



The Rhodomentum

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society Newsletter

April 2021



President's Message

Easter Greetings to all NRS Gardeners!

We are delighted to warmly greet our new member, Dr. Rae Trajan, who just retired from dentistry and will devote her time now to tending her rhododendrons. Rae, we hope to meet you in person soon.

This past month, we had again the opportunity to watch some outstanding Zoom presentations, highlighted by two which really helped expand our gardening knowledge: Don Wallace's "Pruning Rhodos" and Brian Minter's on "Food Gardening".

We also developed a new page relating to rhododendrons:

<http://nanaimorhodos.ca/landscaping-with-fantastic-rhododendron-foliage-in-mind/>. Thank you, Susan, June and John, for those splendid photos.

Once again, much work has been done at the Hailey Grove, thanks to Bryan Jubinville for organizing it with Susan, Art, Gayle, Allen, Elaine, Val and Rosina giving a hand with pulling, pruning and sawing, at least one truck load of weeds, brambles and holly bushes. The first rhodos are about to start blossoming, so don't miss joining the crew at the next work party on the second Tuesday (13th) of April.

April is the time to apply beneficial nematodes to rhododendrons to combat weevils, and as we learned in one of the recent presentations, to prune rhodos and other shrubs right after flowering, as well as to apply fertilizer. (For further info see:

<http://nanaimorhodos.ca/rhododendron-caring-schedule/>)

It is also time to rake out the moss from the lawn, place peony support rings before growth gets too tall, and apply slug bait around newly emerging hostas.

Our April schedule will be busy again. There will be at least two Zoom presentations in lieu of in-person meeting, and one garden open house, and you would not like to miss any of it.

NRS has purchased from the Perennial Ridge Farm 40 rhododendrons for our own use. Thank you Art, for looking into it and Ron, for delivering the plants to Chris and Deborah's home to be looked after until they will be needed.

Our 2019 cuttings are doing well. Hopefully they will be ready for sale in a year or two. The 2020 cuttings, under the loving care of Allan Murray, will be transplanted into larger containers soon.

Happy Easter and happy gardening!

Rosina



OUR EXECUTIVE

President	Rosina Schmidt	751-3386
Vice President	Chris Southwick	390-3415
Past President	Allen McRae	758-7589
Secretary	Deborah Francis	
Treasurer	Ron Sutton	416 951-1373
Directors	Bryan Jubinville	668-2965
	Art Lightburn	468-7516
	Susan Lightburn	468-7516
	Gayle McRae	758-7589

COMMITTEES:

Advertising	Allen McRae
Library	Ann Beamish / Sandra Dorman
Newsletter	June Bouchard / John Deniseger
Membership	Jan Moles
Program	by Committee
Raffle	Ann Davey & Val Harvey
Social	vacant
Bargain Table	Reinhold Gorgosolich
Website	Deborah Francis/Rosina Schmidt
Bus Tour	David & Joyce Mitchell
Sunshine	Ann Beamish
Propagation	Rosina Schmidt
Hailey Grove	Bryan Jubinville
Show and Sale	Jan Moles and Brenda Lewis
Nanaimo Rhododendron Society	
Box 241, #101-5170 Dunster Road	
Nanaimo, BC V9T 6M4	
Website: nanaimorhodos.ca	

Next Events – Zoom Presentations:

April 7th, at 7pm - Chris Jennings: *Shade and Woodland Gardening* –
April 29th at 7pm - Brian White: “Treasures of the Cloud Forest” on his visit to Vietnam
in Spring

What's Coming Up?

Despite Covid19, we are planning things to do, places to go, events, and work bees... As part of the new normal, all of the usual protocols apply e.g., physical distancing, hand sanitizers, masks, etc. There will also be more on-line events coming – stay tuned!



WORK BEES

- Greig Rhododendron Species Garden at Milner –work bees expected to begin in April
- Hailey Grove at Bowen Park – work bees planned for Tuesday, April 13th from 10am to 2pm. Bring your lunch and sunny disposition. **Details on p. 7**



OPEN GARDENS ARE BEING PLANNED

**** COVID-19 RULES IN EFFECT: masks, hand sanitizer, physical distancing – NO WASHROOMS WILL BE AVAILABLE – STREET PARKING ONLY.**

Check future newsletters or [our website](#) for updates on our open gardens:



- **Saturday, April 17th 2 to 4 pm:** open garden at Allen and Gayle McRae's will also include a plant sale - 3570 Oakridge Drive
- **Saturday May 1st 3 to 5pm:** Dick and Ann Beamish's wonderful garden - 3904 Hammond Bay Rd.
- **Saturday May 8th 2 to 4 pm:** Chris Southwick's beautiful garden – will include a plant sale - 6647 Green Acres Way
- **Sunday May 9th 2 to 4 pm:** June and John's garden – 4555 Thompson Clarke Dr East in Bowser
- **Saturday May 29th 1 to 5pm:** Ron and Rea Sutton's in Fanny Bay – 7310 Cougar Smith Rd – will include a plant sale

- Milner Gardens and Woodland – **the gardens are open Thursday thru Sunday from 11 am to 5 pm.** Check their website for current details: [Click here](#)

Zoom based speakers and seminars – links and passwords will be sent to you a few days prior to each event:

April 7th, at 7pm - Chris Jennings: *Shade and Woodland Gardening*

April 29th at 7pm - ZOOM presentation by Brian White on his visit to Vietnam in Spring "Treasures of the Cloud Forest"



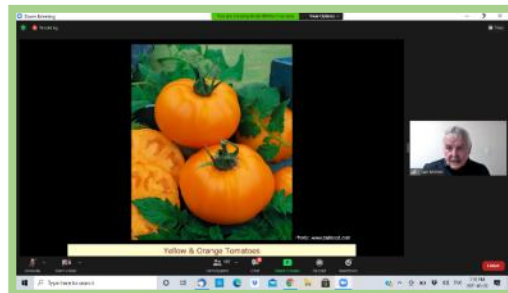
Stay connected - check our web-page - new things added regularly! <http://nanaimorhodos.ca/>

Looking back at March:

Linda Chalker-Scott gave an excellent presentation on raised bed vegetable gardening. The presentation was extremely well attended with 226 participants.



Brian Minter gave a superb, far ranging presentation on the latest developments and trends in food gardening. Brian's presentation was equally well attended with over 200 participants.



We sometimes forget that rhododendron enthusiasts are not limited to the west coast of Canada. On March 28th, June and I participated in a very well-done presentation through the "Société des Rhododendrons du Québec". The speaker was Richard Dionne from the "Jardin Botanique de Montréal" (also Vice-President of the Société). The talk focused mostly on hardy rhododendrons that would survive the local winters as well as companion plants.



It's Never too Late to Develop a Green Thumb!

Our very own Dorothee Keiser was interviewed by the Parksville Qualicum Beach News recently. She did a great job!

[Click here](#) to find out more, read the article and view the podcast.
(photo from PQB news)



Words of wisdom from our wonderful president!

The Leaves of Holly medicinal qualities

At our latest work bee at the Hailey Grove, while I was watching Bryan Jubinville sawing a truck-full of small trees and holly bushes with gusto, I recalled that my great-grandmother told me that she used the holly leaves for saving the lives of her children that were burning with fever during the Spanish flu epidemic in 1918/19, as the chemical medications were of no help.

My cherished herbal book “Das grosse Kräuterheilmittelbuch” by the Swiss herbalist Pastor Künzle (1857-1945) confirmed my great-grandmother’s wisdom, but also much information is to be found via the Internet.



The leaves of the English or European holly are used to combat many issues, such as digestive maladies, rheumatism, high blood pressure (hypertension), fever, and more. The leaves have a calming effect; they facilitate better blood circulation and arterial function.

While the leaves and the berries both contain caffeine, the berries are much more concentrated and therefore they are poisonous for human consumptions.

In the Black Forest where I lived for many years, the dry holly leaves were used as a substitute for the English tea (our regular tea). Both of them contain caffeine, but holly leaves have so many more health benefits. While the English tea is often served with milk, a slice of fresh lemon is best to enjoy the tea of holly leaves.

To your good health!

Rosina Schmidt
March 2021

The right time to plant vegetables in your garden:

When forsythia is blooming - plant radishes.

When apples and lilacs are blooming - plant squash, cucumber and beans.

When spirea is blooming - plant tomatoes.

Odds and Ends....



Propagation update from Rosina:

- Our cuttings are all thriving well now that the warmer weather has arrived. A warm thank you to our members in whose care they are.
- The 2020 cuttings in Allan Murray's propagator and under his loving care are doing well too. Because of the Covid-19 restrictions, any plans with Paine Centre greenhouses are on hold for now.
- **Your Propagation Team still needs 2-gallon pots.** Please drop off at Rosina's place, 3196 Merry Men Way, Nanaimo. Many thanks!



Members' Garden "Open Gardens" – update from Rosina:

This year we plan to have members' garden "open houses" starting in April. We would love to see your garden also – contact a member of the executive if you'd like to open your garden to club members. The schedule is updated regularly on our nanaimorhodos.ca website.

Plant sales will be included at some of the open gardens. If you have any plants to contribute to this event, it would be wonderful! **Please drop them off at the garden in advance of the open garden date.** All proceeds go to the club. Please mark your calendar, so you will not miss it. Hope to see you there!

Website updates:

Our webmaster Rosina has been busy. She's added sections to the website on foliage, rhododendron care and continues to add photos of what's currently in bloom as we build a photo catalogue. Please send your photos of rhodos that are blooming now to rosinatschmidt@gmail.com who will put them on the website, unless they're already there. [Click here](#) to see what's in bloom at various times of the year.

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Thanks to Chris Southwick for bringing the following to our attention – it links well to our February Speaker, Ken Nentwig on "Water Efficient Landscape":

Water to Earth Month 2021: A celebration of water and environmental awareness!

This is the 5th Annual Water to Earth Month series of events and activities that connects World Water Day (March 22) and Earth Day (April 22). The RDN, in partnership with the City of Nanaimo, Vancouver Island University and Nanaimo and Area Land Trust, has organized a variety of virtual and physically distanced events and activities including webinars, outdoor scavenger hunts, interpretive watershed walks in parks and more. **To learn more, access activities and register for events and webinars, visit** <http://www.getinvolved.rdn.ca/team-watersmart>

*"Everything is blooming most recklessly; if it were voices instead of colors,
there would be an unbelievable shrieking into the heart of the night."
- Rainer Maria Rilke*



Hi Fellow Rhodies!

This is Allen and Gaylle McRae here to welcome you to our Open Garden event on Saturday, April 17th from 2:00 to 4:00pm. As you can see from the accompanying photos, colour is starting to appear in our garden and many rhododendrons are blooming now as we look forward to welcoming you to our garden for the “Spring Blossom Event”.

The most exciting news for us to share with you (and invite you to see) is an area of our property now closed off to deer by a hand-built (by Allen) cedar fence and gate. We are now in the process of clearing the area of unwanted grasses, thistles etc. so that we can get our long-awaited greenhouse and raised beds erected this spring. Hopefully, this area will include espaliered fruit trees, cold frames, and a shaded sitting area.

This is what we’d enjoy to show you, so do please join us. Because of the pandemic, we have not seen many of our club members for way too long, so we’ll look forward to having you here – physically distanced, of course!



When: Saturday, April 17th – 2pm to 4 pm.

Where: 3570 Oakridge Drive; 250-758-7589 (if you need directions).

****There will also be a plant sale – if you wish to donate plants, please, bring them to the address above **prior to the opening hours.****

Hailey Rhododendron Grove at Bowen Park

by Bryan Jubinville

Hailey Gardens are looking up with the bonus of a few blooms starting to show. I look forward to seeing a lot more blooms in the coming weeks. This past month, we once again undertook to attack the invasive species in the gardens with several of the weeds taking major hits, most notable the Holly. We also continued hitting on the various other invasive weeds... they seem to be growing everywhere. We might win someday! In addition, we continued to undertake the winter debris clean up and pruning of damaged trees and shrubs.



The plan is to continue our efforts on Tuesday, April 13th, starting at 10:00 hours until 14:00 hours. Once again, it is a volunteer effort and if you can support the program with only a small amount of time, it will be time appreciated.

We usually break for lunch at about *noonish* and if you want to come out for a picnic and simply socialize it would be great just to reconnect. Imagine a cup of hot chocolate, tea or coffee come with your favourite sandwich and a dessert of some kind in the fresh air amongst the rhodos would be fantastic! Hope all are well.... maybe we will see you for the picnic lunch.

Cheers!

Bryan

Photos from the March 9th work bee:



"It's spring fever. That is what the name of it is. And when you've got it, you want - oh, you don't quite know what it is you do want, but it just fairly makes your heart ache, you want it so!"

- Mark Twain

Plant of the month - Rhododendron platypodium

by Ron Sutton

Here is a desirable species rhododendron belonging to subsection fortunea, with outstanding foliage and habit.

This plant produces beautiful thick bluish green leaves with a prominent yellow midrib and a whitish underside. In early May it produces an inflorescence truss of nodding pink flowers. It is quite similar in appearance to *Rhododendron yuefengense*, but with denser growth and larger leaves. It's an endangered species due to habitat loss in the Chongqing municipality of China where it grows wild. The hardiness is rated to approximately -18°C / 0°F and it likes part sun.



Not much is known about its growth rate or eventual size, given that it is fairly new to rhododendron collectors. The Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden sometimes offers this plant for sale. It is where I got mine.

My plant hasn't flowered yet, so the flower photo is from the internet.

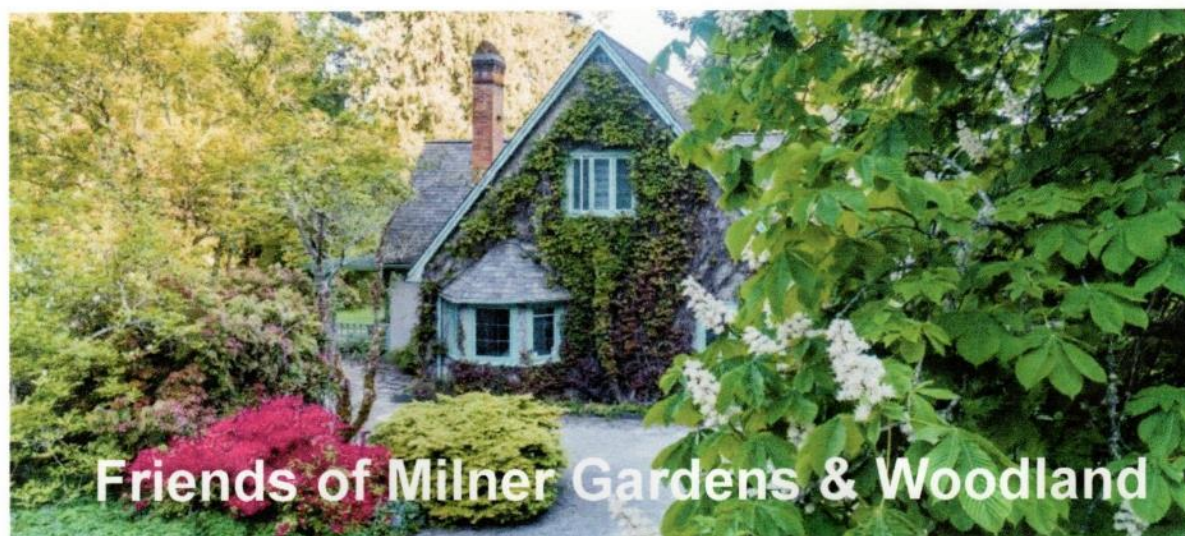
District 1 Rhododendron Chapters' Database

As we are losing our Rhododendron propagating professionals on the Island, it is of a great urgency for District 1 Chapters to propagate their own. It is also most important to concentrate on the current great diversity of rhodos in our own gardens and propagate the more exotic varieties that one can't purchase in retail stores.

The first step is to establish a database of those notable plants in our gardens, which are ready to be propagated. Each Chapter will establish a database of their gardens, and contribute to the database of District 1, which is to be established shortly. The cuttings are to be exchanged within the whole of District 1.

All NRS members will be contacted individually for their help towards this most important undertaking.

Rosina T. Schmidt



**Purchase your discounted annual
Friends of Milner Gardens Membership
by showing your Garden Club/Rhododendron Society
member card at the Milner Gardens' Welcome Centre
Offer valid March through May 2021**

Discounted rates: Individual \$20 or Household \$35

2021 season hours: milnergardens.viu.ca/hours-admission
Renewals: Please bring your current Milner Gardens membership
card to confirm your new expiry date

Benefits of a Milner Gardens Membership:

✓ Unlimited admission during regular open hours ✓ Advance entry
to Spring/Fall Plant Sales ✓ e-Newsletter ✓ 10% discount off Gift
Shop/Nursery regular priced items ✓ Guest Passes discounted to
\$9 each ✓ Milner Gardens and Woodland Society membership

Questions? Visit milnergardens.viu.ca/membership-benefits
or email MilnerGardens@shaw.ca or voice message 250.752.6153

Thank you for your support!



Milner Gardens & Woodland Announces Creation of an Endowment Supporting the Gardens' Rhododendrons

With great thanks to a group of generous supporters, Milner Gardens & Woodland is very happy to announce the creation of an endowment that will support the well being of the Rhododendron collections at Milner Gardens & Woodland into the future. This support will ensure the collections' long term health so it can continue to be used to show our community the diversity and complexity of the genus. The Rhododendron Legacy Endowment is focused on the longer term upkeep, enhancement, and study of the Rhododendron collections at Milner Gardens & Woodland.

Thanks to initial gifts from the Vancouver Island chapters of the American Rhododendron Society (District One), Jean Greig, and a generous anonymous donor, the endowment was established in 2020.

It is the hope of the founding donors that the fund will continue to grow and strengthen the support of the Rhododendron collections at Milner Gardens & Woodland and their use in educating our communities about this amazing genus.

Please go to the [Milner Gardens & Woodland Rhododendron Legacy Endowment's page](#) to donate to it now or contact [Susie Caswell](#) to learn of other ways you can help build this fund or one of the other endowments that are helping secure Milner Gardens & Woodland's future.

We would be happy to discuss how you can make a difference today, tomorrow or in the future.

Anyone interested in [supporting the endowment today can do so here](#) or [contact us](#) for more information.

"Tidbits of interest" sent by Art and Susan Lightburn:

There are so many sources of excellent garden information available on the web. Here are a couple of great examples from the "Garden Professors" website. Thank you, Art and Susan, for bringing those to our attention.

On fresh mulch:

<https://gardenprofessors.com/why-fresh-is-best-when-it-comes-to-mulch/>

On Vegetable Garden Success during a pandemic:

<https://gardenprofessors.com/planning-ahead-in-a-pandemic-for-vegetable-garden-success/>

Scented Rhododendrons by John Deniseger

This is the time of year when we take our collection of borderline hardy rhododendrons out of our unheated, insulated garage. They're a little extra work to move in/out in the fall and spring but in late April, they pay us back tenfold. We have them in pots which we put out under the front verandah. They typically begin to bloom in early to mid-April, putting on a display of beautiful flowers – but it is the amazing fragrance of these plants that steals the show. It is one of the highlights of spring in the garden. We have had many garden visitors drawn to the scent, wondering what the source could possibly be. We have a few favourites:



R. edgeworthii which blooms in mid-April through May. Hardy to -9 C, the white flowers are flushed with pink and a ten-year-old plant will reach a height of about 3 feet. If you live in a somewhat sheltered spot, or are a gambler, you may wish to plant it in the ground. 😊 The foliage is a richly textured dark green with dense rusty indumentum on the underside of the leaves. It is a plant worth searching out and growing.



R. 'Fragrantissimum' also blooms in early to mid-April and is hardy to -9 C, with predominantly white flowers flushed with pink. It too will reach about 3 feet in 10 years and has richly textured dark green foliage. It does tend to be a little leggy, giving you an opportunity to practice your pruning techniques.



R. 'Princess Alice' also blooms in early to mid-April but grows a little larger to 5 feet in 10 years and is hardy to -12C. The flowers are held in a loose truss, and are white, flushed with pink on the outside. The leaves are richly textured and dark green. Ours remains in a pot at least for now. Will we eventually plant it in the ground? We'll see....

R. 'Mi Amor' is one of our favourites. It blooms in late April and is rated as being hardy to -9 C while growing to 6 feet in 10 years. The white flowers have a yellow throat up to 5 or 6 inches across, forming a loose flat-topped truss. We saw it in many gardens in New Zealand in 2017 (photo on the right). Unfortunately, it does not survive our winters here on the coast. This naturally leads to a discussion on plant hardiness ratings based on temperature. There is more to it than just temperature, but that is a discussion for another newsletter....



There are of course, a number of scented rhododendrons hardy enough for our climate. They include *R. decorum*, *R. diaprepes*, *R. "Loderi King George"*, *R. luteum*, the fall blooming *R. faithiae* and many more.

From the kitchen (and the freezer) – by June Bouchard

Many years ago, Ann Beamish submitted the following recipe to our newsletter (October 2013). I have made it so many times that my printed page is covered with “drips and drops” – always a sure sign of a winning recipe! Although the original list of ingredients calls for diced green tomatoes (which tastes great!), I have adapted it to whatever is available either fresh or from the freezer - applesauce, stewed or freshly chopped rhubarb, frozen raspberries, puréed quince, grated carrots, bananas, and more! We’ve enjoyed it for breakfast, dessert or simply with a cup of tea in the afternoon – good spread with butter or even cream cheese. I’ve made it in loaf pans as per the recipe, but I’ve also made it in muffin tins.

I think that a recipe that is so versatile and turns out great each time deserves to be re-published, especially at this time of the year as we inventory the freezer to use up last summer’s bounty, including of course, chopped green tomatoes! Thank you once again, Ann, for sharing this great recipe!

GREEN TOMATO BREAD

2 cups finely diced green tomatoes (or 2 cups of “anything” 😊)
2 cups white sugar (I usually use less)
1½ cups chopped walnuts (you can vary the nuts, or don’t use any)
1 cup canola oil
2 eggs
1 tablespoon vanilla
1 teaspoon salt
3 cups all-purpose flour (or any flour – whole wheat works great)
1 tablespoon ground cinnamon (I sometimes omit, depending on what I’m using)
1 teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon baking powder



1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease and flour two 9x5-inch loaf pans.
2. Mix tomatoes, sugar, walnuts, canola oil, eggs, vanilla extract, and salt together in a large bowl until well blended. Mix flour, cinnamon, baking soda, and baking powder together in a separate bowl; stir into egg mixture until just blended. Spoon batter into prepared loaf pans.
3. Bake in the preheated oven until a toothpick inserted in the middle of each loaf comes out clean, about 1 hour. Let cool in the pans for about 10 minutes before transferring loaves to wire racks to cool completely. Enjoy!

Humour is good therapy! 😊



~ So, my neighbour sees me kneeling down, busy in my garden and asks what I'm doing:
"I'm putting all my plants in alphabetical order."
"Really?! I don't know how you find the time!"
"It's right next to the sage!"

**AMERICAN RHODODENDRON
SOCIETY 2021
VIRTUAL AND LIVE CONVENTION
RHODOS DOWN EAST: EXPLORING
THE NORTH ATLANTIC REGION
June 3-6, 2021**

**Virtual Convention and onsite events
at the Old Orchard Inn, Wolfville,
Nova Scotia**



While the pandemic has made in-person attendance difficult, the host Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society has taken a more creative approach. The ARS spring convention will be both virtual and live. Registration for the virtual conference is now open! All presentations, garden tours and networking opportunities will be available online. Early bird registration for the virtual convention is open. Prices will increase on April 1st, 2021. The overall deadline for registration is May 1st, 2021. Visit the convention website for more details at: [convention details](#)

Speakers include **Ken Cox**, famed Scottish rhododendron breeder from Glendoick Nursery in Scotland; **Joe Bruso**, rhododendron breeder from Massachusetts; and **Todd Boland** from Newfoundland's Memorial University Botanical Garden. The Convention will start with a lecture on "Introduction to Mi'kma'ki" by **Gerald Gloade**, a Mi'kmaq Naturalist and educator who will tell the stories of the first people that explain the natural history since the area was covered by ice.

Garden tours, both virtual and in-person, will include the **Kentville Research Centre**, **Annapolis Valley Historic Gardens** and **Peggy's Cove barrens** as well as private gardens. Networking opportunities will include the **Breeder's Roundtable** where you can hear about the latest trends in Rhododendron breeding, the **ARS Next Gen Project** which will show how to involve the next generation in your local ARS club, as well as social events that feature the seafood, cider and wine from our local producers.



*Stay Safe and
Happy Easter
everyone!*