and our "pot party" in which we sorted and re-stacked the pots, resulting in a trip to the recycle depot with a trailer load of broken or unusable pots. Our most recent work party was to mulch the pathways between the grow



boxes. Thanks to all who have come out to help us, it always turns out to be a fun time sharing lots of laughs.

Sheryl organized the watering crew and with some maneuvering we had a full crew. We have worked to make

the watering easier with two hoses and new watering wands. Thank you to this dedicated team. Wayne, the gardener/maintenance person for the Smith property has been very helpful setting up the irrigation and did an awesome job weed eating the area for us!

With Wolfgang providing his expertise we are planning to propagate some more rhodos in September, and designing an easier heating system.

Notices will be sent on dates and times.

We welcome you to join us!!

Photos by N. Boudreau



Meeting Program

Azaleas

Presented by Chris Southwick and Sue Klapwijk.

Revised from Nanaimo Rhododendron Society March 2026

Chris and Sue will be presenting a talk about those beautiful shrubs we know as Azaleas. Using photos from their own gardens, they will illustrate where Azaleas fit into the Rhododendron genus and help us learn how to recognize them in the landscape. They will be focusing on both deciduous and evergreen azaleas. Sue will also demonstrate how to propagate azaleas and she will be bringing some plants to sell from her nursery.

Chris Southwick's story: Chris had the good fortune to be born into a family that loves the outdoors, gardening, and rhododendrons in particular. Her paternal grandparents were Ted and Mary Greig, of Royston, who were pioneering rhododendron and alpine plant enthusiasts on Vancouver Island.

Chris has carried on that tradition since 1992 when she moved to Nanaimo and began gardening with rhododendrons in earnest, having purchased some lovely rhodos for her first Nanaimo property.

Chris joined the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society in 1994, and has been actively involved ever since. As a rhododendron species proponent, she currently serves on a committee that helped create the Greig Rhododendron Species Garden at Milner Gardens and Woodland in beautiful Qualicum Beach. After retirement, she became a certified Master Gardener to carry on learning about plants and giving back to the gardening community. She is currently the Chair of the Milner Garden and Woodland Society, Past President of the Vancouver Island Master Garden Association and a continuing Member-at-Large of the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society. She is also the Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden in Federal Way, Washington. Today in her half-acre Nanaimo garden, she has several hundred rhododendrons, including many dwarf species, many native flowering plants, ferns, Japanese maples, dogwoods, primulas and vegetables.

Sue's Klapwick's (Finley) story: The Finley Rhododendron Nursery grew out of a passion for rhododendrons and azaleas. My parents, Vernon and Gordon (aka 'Fin') Finley, loved to spend their summers touring the B. C. coast by boat, so Mom wanted a garden that was colourful in spring and could withstand summer drought. They had many friends who shared the same passion for the genus rhododendron. They would continually trade cuttings, share seeds of new crosses, hybridize their own plants and purchase new varieties of plants. A dear family friend once gave Mom a teaspoon full of seeds. That fine dust turned into thousands of seedlings. It did not take Dad long to figure out that one might need a place to plant them out and that was the beginning of the nursery in Langley. The land was cleared; a huge lathe house was constructed to protect the seedlings and two large greenhouses were erected. This left a large open field as well as a long narrow strip by the driveway open for planting out the larger of their hybrids.

They produced a number of hybrids, which they felt were good plants to propagate. None of these have been registered so far except for R. 'Burnaby Centennial'. They always believed that a plant should not be registered until it had bloomed for about ten years to prove its worthiness and to be assured of the stability of the bloom.

Over the years, Dad produced many cuttings. He turned his hobby into a full-time occupation after his retirement from medicine. He had always said to colleagues, "If you do not have a hobby, do not retire". This "hobby" also kept Mom very busy weeding, transplanting and selling plants. All my siblings and their children would pitch in and help with transplanting. The "Potting Parties" were a lot of fun, and thousands of plants were moved into the greenhouses in very short order. We all loved to go to plants sales, set up the displays and truss shows. The younger boys would always help people to their cars with their newly acquired plants.

Mom and Dad continued for 20 years longer and at this point Mom preferred to go golfing and Dad was no longer able to work due to failing health.

At this point, the nursery was going to be closed. I always felt that they had a lot of plants that were worthy of propagation and therefore I continued with their legacy until moving to Vancouver Island in 2018.

Revenue Table

by J. Walker & M. Denny

Our first meeting of the year is coming soon so it is time to look around your garden to see if you have any plants, house plants, fall bulbs, or garden related items to share and bring to The Revenue Table. The income from the sales is a good source of funds for the club and a way for others to have a peek into what grows in our gardens.

Please label all plants with their name, we will price them. If your plants don't sell, please take them home.

It is also time to take stock of which plants you will be able to divide and pot up for next spring's Plant Sale. It is too dry to do now, hopefully we will get rain by mid-September. For how to videos check out the Gardener's World website. <https://www.gardenersworld.com>

Looking forward to seeing what shows up at the tables!

Rhododendron 'Purple Lace':



Rhododendron 'Purple Lace' is a frilly, deep-purple hybrid rhododendron known for its ruffled petals, dramatic colour, and reliable blooming.

It's not one of the big-leaf *Grandia* types like *sinogrande* or *montroseanum*—instead, it's a compact, evergreen landscape rhodo that fits beautifully into Comox Valley gardens. **Flower colour:** Intense purple-violet with lighter centres and occasional spotting.

Petal shape: Distinct frilled / lace-edged petals - this is the signature trait. **Bloom time:** Mid-season (typically May in coastal BC). **Size:** Usually 4–6 ft tall and similar width at maturity (varies slightly by nursery clone). **Growth habit:** Rounded, dense, and tidy—good for foundation plantings or woodland borders. **Foliage:** Medium-sized evergreen leaves, not the huge tropical-looking leaves of big-leaf species.

Rhododendron 'Black Widow':



Rhododendron 'Black Widow' is one of the darkest, most dramatic rhododendron hybrids ever bred — a compact shrub with black-red to dark purple blooms, heavy ruffling, and striking white anthers. It's a mid-season bloomer and performs well in coastal BC conditions when given shelter and acidic soil. Original parentage was (Frank Galswothy x Leo) x Warlock, however, our propagation leader Nadine, informed us that this Black Widow parentage is (Black Widow x decorum x 'Dexter's Spice') and it seems to be someone's experiment cross and not a registered

hybrid, but something very interesting.... (She also said that she hopes to win this one.)

Rhododendron spinuliferum

If a rhododendron was to receive an award for having the weirdest flower, it would go to *Rhododendron spinuliferum*.

This species rhododendron belongs to section *Trachyrhodion*, and is native to central and western Yunnan and southern Sichuan China.

The distinctive tubular, pink to orangey red flowers that bloom in late April on the island, are approximately one inch long. The petals hold the stamens and pistil in a tight cluster. The semi-shiny leaves have rugose surface.

The plant is hardy to -15°C, Zone 7b.

It is tolerant of full sun, but part sun will be more ideal.

It tends to be an upright grower, but it will also grow branches horizontally.

It isn't a vigorous grower, only achieving a height and width of 3-4 feet in 10 years.

I would suggest keeping this one from drying out.

Unlike many rhododendrons that will show signs of dehydration, this one won't, until the leaves begin falling off.

I learned this, when I accidentally brushed up against it, and felt the brittle leaves fall off. I then started to knock the rest all off, until there were only bare branches. My next course of action was to keep it very moist and observe it with hope, that it would rebound.

It did finally leaf out again, over the course of a month. I pruned out the branch sections, where there was no life. The plant is looking healthy again.

Never be so quick to write off a dead looking plant, give them some care and patience and you might be rewarded.

Anyway, in closing, this is a worthwhile addition to anyone's plant collection.

Photo is my plant taken April 29.



Ann's Garden

A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.

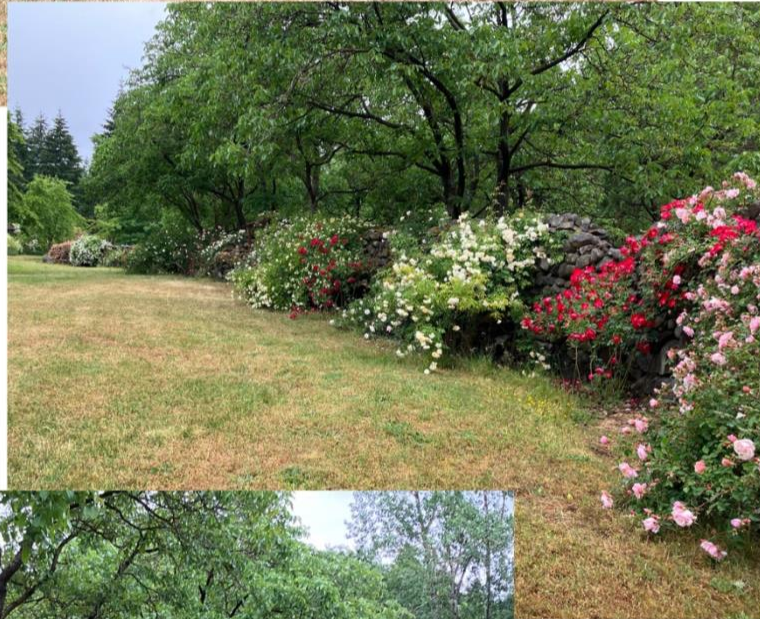
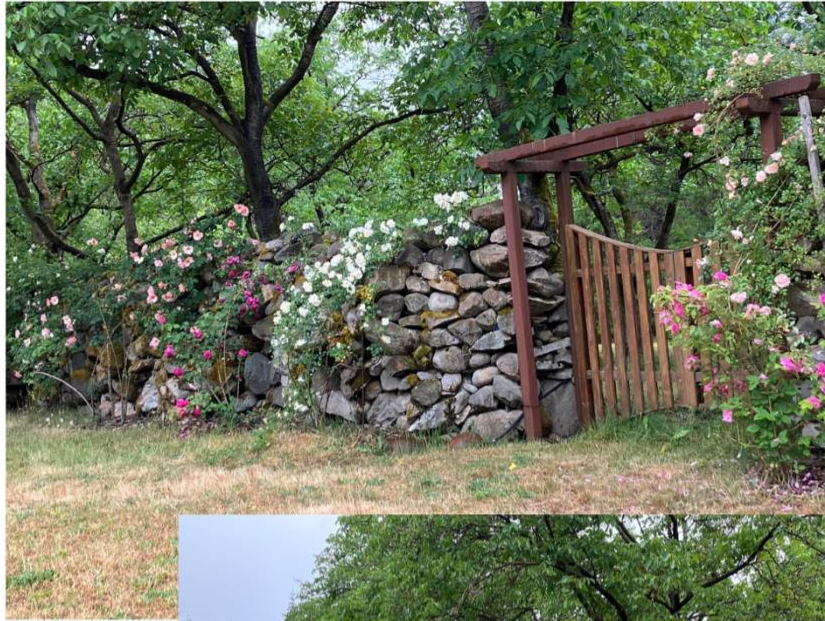
From Romeo and Juliet

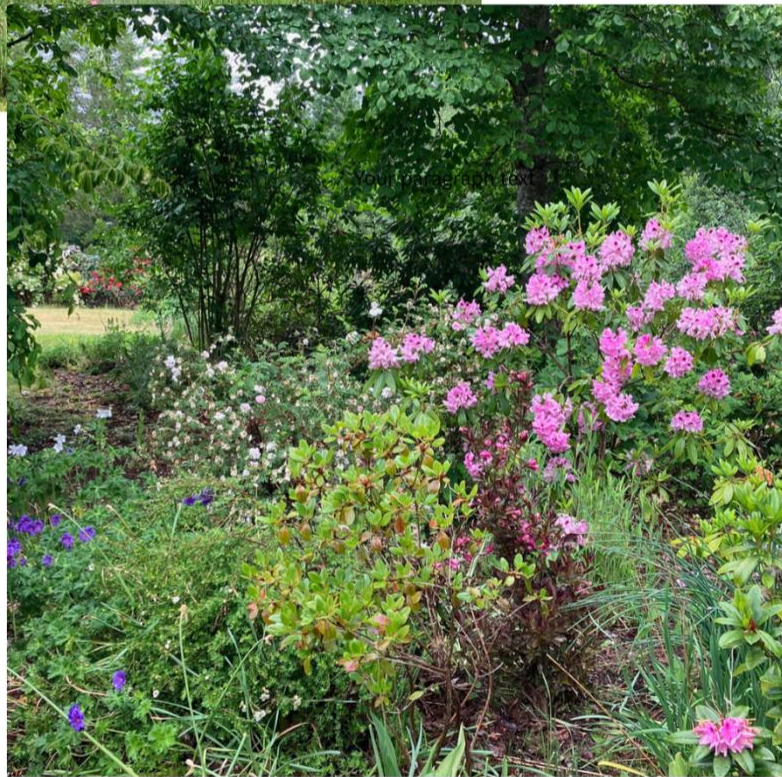
A rose is a rose is a rose - Gertrude Stein











Ann and her husband started developing this garden in the early 90's. Definitely a labor of love from the erecting of the massive rock wall that forms the impressive backdrop for the many, many prized roses, to the cultivation of and preservation of the land at Happy Creek Farm.

Thankyou Ann for opening your garden.

Newsletter submission deadline is the 15th of each month.

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Tree Peony By V. Ferris



Western Wild Ginger (*Asarum caudatum*)

By M. Denny