



# The Rhodomentum

## Nanaimo Rhododendron Society Newsletter

April 2020



### President's Message

What interesting times we are living in. This scary virus will hopefully not knock on our doors. But then, this too shall pass. As a precaution, we have cancelled our April and May meetings, as well as our May Truss Show and Sale. We are hoping to have a Truss Show and Sale in September, though. We plan to have photos of the plants in bloom attached to the sale plants.

Speaking of photos, as announced already we will have a new page called "What's Blooming" on our website [www.nanaimorhodos.ca](http://www.nanaimorhodos.ca) to display the rhododendron blooms of our gardens for each month of the year. We are looking forward to your photos. **Please send photos to Deborah Francis, our Webmaster, at [kdmfranc@telus.net](mailto:kdmfranc@telus.net).**

The work party at Hailey Rhododendron Grove at Bowen Park made a big dent into the present state of the jungle, and much more needs to be done urgently. Bryan Jubinville hopes to organize future work parties. It is a great opportunity to enjoy the beauty of some unusual rhododendrons in bloom (one is about 100 years old!), get some exercise and contribute to our community. A great thank you to Susan and Art Lightburn, Gayle and Allen McRae, Bryan Jubinville and Rosina Schmidt for doing such a great job at the first work party.

Towards the end of April, we hope to have a propagation workshop at the Paine Greenhouses for all NRS members. Al Murray will show us how he does it. He is master extraordinaire at this as his propagated cuttings are doing best! Around that time, the propagation team will replant some of the rooted cuttings into 4"x4" pots. **Please stay tuned!**

It is always great to visit each other's gardens, especially at this time of the year, but for now our communication will be online. It would be great to "see" your garden via the photos.

Keep well and happy gardening,

Rosina

### OUR EXECUTIVE

President	Rosina Schmidt	751-3386
Vice President	Chris Southwick	390-3415
Past President	Allen McRae	758-7589
Secretary	Jan Moles	390-9340
Treasurer	Liz Higgins	390-9340
Directors	Bryan Jubinville	956-6178
	Art Lightburn	468-7516
	Susan Lightburn	468-7516
	Gayle McRae	758 7589
	Don Noakes	778 441-4783
	Ron Sutton	905 331 5527

### COMMITTEES:

Advertising	Allen McRae
Library	Ann Beamish / Sandra Dorman
Newsletter	June Bouchard / John Deniseger
Membership	Krystyna Sosulski
Program	Committee
Raffle	Ann Davey & Val Harvey
Social	Deborah Francis
Bargain Table	Reinhold Gorgosolich/Don Noakes
Website	Deborah Francis
Bus Tour	David & Joyce Mitchell
Sunshine	Ann Beamish
Propagation	Rosina Schmidt

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society  
Box 241, #101-5170 Dunster Road  
Nanaimo, BC V9T 6M4  
Website: [nanaimorhodos.ca](http://nanaimorhodos.ca)  
email: [rhodomentum@nanaimorhodos.ca](mailto:rhodomentum@nanaimorhodos.ca)

**All NRS activities suspended!**

**Due to concerns surrounding the Covid-19 virus, all NRS meetings and events are cancelled or postponed until further notice: Craig Clarke's Celebration of Life on April 18<sup>th</sup>; both April and May meetings; Bus Tour; Annual Plant sale and Truss Show on May 9<sup>th</sup>. Stay tuned for updates...**



## Our Program for April:

**CALLING ALL GARDENERS!!!**

**Get out in your Garden!!!!**

We are living in difficult times and have no idea how long it will last. Stress and anxiety are normal reactions to what's happening. It is a time to reach out to others, check in with family and friends to see how they are doing. We can email, text, phone, video call, send photos, share positive stories and support one another, while following the recommended precautions such as social distancing. Together, we will get through this!

As gardeners, we have one of the best hobbies/passions at our fingertips for stress relief. Spring is on its way, and will continue to do so. Take time to enjoy your garden, walk around with a cup of coffee or tea or a glass of wine. Take photos (send them to our webmaster Deborah Francis [kdmfranc@telus.net](mailto:kdmfranc@telus.net)), get your pruning done, observe your mason bees, do your fertilizing.....there's so much to do and to enjoy! Maybe you have a garden project that you've been putting off.....we all have at least one of those. Try playing some classical music (dare we suggest Vivaldi's Four Seasons). Get creative, inspire others! Embrace your green thumb! Gardening and our gardens are the best therapy!

John and June



P.S. Let's remember that the less fortunate in our community still need our support. Loaves and Fishes and so many other charities could use a little help!

## *March 12th, 2020 - General Meeting Minutes (by Jan Moles)*

### **1. President's Report: Rosina Schmidt**

a) Action arising from the previous meeting are as follows:

- Many members attended Seedy Sunday in Nanaimo – Allen McRae organised the group and will report.
- There has been some progress on Bowen Rhododendron Grove - Art Lightburn to report.
- There will be a memorial for Craig Clarke - Dick Beamish and John Deniseger will present on our behalf.

b) Rhododendron Lake Visit?

- It is proposed that we return to Rhododendron Lake this year, probably in June - to be discussed later.
- Probably best time would be end of May beginning of June as rhodos up there are late blooming.
- Jan suggested that this year might be a good year as it is an outside activity.

c) May 9th NRS Rhodo Truss and Sale Show (Brenda Lewis will be overall organiser; Jan Moles for Truss Show)

### **2. Treasurer's Report: Liz Higgins**

Report was made available on front desk for those who wanted to read it.

### **3. Secretary's Report: Jan Moles**

a) No correspondence. Last months minutes available on front desk.

b) May 9th Truss Show: The poster for 2020 on website is available on the website plus 2019 documents which will be updated before April meeting, including:

- list of classes into which you can enter trusses;
- list of rhodos in alphabetical order with the class;
- 2 registration forms which entrants need to complete - Jan will bring some to next meeting;
- tips on what to look for when choosing your truss.
- Also, there are list of winners, winning plants and photos from previous shows.

### **4. Membership Report: Krystyna Sosulski**

- Krystyna not present: one new member expressed interest in joining this month (Bobby).

### **5. Program Committee's Report: Art Lightburn**

a) Last year's program, organised by programming committee, comes to an end in April. As it worked out very well, there will be a new committee for the coming year. Please send your ideas for interesting speakers to Art ([slightbu@shaw.ca](mailto:slightbu@shaw.ca)).

b) The Summer Potluck will be at Rea & Ron Sutton's - send suggestions to Ron.

c) Show & Sale: we have 180 plants - we will need a bigger work force on floor for selling – volunteers please.

d) North Island are now unable to bring plants to our sale.

### **6. Propagation Committee's Report: Rosina Schmidt**

In about 1-2 months we will be having the next propagation group; Alan Murray will give us lessons on how, when and from where on the plant to take best cuttings. We are looking to take some early bloomer cuttings of those plants that people showed great interest in at Seedy Sunday.

### **7. Advertising Report: Allen McRae**

a) Seedy Sunday: We had a really good seedy Sunday, a large number of people visited our table and stopped to chat and ask questions. Art & Susan did the display of plants in the log and photos on the wall; Allen and Gaylle organised the whole thing and packed up afterwards; several members came to man the table including Rosina, Val, Deborah and Jan. We signed up a couple of people and sold 10 copies of *Rhodo Gardens of Vancouver Island* by Ian Efford.

b) Bowen Park Rhodo Grove: all helpers will meet on Tuesday at 10am, for general clean-up - we have to wear hard helmet (city rules). Helpers please be on time as at 10am, we will be given a safety course before we commence.

### **8. Milner's Gardens Report: Chris Southwick:**

a) Greig Rhododendron Species Garden special event on April 21<sup>st</sup>: we are all invited to a special event, 1 - 3pm on April 21<sup>st</sup>; it has been 2 years since opening the species garden, big rhodos have been planted (many donated by the Lightburns) and many companion plants.

- b) Work Parties at the Species Garden: the group would like to have work parties on the last Tuesday of each month, starting March 31st, 12:30 to 3:00pm.
  - c) Milner garden early spring and summer schedule available
  - d) On the table is Rhododendron 'Seta' – a very old hybrid.
  - e) "Fall into Gardening": October 25<sup>th</sup>:
    - Mini-Conference in Parksville in large room, bring own lunch;
    - There will be 4 interesting speakers: Linda Chalker-Scott, Richard Hebda, Shannon Berch, Scott Wiskerke.
    - Cost will be \$30, very reasonable for 4 speakers.
- 9. Sunshine Girl Report: Ann Beamish - No report**
- 10. Bus tour: Joyce and David Mitchell** - on hold for now; we will see what comes in next month or so....
- 11. Milner membership and renewals:** \$35 single, \$50 for family.

### Presentation:

The business meeting was followed by a very informative and interesting presentation by Linda Gilkeson on 'Natural Insect, Weed and Disease Control'. Linda had books for sale at the back, and gave us her web site address for information and photographs in colour ( [www.lindagilkeson.ca](http://www.lindagilkeson.ca) ). Thank you very much Linda.

**\*\* Next meeting: Thursday 9th April 2020 at Beban Social Centre**

### WANTED!!!!

Our great propagators will need to transplant the rhodo cuttings into larger pots. They would appreciate any 4-6" pots that you might have. Please set them aside as they'll be needed.

Rosina has sent us photos of some of our cuttings !



*"April has searched the winter land  
And found her petted flowers again;  
She kissed them to unfold her leaves,  
She coaxed them with her sun and rain,  
And filled the grass with green content,  
And made the woods and clover vain."*

*~Hannah R. Hudson, "April," The Atlantic Monthly, April 1868*



## **Fertilizing Rhododendrons the Organic Way** –taken from *The Journal of the American Rhododendron Society*

1993 vol 47(4) (used with permission)

(An article written by Terry Richmond 27 years ago which we thought was worth reprinting as he makes so many good points which remain relevant today.)



When fertilizing rhododendrons, we should look to nature to show us the way. In nature, mulching and fertilizing is a continuous process with the current year's mulch being gradually transformed in subsequent years to usable fertilizer. Nature's rhodo food begins with a leaf, needle, twig, petal and fruit fall - in short, any and all matter that falls to earth or flows into their area in ground water.

Rhododendrons, because of their environment and the shallow layer of organic matter in which they grow, have evolved a massive root system consisting of literally thousands of tiny, shallow running feeder roots. These roots are extremely efficient in extracting life-sustaining plant nutrients from their immediate area. Root systems will be much smaller in a benign climate because a smaller amount of nutrients is required to maintain plant health. Conversely, rhododendrons in exposed and/or harsh conditions will have a vastly increased

root system to extract every ounce of nourishment from their surroundings.

So how do we fertilize rhododendrons in our garden? First, any literature on fertilizing rhododendrons assumes that your plants are growing in the correct medium. Again, as in nature, this medium should be extremely high in organic matter, well drained, well aerated and moderately to slightly acidic. Fir and pine bark, composted oak leaves and evergreen needles, decayed wood, well rotted sawdust, coarse peat moss, reed sedge and topsoil high in organic matter are some of the materials that can be combined in endless combinations to provide excellent growing mediums. Growing medium acidity or pH value is not nearly as critical when growing plants in an organic medium using primarily organic fertilizers. One good quality compost for rhododendrons contains oak leaves, evergreen needles, alfalfa and washed seaweed. Between the various layers, an organic nitrogen such as canola meal, fish meal or blood meal can be added.

A word of caution! Rhododendrons, because of their previously mentioned tiny feeder roots, can be easily damaged through over-fertilization, especially when using high analysis chemical fertilizers. Elements to be cautious using include nitrogen, iron, sulfur, boron, sodium and calcium. Contrary to popular belief, rhododendrons do not hate calcium. In actual fact the reverse is true. They will gorge themselves on available calcium until they make themselves sick. With respect to iron, a few years back a respected rhododendron grower suggested I supply more iron to help combat the effect of full sunlight in my exposed garden. He was undoubtedly right, but I supplied so much iron sulfate that severe leaf scorching occurred. A little fertilizer goes a long way, especially with small plants.

I fertilize in early spring around the end of March using all the organic fertilizer and soil amendments that I can obtain. When I combine ingredients, I try to duplicate natural fertilizer analysis. For instance, in canola meal (6-2-1) and in fish meal (3-2-1) the nitrogen is two to three times that of phosphorus and three to six times that of potassium. Three advantages of organic fertilizers over their chemical counterparts is in their trace element and humic content and in their extended time release of nutrients.

**Fertilizer Recipe** – my base organic fertilizer and filler recipes in volume parts are as follows:

2 parts each of fish meal, canola meal, alfalfa

1 part worm castings

½ part each of rock phosphate, bone meal, and kelp meal

Filler: 5 parts each of coarse sand, screened fir bark and fish compost

The filler, equal in volume to the fertilizer total, is used to prevent clumping of the meal type fertilizers and to minimize the dust problem associated with mixing finely ground or powdered materials.

*Well, when you feel like you've had enough gardening for the day, it's time to come inside, pour a glass of wine, and look into new recipes. Here's one from Susan Lightburn's kitchen and another one from our own Bowser kitchen! BonAppetit!*

### **The Only Barbeque Salmon** (Serve 4 to 6)

1 3 lbs. fresh salmon fillet, deboned  
6 large garlic cloves, minced fine  
1 teaspoon salt  
4 tablespoons fresh parsley, minced fine  
2 tablespoons dried tomatoes (packed in oil), minced fine  
1/4 cup olive oil.

Remove the belly and pin bones from the fillet, using bone tweezers if you have a pair.

Crush and mince garlic cloves. Sprinkle with the salt. Using a wide-bladed knife, grind the garlic into pulp. Combine the garlic, parsley, dried tomatoes, and olive oil in a jar. Cover with a lid and shake well to blend all the ingredients. Refrigerate until ready to use.

With a sharp knife, cut 2 lengthwise slits in the salmon fillet, dividing the surface of the fish into thirds, cut to the skin not through the skin. Spread half the mixture over the fillet and into the slits. Place the fish on a preheated barbeque over medium heat (350°F). Close the lid and grill for 15 minutes. This can also be done in the broiler.

Spread the remaining garlic mixture on the fillet. Close the lid, turn the temperature to high 400°F and grill 10 more minutes.

Remove the fish from the barbeque by inserting a spatula between the skin and the flesh, so that you can lift the fillet, but leave the skin on the grid. I like to serve the skinless and boneless fillet on a bed of fresh spinach.

You can also use the broiler instead of a grill.



### **Spring Tonic Sorrel Soup**

(From *Summer Delights: Cooking with Fresh Herbs* by Noel Richardson; Whitecaps Books, 1986)

This soup has many variations – but this particular version is a thin bisque-style soup. If you want it thicker, you can add some potatoes or leek to it. We're lucky to have French sorrel in our garden but if you don't, you can use spinach, kale, chard, or a combination. This recipe is from an older book which we've had for at least 30 years – we make it as a "spring ritual" almost every year! We like to use kale as part of the mix.

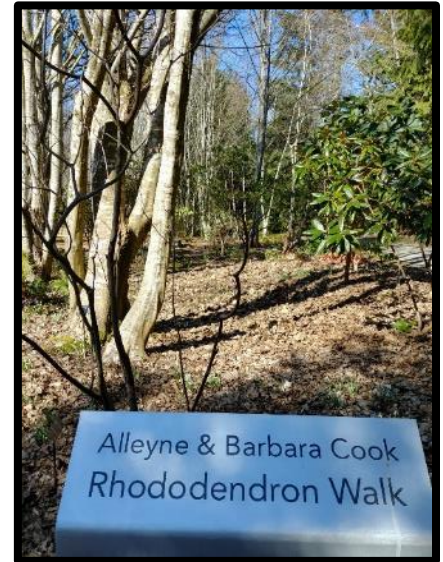
4 cups washed sorrel leaves  
4 cups washed spinach leaves (or kale, or any green of your choice)  
4 shallots, or 1 medium onion, finely chopped (we like to add garlic as well)  
4 tbsp. butter  
2 cups stock of your choice  
1 ½ cup half and half cream  
Salt and pepper to taste

Cook sorrel and spinach in a saucepan with very little water until limp. Drain and purée. Set aside. Sauté shallots or onions in butter for 3-4 minutes. Add stock and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer for 5 minutes. Add puréed sorrel and spinach, stir with whisk until smooth. Blend in cream; season and heat through.



## Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden – by John and June

In early March, we visited the Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden. It was a beautiful, early spring day, but you could see that this was a garden worth exploring. The SCBG is still young, a work in progress, as the SCBG Society purchased the 40-acre former tree farm in 2009. There are pathways throughout the property highlighting the native plant garden, the Garry Oak Meadow, the rainforest grove and the rainforest platform. The new pavilion and welcome garden are part of a beautiful entrance to the garden. A tremendous amount of planting is underway.



For rhododendron lovers, a real highlight was the Alleyne and Barbara Cook Rhododendron Walk. Many of you will remember Alleyne as an avid plantsman, rhododendron expert, and ARS Gold medalist (see Nov. 2019 newsletter). The Cooks donated more than 100 rhodos to the SCBG a few years ago. The result is an interesting collection of hybrids and species underplanted with perennials such as hellebores, and cyclamen. We were really impressed with the labelling of plants throughout the SCBG.



As we wandered the garden, we met the SCBG's manager, Mary Blockberger. She told us about the garden's history and plans. Working with a large team of volunteers, they offer classes, lectures, demonstration areas, tours and more. They have created an educational center as they teach people about the natural world. As with any garden, there's always lots more to do and



more to imagine. In June, they're planning on having Jim Byrnes in concert in the garden! Next time you're in the Sechelt area, it's worth visiting. Who knows, maybe we'll have a future presentation on the Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden.... <http://coastbotanicalgarden.org/>





\*\*\*\*\*

## First Day of Spring in Christina Lake

Richard White is a long-term member of the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society. He was on our executive for many years, including president for at least one term. He and his wife Linda now live in Christina Lake but have remained members of the NRS.

Richard sent us the following photos of his garden on March 20<sup>th</sup>, this year's official "first day of spring"! From what you can see, rhododendrons seem to grow well in the Kootenays, albeit with a later blooming date. Thank you so much Richard for these photos and for keeping in touch with us! Maybe you can send us pictures of the same plants when they are in full bloom!



Richard receiving the Bronze Medal from Craig Clarke in 2005



R. 'Voluptuous' budding nicely, and R. *brachycarpum* not looking too good. Five more weeks to go for blooms.



Yak hybrids poke through the snow, still 18 ins to melt.

"In the spring I have counted one hundred and thirty-six different kinds of weather inside of four and twenty hours." ~Mark Twain



## *A Successful Work Bee at the Hayley Rhododendron Grove in Bowen Park - stay tuned for future sessions*



The First Work Party at Hailey Rhododendron Grove



The first group of "Hailey Heroes" on 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2020

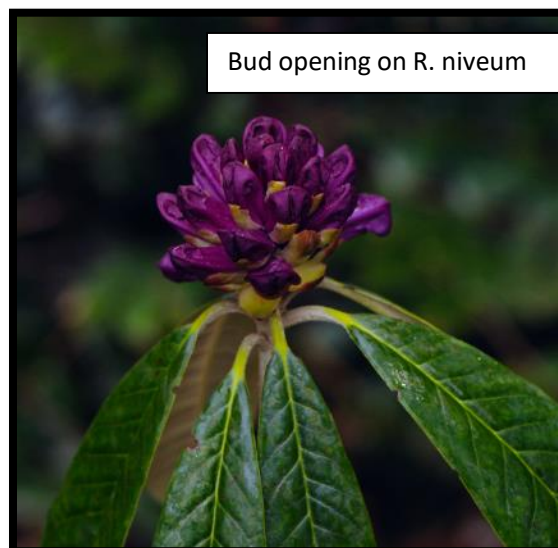
See their happy smiles after work well done?

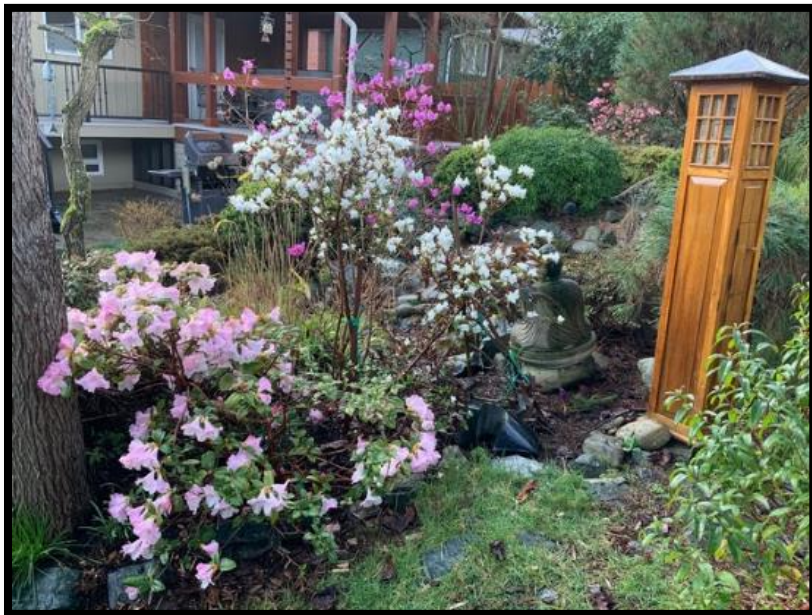
Bryan Jubinville will organize the next tour, so all of us will have the opportunity to enjoy fresh air, plenty of exercise and a great feeling that we contributed to a good cause.

Thank you, Susan, Gayle, Art, Brian, Allen and Rosina!



**From Art and Susan Lightburn's beautiful garden – photos by Susan Lightburn**





From Debbie Gaboury – a photo of her garden in mid March. Near the lantern are the purple and white forms of *R. dauricum*. In the foreground is *R. moupinense*

From June and John's garden:



*R. sutchuenense* – an open pollinated cross from Gord Galloway



*R. sutchuenense* close up



Native flowering currant



One of many *Primulas*



## *Fall into Gardening is Back!*

In October 2018, the Nanaimo and Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Societies co-hosted a very successful one day fall gardening workshop in Parksville. The event was called “Fall into Gardening” and had the theme of “Navigating Garden Myths”. The organizing committee continues to be hard work putting together a special day for the gardeners of central Vancouver Island.

After a year off, “Fall into Gardening” will be back in October 2020! The NRS and MARS have added a new partner: the Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association. This year’s theme will be “Gardening from the Ground Up”. The program includes Linda Chalker-Scott, Richard Hebda and Shannon Berch and Scott Wiskerke. **It will be held on Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, at the Parksville Community and Conference Center.** Details will follow in upcoming newsletters.

*Your first job is to prepare the soil. The best tool for this is your neighbor’s motorized garden tiller. If your neighbor does not own a garden tiller, suggest that he buy one.*

*~Dave Barry~*

