



December 2015

President's Message

Although the season is not yet officially winter, it certainly feels like it with the increased rains, shorter days, lower temperatures and the first hard frost of the fall (for those of us who don't live along the seaside). We are fortunate indeed, however, to live on the coast of BC, where can so easily grow plants that give winter colour and interest every month of the year. My *Camellia sasanqua* doesn't seem to have been adversely affected by the frost and lights up the garden with its clear pink blooms with bright yellow stamen centres. I was lucky enough to "win" this plant at last year's Christmas Auction and consider myself fortunate that it was donated by one of our members.

I know, it seems hard to believe that in several weeks from now, our annual Christmas Potluck and Auction will take place, on Thursday, December 10th. It is one of our main fundraisers of the year and functions to support our student bursaries, pay for our meeting expenses for the year and help support Loaves and Fishes (with 10% of the proceeds). We encourage everyone to both bring and bid on items, remembering that the idea is that this is a fundraiser as well as a social time. We have a very generous membership and it is always fun to see what people bring to auction. Garden-related items are suggested, of course, especially plants, but other items that you may want to re-gift are encouraged as well. Our Auction team is busy planning the evening and encourages you to bring a cheque to pay for your items as it is easier to keep track of the "winning" bidder. Don't forget to bring non-perishable food items for the Food Bank as well. There are a great number of needy folks in our community.

Bring your plate, cutlery, mug and a potluck finger food item to share, and bring along a friend to join in the fun! Our meeting on the 10th will start earlier than usual – set up at 5:45, with dinner beginning at 6:30, followed by the auction.

Hope to see you all there!

Chris Southwick

EXECUTIVE

President	Chris Southwick	390-3415
Vice President	Brenda Lewis	751-3639
Secretary	Ann Beamish	758-2574
Treasurer	Krystyna Sosulski	729-0948
Directors	Glenda Barr	390-2822
	Craig Clarke	390-4090
	Susan Lightburn	468-7516
	Dorothee Kieser	390-4136
	Gayle McRae	758-7589
	Art Lightburn	468-7516
	Sandra Dorman	390-0136

COMMITTEES

Advertising	Jan Moles	
Library	Ann Beamish	758-2574
Newsletter	Kathryn Grant	585-2706
Membership	Sandra Dorman	390-0136
Program	Art Lightburn	468-7516
Raffle	Ann Davey & Val Harvey	
Social	Susan Lightburn	468-7516
Bargain Table	Reinhold Gorgosilich	758-6533
Website	Craig Clarke	390-4090
Sunshine	Edith Higgins	390-9340
Bus Tour	John Deniseger & June Bouchard	
Truss Show	Doug Blenkarn	
Spring Sale	Ann Beamish	

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society
Box 241, #101-5170 Dunster Road
Nanaimo, BC V9T 6M4
Website: nanaimorhodos.ca
email: nanaimo@rhodos.ca

Next Meeting

Thursday December 10, 6:30 pm Beban Park Social Centre

CHRISTMAS POTLUCK AND AUCTION

Twigs and Stems 

MILNER CHRISTMAS MAGIC

December 4-6, 11-13, 16-20

5 pm - 8:30 pm

entry by donation

Santa, lights, live music, Teddy Bear Cottage, refreshments

Roots children's program

www.milnergardens.org or 250.752.6153

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society Calendar

Our regular monthly meetings normally begin at 7:30 pm on the 2nd Thursday of the month at Beban Park Social Centre. Executive meetings begin at 2:00 pm on the 3rd Thursday of the month. Occasionally the dates change due to events at Beban Park Social Centre or if we share an exceptional speaker with another chapter. Here is the annual calendar for your information:

Dec. 10	Christmas Potluck and Auction – 6:30 start
Jan. 14	Monthly meeting
Jan. 21	Executive meeting – Glenda's
Feb. 11	Monthly meeting
Feb. 18	Executive meeting – Craig and Joyce's
March 10	Monthly meeting
March 17	Executive meeting – Sandra's
April 14	Monthly meeting
April 21	Executive meeting – Krystyna's
May 12	Monthly meeting
May 19	Executive meeting – TBD
June 11	Saturday - Possible date for the year-end wind up party

NRS PARTY & AUCTION '15



December 10th, 2015

Once again it is time for the annual **Christmas Party and Auction** to be held in our regular meeting room on Thursday, December 10th, dinner starting at 6:30.

Please bring your favorite finger food for all to share. The social committee will provide coffee, tea and a non-alcoholic punch. After dinner our **Santa** will conduct an auction on donated items as a fundraiser for our club, with 10% donated to the SOS. Also, a box will be provided for dry good donations, which will go to Loaves and Fishes.

Welcome to friends, guests, neighbours. Please bring your own plates, glasses/cups, and eating utensils. **All** can donate items for the auction (plants are a favorite), but all items, homemade or purchased, are welcomed. And everyone, please remember dry good items for the Loaves & Fishes.



NRS Garden Tour 2016

As you may already know, the NRS is planning a public garden tour for May 14/15 2016. The organizing committee would welcome any suggestions of potential gardens to include on the tour - we're looking for a wide variety of gardens representing a blend of mature and new, large and small, estate and urban gardens. It is not necessary for the garden focus to be rhododendrons and the garden owners do not have to be NRS members. Please contact Gaylle McRae (250 758-7589; allengaylle@shaw.ca) or Art Lightburn (1 250 468 7516; slightbu@shaw.ca) if you have any recommendations or if you would like to volunteer your own garden. Your input would be greatly appreciated.

We will also need a number of volunteers to act as "garden sitters". To help us with our planning, a sign-up sheet will be circulated at the December meeting. We hope many of you will be able to either open your garden to visitors or participate as sitters on the day(s) of the event.

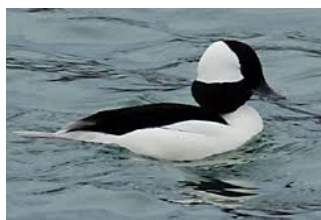
Many thanks from your organizing committee

Seen in Passing

Large flocks of Surf Scoters and Buffleheads in Craig Bay sheltering from the recent turbulent storms.



Surf Scoter



Bufflehead

The Nepal Earthquake Appeal

At the 2015 ARS Spring Conference in Sidney, B. C., Kenneth Cox encouraged all of the rhododendron societies to raise some funds to support the devastation in Nepal. Chris has contacted him and to quote from his email, "Thanks for getting in touch and thanks too for doing this fund-raising. An excellent way of doing it I think. I'll keep you posted on the projects we are planning to support. Ken Cox"

To see the details about what the region requires, please check out the following link:

<https://www.glendoick.com/Nepal-Earthquake-Appeal>.

The link has a great deal of information, including information from those affected.

I'm pleased that we have another plant lined up for auction in January. More details to follow! From the website above, comes the following information:

The Nepal Earthquake April 2015

"The death toll in the massive earthquake which struck Nepal on Saturday 25th April has passed 6,000, and many thousands are still unaccounted for. Thousands of villages have been devastated, with up to 90% of clinics and schools in some districts rendered unusable.

Lalugiras or Rhododendron is the National Flower of Nepal and many Nepalese species and hybrids bred from these species are widely grown in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand.

Two of the main trekking areas of Nepal where tourists go to see the rhododendrons are Milke Danda and Langtang.

Participating so far are:

The Scottish Rhododendron Society, Rhododendron Species Conservation Group, & Matt Heasman £1313 raised.

Glendoick Gardens and Garden Centre

Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society (Vancouver Island, Canada)

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society, (BC, Canada)

Millais Nurseries (England)

German Rhododendron Society

The Rhododendron, Magnolia & Camellia Group (UK)

New Zealand Rhododendron Associations \$3,500

Norwegian Rhododendron Society (£570 GBP raised)

How long will this appeal run?

The devastation in Nepal will take at least 10 years to repair. So we should take a long term view and support projects which will make a real difference to the villagers from the Rhododendron growing areas. I think it makes sense to run this through at least to the end of the 2016 Rhododendron flowering season."

NANAIMO RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

Cox Hybrids

The listed hybrids are very popular as they are usually fairly dwarf and slow-growing. They are good “doers” and many of them are available either at local nurseries or through our growers at our annual plant sale. These hybrids are from the famous Glendoick Gardens in Scotland, and as such are well suited to our climate. In addition, since they are quite dwarf in nature, they can usually take more sun than their larger cousins, thus good candidates for future garden plants. As you can tell from the list, they are named after different birds found in Scotland and the brilliant idea of naming them after birds has made them quite a collector’s delight. This is not a definitive list but many of those listed are in our local gardens. They are listed by colour below:

Yellow

Chikor
Curlew
Merganser
Teal
Wren



R. 'Wren'

Pink

Pipit
Snipe
Razorbill

Red

Grouse



R. 'Razorbill'

Lavender

Phalarope
Wigeon

White

Egret
Eider
Ptarmigan



R. 'Egret'

Rhodos Worth Growing



Rhododendron 'Maureen' - Maureen is an *R. williamsianum* hybrid with cute round leaves (typical of that species) that emerge with the coppery hue of brand-new pennies. The flowers are clear pink. Low-growing.



Rhododendron 'Moonstone' — (*campylocarpum* x *williamsianum*) 3', -5°F, EM, 3-4/4. This plant forms a compact mound covered with oval, smooth green leaves. The flowers are creamy yellow and are borne in profusion. One of the best yellow-flowered semidwarfs.

Fall for Rhododendrons by Norman Todd

In the gardens of coastal British Columbia, the best time to plant broad leaf shrubs and trees is the fall. In October and November, the soil is still warm, the autumn rains have begun, and conditions are the best for the development of new roots. By planting in the fall, plants will become established before the burgeoning demands of spring signal the roots to send more nutrients for swelling blossoms and expanding leaves.

As long as the ground is not frozen, the roots of the broad leaf evergreens are purposefully working. To the human eye, there does not seem to be much going on above soil level, but the plant is still photosynthesising. Sugars and starches are being manufactured from the nutrients the searching roots are pumping up to the leaves.

When a plant is dug up and replanted, or taken from a container and put in the ground, the roots are always disturbed. To assist them to grow into soil in their new environment, the roots of a potted plant must be teased apart quite vigorously so that they can make intimate contact with the welcoming environment of the new, freshly prepared home. For rhododendrons this means an open, friable soil with a high content of organic matter, located in a well-drained site. Rhododendrons hate standing in water: they drown. Their roots need loose, airy, humusy soil around them.

One of the best and easiest ways to give them this open soil and the right acidity is to incorporate bark mulch. Up to 50% of the mix in the planting soil can be bark mulch – not too coarse and not dust either. Many people like to use peat moss, but much of the moss available today is so fine that if it ever dries out, it is very difficult to moisten it again. Furthermore, peat moss breaks down far more quickly than bark mulch. The number one cardinal rule for growing rhododendrons is that the roots must never go dry.

If your soil is a black humus-rich loam, you are fortunate indeed and no amendment may be necessary. You can plant the rhododendron as deeply as it was in the pot. But if the natural soil is a heavy clay, then 8 to 12 cm of coarse sand should be dug in to a depth of 30 cm before the addition of the bark mulch. Composted leaves, preferably oak, can be used instead of bark mulch. If the soil is heavy clay, you can plant very shallowly, bringing the amended soil higher than the soil level at which the plant was previously growing. Mixing some fertilizer in the planting hole is beneficial. Avoid using animal manure that is less than a year old. An excellent fertilizer you can make yourself is a mix of ground meals: 4 parts of canola, 4 of

alfalfa, 4 of blood, 1 of bone and 1 of kelp plus 2 of dolomite lime and 1 of rock phosphate.

Most of the rhododendrons we grow are hybrids. Hybrids result when two or more of the plants found growing in the 'wild' – the species – have been combined by cross-pollination. Most of the species that have been used to make these popular hybrids come from climates that have relatively dry winters and high summer rainfall. In the Victoria, we have the reverse. One of the consequences of our persistent winter rainfall is that the nutrients that are at the surface of the soil get leached downwards quite quickly. Rhododendrons, which are very shallow-rooted can in fact be starved in our winter because all the goodness goes past them before they can catch their fair share. If the roots can't supply the nourishment, then the plant will draw from its stored reserves – its rainy day account, leaving less for production of flowers and foliage. The regime that I follow is to feed sparingly with a chemical fertilizer (10-8-6 with all the minor elements), five times a year. I start in November and feed every two months with the last feed on Canada Day. Rhododendrons are not gross feeders, but they do like three meals a day – light ones in the winter, heavier ones in the spring.

Choosing the right variety for the right spot is important. There are now more than 23,000 registered hybrids. This is a daunting number but, from its very size, you can be sure that the right plant for your particular location can be found. Some need almost no direct sun, some need full sun, some will grow to be trees and some will never be more than 2 cm high, some will bloom in December and some will bloom as late as August, some are deciduous, most are evergreen. Colours range through the entire spectrum except for the pure gentian blue. Even that is now a possibility with our increased understanding of genetics.

One of the convenient characteristics of rhododendrons is that because they're shallow-rooted they are very portable. For gardeners who would really like their plants to come with wheels so that they can move things around until their concept of horticultural artistic perfection is reached, rhododendrons come quite close to being ideal. They can be moved at any time of the year. The huge majority are planted in the spring and they do very well. The very best time, however, for gardeners in our area is the fall.

(This article was discovered in the VRS archives, undated, but probably first published in the early 1990's. It is both timeless and timely.)

NRS has five copies of "The Complete Wit and Wisdom of Norman Todd" which we'd like to sell for \$12.00. Norman and his wife owned Firwood Nursery in Saanich. It would make a great Christmas gift for plant lovers and should be in every rhododendron lover's library.

NANAIMO RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

ADD INTEREST TO YOUR GARDEN DURING THE WINTER MONTHS

On southern Vancouver Island you can have an interesting garden every month of the year. Most plants that bloom or carry berries through the winter months need some protection, particularly from the wind; a light woodland setting is ideal.

Try some of these combinations of plants in your garden to generate interest during the winter months:

1. Pampas grass, variegated bamboo, golden variegated Russian olive (*Eleagnus*), dwarf spruce, *Viburnum tinus* and *Photinia x fraseri*.
2. Cornelian cherry (*Cornus mas*), winter flowering cherry (*Prunus subhirtella autumnalis*), witch hazel, *Viburnum bodnantense* and winter heather with blue crocus or muscari.
3. *Daphne mezereum* with Blue Bonnet crocus.
4. Witch hazel with winter aconite and snowdrops.
5. Winter flowering cherry and *Erica carnea* (King George).

Gardening Tips: Many winter-flowering shrubs do not need much pruning except to shape them. If you are in doubt, observe whether flowering is on old wood or current year's growth.

You do not want to encourage new growth in the autumn; it can get frozen.

Most winter flowering shrubs are easy to propagate from cuttings, otherwise try seeding. Sow hellebore seed in June, it will germinate in January.

Some plants that add fragrance during the winter months: Algerian Iris, *Chimonanthus praecox*, *Lonicera standishi*, *Hamamelis mollis*, *Sarcococcus*, *Prunus mume*, *Sycopsis sinensis*, *Daphne laureola*, *Daphne mezereum*, *Azara lanceolata* and *Clematis Armandii*.

Some Plants with coloured berries:

Purple berries: Oregon grape, *Berberis*, *Leycesteria*, *Billardiera*, *Callicarpa*
Pink berries: Mountain ash and *Pernettya*
Black berries: Privet, *Sarcococcus* and Ivy
Blue berries: *Viburnum davidii*, *Callicarpa*, *Cornus amomum*, *Gaultheria sinensis*, *G. trichophylla*, *G. wardii* and *G. hookeri*

Red berries: Holly, *Cotoneaster*, *Skimmia*, *Berberis*, *Pyracantha* and *Pernettya*

White fruit: Snowberry, *Skimmia*, *Pimella*, *Margyricarpus*, *Pernettya*, *Cornus alba*, *Gaultheria cuneata*, *G. hispida* and *G. miqueliana*

Orange fruit: *Hippophae*, *Crataegus x Carrierei*, *Euonymus*, *Pyracantha*, Gladwyn iris and *Celastrus*.

Groundcovers: *Cotoneaster*, heather, *Lamium maculatum*, *Bergenia*, Ivy (*Hedera*), *Epeimedium*, Juniper, *Hypericum*, *Pernettya*, Vinca.

Do not forget ornamental grasses in your winter garden.

A Winter Garden Work Calendar

January: Prepare new beds by double digging, make sure drainage is good. Crowded shrubs may be moved. Apply bonemeal, it will soak in well if snow is on the ground. Remove snow from branches.

February: Look for seedlings of cyclamen in centre of old plants. New shrubs and trees can be planted if weather is suitable.

March: Watch for seedlings around hellebores. Fertilize rhododendrons, azaleas and pieris; all will benefit from an annual 4 inch mulch of oak leaves.

April: Divide large clumps of snowdrops, aconites and hellebores. Leave seedpods on to spread the plants. Plant Algerian Iris. Apply a general fertilizer to most plants.

May: Divide English and double primroses immediately after flowering. Deadhead rhododendrons and azaleas. Feed Algerian Iris Epsom salts. Plant bamboo, camellia and magnolia, adding compost to the planting soil.

June: Early in the month give a second application of rhodo fertilizer; do not fertilize after this or you will not give new growth time to mature before winter.

July: Weeding and watering.

August: Begin to taper off watering but water well those trees that give good autumn colour. Plant daffodils and narcissi and water well. Plant autumn crocus.

September: Plant bulbs through to November. Tulips can be planted into December.

October, November, December: Plant trees, shrubs and some fall flowering perennials.

NANAIMO RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

WEATHER PROTECTION

Damage to rhododendron and azalea leaves and buds can occur at low temperatures. Exposure to cold can cause dry, brown areas on leaves and brown-colored buds. Sometimes new plant growth may not have had sufficient time to harden off before cold weather sets in and may be killed. Give the plant plenty of time to send out new growth as temperatures warm before pruning off the damage. Warm temperatures followed by a quick freeze, such as early freeze in the Fall or a late freeze in the Spring can be more damaging than a gradual drop in temperature.

USDA hardiness zones (and similar maps in other countries) can be consulted to determine annual minimum temperatures at your location. Where your garden is situated in a hardiness zone and the garden's specific details are important, as local microclimates may be different than the general hardiness zone you live in. Cold hardiness estimates provided by the ARS for selected **rhododendron** and **azalea** species and hybrids can be used to find plants suitable for your garden. The ratings give an indication of minimum temperatures that a well-established plant can be expected to survive without damage. Certain rhododendrons and deciduous azaleas can survive temperatures as low as -35°F (-37°C).

It is normal for some rhododendrons to exhibit leaf droop and curl at around 32°F (0°C); the lower the temperature the tighter the curl. Leaf movement occurs rapidly and it is reversible as temperature warms.

Rhododendrons and evergreen azaleas lose some of their leaves each year. Typically leaves are retained for one to three years dependent on the variety. Leaves may turn yellow, red, or purple before they fall off. For some rhododendrons and azaleas the retained leaves turn red or bronze-colored in the cold months. In some azaleas the only leaves remaining are those that surround the flower buds at the tips of the branches. The degree of leaf coloration or loss is determined by a plant's genetics. In cold areas, certain evergreen azaleas may lose more leaves than they would in milder areas.

Drying winds and frozen ground deprives plants of their natural moisture intake. A good soaking in the late fall before freezing and a good mulch will greatly help a plant's survival. In cold climates, rhododendrons and evergreen azaleas can benefit from an application of an anti-desiccant, such as Wilt-Pruf. Read and follow carefully the manufacturer's instructions. Spray in late Fall when temperatures are near 40°F.

Even with recommended varieties, plant performance will be improved with reasonable protection from drying winds. In some windy areas gardeners protect rhododendron plants by building a windbreak around them or screening them with burlap or other protective material during the worst part of the cold season. Rhododendron or azalea especially valuable to you can be protected with a mesh enclosure filled with oak leaves, or with a teepee-like structure constructed using three or four evergreen branches with the points forced into the ground and other ends tied together, or by snow fencing alone or with a polyethylene plastic sheeting attached to it. Protect the plants just before freeze occurs and remove the protection after all the frost is out of the ground.

Among the major types of rhododendrons (big leaf and small leaf) and azaleas (evergreen and deciduous) there are differences in their tolerance to various weather conditions. Generally large-leaf rhododendrons are less tolerant of sun and wind than small-leaf rhododendrons and evergreen and deciduous azaleas. Planting locations with early morning or late afternoon sun or dappled sun throughout the day from an overhead canopy or a shade structure, protection from high winds and proper watering can minimize leaf sunburn and wind damage problems. Generally, the east and north sides of the house are better locations than the west and south. Some varieties will not tolerate full sun, developing quite yellowish leaves under such conditions. There are others that become a better shaped plant if grown in a location with lots of light. Deciduous azalea species are very heat and humidity tolerant, and are widely grown by gardeners in the mid Atlantic and southeastern regions of the U.S.

There are many exceptions to the above so an awareness of what specific rhododendron or azalea you want to grow and attention to where you want to plant them are important if you want to be successful. With hundreds of different rhododendrons and azaleas to choose from you are sure to find plants suitable for most climatic conditions. For further information on protection of rhododendrons and azaleas consult the following Journal ARS articles:

Winter Desiccation Injury of Rhododendron by John R. Havis

Flower Bud Hardiness Of Rhododendron Taxa by Harold Pellett, Susan Moe and Wayne Mezitt

Cold Hardiness Ranking of Rhododendrons By Means of Flower Bud Damage by Russell Gilkey

Notes on Winter Hardening Rhododendrons

Causes and Significance of Winter Leaf Movements in Rhododendrons by Erik Tallak Nilsen

Rhododendrons and Hot Weather by George W. Ring

<http://www.rhododendron.org/protection.htm>

White Christmas cake (Reeta's)

3/4 pounds whole dates (pitted)
3/4 pounds whole white figs
1 cup green cherries
1/2 cup sliced candied pineapple
1 pound whole Brazil nuts
1 cup red whole candied cherries
1/2 cup sliced candied ginger



Put all of the above in a bowl – sift 1/2 cup flour over it. Mix well.

In another bowl - beat three eggs, add 1/2 cup brown sugar, 1/2 cup flour sifted with 1 teaspoon baking powder and 1/2 teaspoon salt – mix

Pour over fruit and mix. Place in pans, press down. Bake in slow oven 300° for about two hours.

This makes 2 pans 7" x 4" x 3" deep. Pans lined with 1 layer tinfoil saves work, and the cakes bake nicely in it. But if they brown too fast put tinfoil on top.

SPICED PARTY NUTS

1/2 tsp ground cumin
1/2 tsp chili powder
1/2 tsp curry powder
1/2 tsp garlic salt
1/4 tsp cayenne pepper
1/4 tsp ground ginger
1/4 tsp ground cinnamon
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 cups shelled almonds or pecan halves
1 tablespoon coarse (kosher) salt

1. preheat the oven to 325 F.
2. mix the cumin, chili powder, curry powder, garlic salt, cayenne, ginger and cinnamon in a bowl.
3. heat the oil in a skillet over low heat. Add the spic mixture and stir well. Simmer to mellow the flavours, 3 or 4 minutes.
4. place the nuts in a mixing bowl, add the spice mixture, and toss well. Spread the nuts in a single layer on a baking sheet. Bake for 15 minutes, shaking the pan once or twice.
5. remove the baking sheet from the oven, and using a rubber spatula, toss the nuts with any spices and oil that have accumulated on the bottom of the pan. Sprinkle with the coarse salt, and a bit more garlic salt if desired. Let rest for 2 hours in a cool place. Store in airtight jars.

From *The New Basics Cookbook*