



The Rhodomentum

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society Newsletter



December 2023



President's Message

Hello fellow members!

This is the last newsletter of 2023, and we now look ahead to 2024.

The weather is much better than the same time last year, it's warmer and drier. It has allowed me, and I'm sure you also, to extend the yard work time. A warmer winter due to El Niño was forecasted, and so far... it looks like it.

We had a good turn out at our last meeting for our "Member's Favourite Plant Pick Night". (see p.3-4) Thank you, Chris and Deborah, for running it.

December 14th will be our annual Christmas potluck dinner and auction which is always an enjoyable event. Your hard-working executive team hopes to see you there. More details in this newsletter. (See p. 2 for full details)

The NRS has recently renewed our membership with the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden in Federal Way, WA for the next 3 years. As part of VIU's Giving Tuesday event, we have also made a donation of \$1000 to Milner Gardens, which will be matched by VIU. Funds will go towards phase 2 of Greig Rhododendron Species Garden.

Have a wonderful Christmas and Happy New Year!

Ron

OUR EXECUTIVE

President	Ron Sutton	416-951-1373
Vice President	Dorothee Kieser	390-4136
Past President	Rosina Schmidt	758-7589
Secretary	Deborah Francis	
Treasurer	Ron Sutton	416-951-1373

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Wanda Brenton	754-1039
Margaret Cadwaladr	585-6046
Arthur Lightburn	468-7516
Gayle McRae	758-7589
Krystyna Sosulski	729-0948
Chris Southwick	616-2742

COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

Advertising	Margaret Cadwaladr
Library	Ann Beamish / Gayle McRae
Newsletter	June Bouchard / John Deniseger
Membership	Krystyna Sosulski
Program	by Committee
Raffle	Val Harvey
Sunshine/Coffee	Wanda Brenton
Bargain Table	Reinhold Gorgosilich
Website	Deborah Francis/Rosina Schmidt
Bus Tour	
Propagation	Rosina Schmidt
Hailey Grove	Deborah Francis
Show and Sale	Jan Moles and Rosina Schmidt

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

Our next meeting – Thursday, December 14th, at 6:00
“Annual Christmas Potluck and Auction”
At Beban Park Social Centre



Christmas Social and Auction ~December 14th, at 6:00



Once again, it is time for our annual *Christmas Party and Auction* to be held in our regular meeting room on Thursday, December 14th – **come at 6:00 with dinner starting at 6:30**. This is your opportunity to sample a wide variety of great food, socialize with other club members and have a chance to bid on some special plants.

You don't want to miss this! 😊

Your organizing committee has been hard at work to plan this year's event which will be somewhat different from previous years. Please check out the following guidelines to help you prepare for this fun event:

- **Fundraiser will be mostly a silent auction** – but be prepared for mystery wrapped prizes!!! There will also be two Dutch auction items, one of which will be R. 'Black Widow', AND of course, a raffle!!!
- The NRS social committee will be providing coffee, tea and a non-alcoholic punch, **as well as turkey and ham**.
- In addition to your own plates, glasses, cups and cutlery, please bring your favorite potluck dish to share (guideline: to feed approx. 8-10 people) – sweet or savoury (appetizer, salad, veggie dish, dessert).
- **We are looking for items for the auction!** Donations of plants (preferred) and garden related items are welcome. Please contact a member of the executive if you need help transporting larger items.



Everyone Welcome - bring friends, guests, neighbours...! 😊



- For our auction, please - cash and cheques only! E-transfers will also be possible.
- This year, there will not be a box provided for dry good donations for Loaves and Fishes. Instead, we are welcoming cash or cheque donations only – they can then allocate the funds to where it is needed most. We'll also be donating 10% of the auction sales to this organization.

Need a ride??? Please, let us know by emailing Jan Moles at jan.moles@btinternet.com We'll try to get something organized to get you there!

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

Looking Back at our November Meeting: “Rhododendrons Recommended by NRS Members”

Last month’s program was a little different in that it relied on all of us to do some thinking about our favourite genus. What was your favourite rhododendron? Why was it your favourite? What rhododendron in your garden has a special meaning? It made us realize that it’s not all about size, or rarity, or even flower or truss. Sometimes it’s about foliage or scent or bloom time or just the right plant in the right place at the right time. Can gardeners really only choose just one? Chris Southwick did a great job putting together our collective entries, photos, descriptions and explanations. It made for an entertaining, fun and informative evening. Judging by the feedback from everyone, it sounds like we’ll be repeating this theme in the future. Thank you to everyone who contributed and especially to Chris who put it all together!

Here's a list of the Member’s Choices with a few example photos...

R. Sun Melody	Margaret Cadwaladr	<i>R. keiskei ozawae</i>	Deborah Francis
<i>R. quinquefolium</i>	Jim Cadwaladr	<i>R. williamsianum</i>	Deborah Francis
R. Nelda Peach	Eliane Leclerc	R. Teddy Bear	Krystyna Sosulski
R. Girard’s Fuschia	Eliane Leclerc	<i>R. edgeworthii</i>	Val Harvey
R. Jean Marie de Montague	June Bouchard	R. Starbright Champagne	Val Harvey
R. Gabriola Blue	June Bouchard	<i>R. thomsonii</i>	Chris Southwick
R. Golden Genie	June Bouchard	R. Laramie	Chris Southwick
<i>R. fragrantissimum</i>	June Bouchard	R. PJM	Liz Higgins
R. Han’s Fortune	John Deniseger	R. Sir Charles Lemon	Jan Moles
<i>R. pachysanthum</i>	John Deniseger	<i>R. albrechtii</i>	Art Lightburn
<i>R. sutchuenense</i>	John Deniseger	R. Langley Tranquility	Art Lightburn
R. Taurus	John Deniseger	<i>R. yunnanense</i>	Susan Lightburn
R. Wanna Bee	John Deniseger	<i>R. kaemferi</i>	Susan Lightburn
R. Horizon Lakeside	Elaine Hutchison		
R. Party Orange	Elaine Hutchison		
R. Sefton	Earl Daneluk		
R. Coastal Spice	Mike and Mary O’Neill		
R. Silver Thimbles	Mike and Mary O’Neill		
R. Whirlaway	Wanda Brenton		
R. Ilam Violet	Dorothee Kieser		
R. Arneson’s Gem	Gaylle McRae		
R. Elsie Watson	Allen McRae		
R. President Roosevelt	Mary Jane Derksen		
R. Grace Seabrook	Mary Jane Derksen		
R. Rosalie Hall	Dick Beamish		
R. Virginia Richards	Ann Beamish		
R. Mrs. T. H. Lowinsky	Ann Beamish		
R. Loderi King George	Ron Sutton		





“I grow plants for many reasons: to please my eye or to please my soul, to challenge the elements or to challenge my patience, for novelty or for nostalgia, but mostly for the joy in seeing them grow.” –David Hobson

Twigs and Stems: Calendar of Other Upcoming Events:

Milner Gardens and Woodland: Milner Christmas Magic: Open December 1-3, 8-10, 15 - 20 from 5pm to 8 pm, with viewing until 8:30. Entry by suggested donation of \$8/Adult, \$4/Child or \$20/Household. For details, check the [Milner Website](#)

North Island Rhododendron Society: "Christmas Potluck", Comox United Church Hall, Tuesday, December 12th, doors open at 5:00pm.

Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society: "Christmas Party, Qualicum Beach Community Hall (next to Curling Rink on Memorial Ave.), Wednesday, December 13th at 5:00 pm.

Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society: Next meeting in February

Victoria Rhododendron Society: Couvelier Pavilion, Glendale Gardens, 505 Quayle Rd, Saanich, Thursday, December 7th, 7:30pm

Seedy Saturday in Qualicum: Saturday February 3rd, 2024 at the Qualicum Beach Civic Centre. [Click here](#) for further details.

Hailey Rhododendron Grove Work Bee ~ Bowen Park

By Deborah Francis, coordinator



Hailey is beginning to take on a winter glow. We had 7 amazing volunteers out in November to assist in trimming away mountains of dead wood. It would be amazing to keep up the momentum for December. **Tuesday, December 12th 9:00 am to 12:00 will be our last Hailey Work Bee of the year at Bowen Park in Nanaimo – parking at the tennis courts. Bring good cheer, your gardening gloves, and a snack. The City will provide gardening tools.**

Hope to see you there! Come and be part of the fun! 😊

More sad news have come our way since our last newsletter...



- Ingeborg Woodsworth from the Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society passed away on September 15th, 2023. Many will remember Ingeborg from her regular presence over many years at our annual plant sale as the owner of the Mayo Gardens Nursery. The NRS also visited Mayo Gardens as part of one of our bus tours a few years ago. Ingeborg was always enthusiastic and had an amazing knowledge of both rhododendrons and wild mushrooms.

- Long time NRS member Linda White passed away earlier this fall. Linda, and her husband Richard, lived in Nanaimo for many years and remained members and strong supporters of the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society after they retired to the Kootenays many years ago. Richard was president of our club from 2002 to 2004.

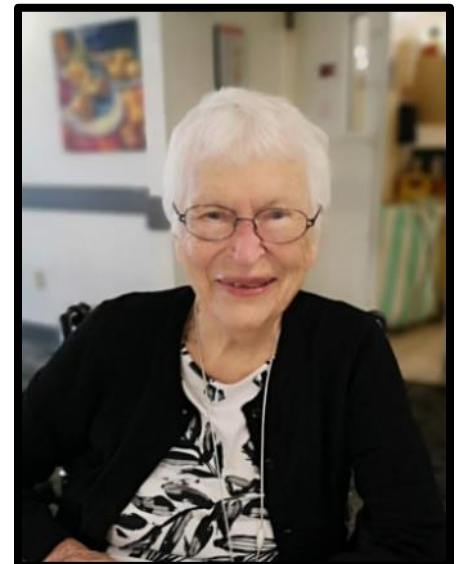
From Richard in a recent email to us (with his permission): *“Linda had lung cancer 2015/16 and had lung surgery and chemo then. She had been cancer free until this summer/fall. Linda and I hiked a lot but she had chest pains and breathing problems Sept/Oct. the cancer returned aggressively and with major complications and she passed on Nov 7th. Linda loved the outdoors and gardening which made us so compatible. and joined me in the love of Rhododendrons.”*

Our most sincere sympathies to Richard and his family.

- We were saddened to hear about our good friend Jean Greig’s passing on November 13th at nearly 102 years old. Jean, and her husband Jim, were avid rhododendron enthusiasts, founding members of the Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society and for many years now, Jean was a member of the NRS. They were also strong supporters of Milner Gardens and Woodland. Many of you will remember Jean at the opening ceremonies of the Greig Rhododendron Species Garden in 2018. There were four generations of Greigs there to cut the ribbon officially opening the garden (see photo). Our condolences



go to Jean’s daughter, Chris Southwick, as well as the rest of the Greig family. A celebration of Jean’s life is planned for the late afternoon of May 18th, 2024, at Milner Gardens and Woodland, when the rhododendrons are in bloom – full details will be in the May newsletter. We will miss Jean dearly... For more on Jean’s long life, please see [Jean's obituary](#)



We thought that Linda Derkach (long-time MARS member and current ARS president) said it well in the MARS newsletter: *"There is no doubt that Jean Greig was an exceptional woman. Friendly, welcoming, diligent, hard-working and dedicated to rhododendrons and to her other favourite plants. Clearly, she loved her own garden – but also demonstrated a devotion to rhododendrons in general as her family lent their name to the Greig Rhododendron Species Garden at Milner Gardens and Woodland. The 'rhododendron world' is so much the better having had Jean a part of it."*



Four generations of Greigs at the opening of the Greig Rhododendron Species Garden in April 2018.

Jim and Jean in 2006 at Joy and Phillip Paull's farewell gathering.



2024 Fall Conference in Florence, Oregon

Report by Chris Southwick



This past October saw four intrepid travelers heading south to the sunny US to attend the ARS Fall 2024 Convention in beautiful seaside Florence, Oregon. ARS President, Linda Derkach (MARS), ARS Secretary, Verna Buhler (Cowichan), Elaine Derkach (MARS), and I (NRS) travelled together.



We had an enjoyable trip south, including a stop at Whitney Gardens and Nursery in Brinnon, Washington. This magnificent garden and nursery are a “must see” for any rhododendron lovers. There are some amazing plants, including an impressive old *R. proteoides* (sorry, no photo!), as well as rare trees such as huge *Cunninghamia lanceolata* (see photo – spot Verna at the base of the tree) which helps shade some of the nursery. This nursery was established in 1955 by the Whitney family and is currently owned by Ellie Sather. The plants were exceptionally healthy and fully budded for next spring. Some of the one-gallon plants were worth \$75.00 US.

The Conference had over one hundred registrations mainly from the Western US. We were the only Canadians in attendance, representing three of the seven District One chapters of the ARS. The conference organizers, the Siuslaw Chapter, had some wonderful displays in the lobby of the Conference Centre, including a bonsai collection and rhododendron leaf display.



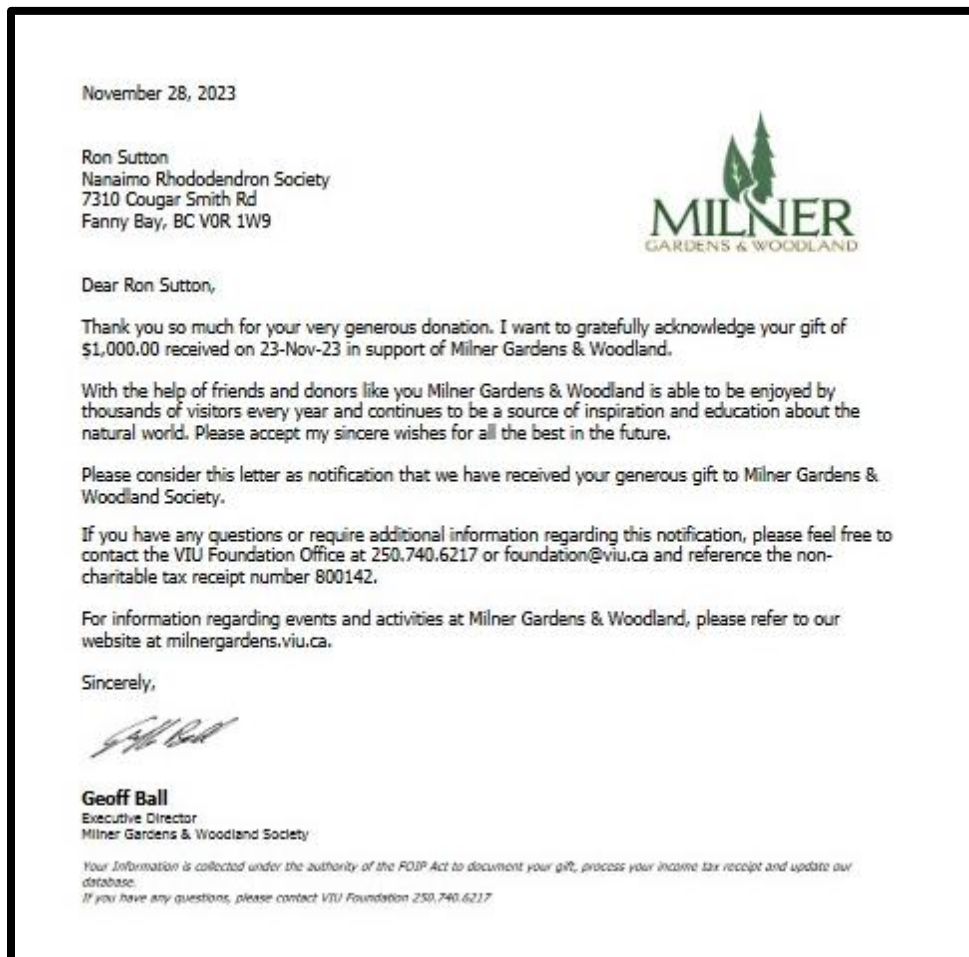
There were no garden tours organized, but there were many interesting presentations with the following topics: My Favourite Flowers, Fuchsias, Geriatric Hybrids – Around Forever, Deciduous Azaleas, Updates to the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, Log Cabin Nursery Presentation, Foliage and Buds, Beautiful and Unusual Bulbs from Around the World, Breeding Reduced Invasive Potential Ornamental Plants, Expedition to Japan, and to end the 2nd day of presentations, Big Leaf Rhododendrons. Mike Bones was one of the co-chairs of the conference and his enthusiastic presence will be remembered by many of our NRS members who attended our 2012 Fall Conference in Nanaimo.

One of the most important sessions was the session led by Linda Derkach. She challenged the group to discuss how our chapters were doing and to share strategies that make successful chapters. It produced a lot of good ideas that she has recently shared with all the ARS chapter executive members. Our own executive will be discussing that information to see if we can implement some of those ideas.

There were two wonderful dinners organized, a silent auction and a wonderful plant sale that we couldn't spend our money on as there was no phytosanitary certificate availability. There were some outstanding plants, both species and hybrids, including the sought-after R. 'King George'. Siuslaw members had baked dozens of cookies for the event – so breaks between presentations were enjoyed by all.

On the final day, Richard Fairfield, one of the organizers of the Spring 2024 Convention in Bellingham Washington, spoke about their upcoming conference. It sounds exceptional and one that will be easy for rhododendron lovers in British Columbia to attend. **They will have phyto facilities available so we will be able to purchase plants.** They also will have many excellent garden tours organized. Please look at their website: <https://www.ars2024.org/> The title of their conference is "Rhododendrons on the 49th Parallel". I hope to see many of you there. We may organize carpools if that would be helpful to folks.

Our club recently donated \$1000 to phase 2 of the Greig Rhododendron Species Garden at Milner Gardens and Woodlands. Below is the letter of thanks that the club received from Geoff Ball.



An Update on our Activities at Milner

Shadehouse at Milner

As winter settles in, the shadehouse is being prepared for winter. The end walls have been built, the plastic has been installed and the shade cloth reinstalled. We still need to install the doors in the end walls and do a little trimming of the excess plastic. The hundreds of rooted rhododendron cuttings inside the shadehouse are nestled all snug in their beds, in hopes that winter will not soon be there....

Our thanks go out to the hardworking crew that has been working on this project for some time: John Deniseger, Glen Jamieson, Guy Loyer, Ross Renwick, Richard Bernier, Brent Darnell, Allen Larsen, David Landry, and Bill Donaldson.

We've set up a weekly maintenance schedule in cooperation with MARS members – we alternate weeks. Thank you to everyone who signed up to help out. **If you'd like to join the team, please see John or Chris.**



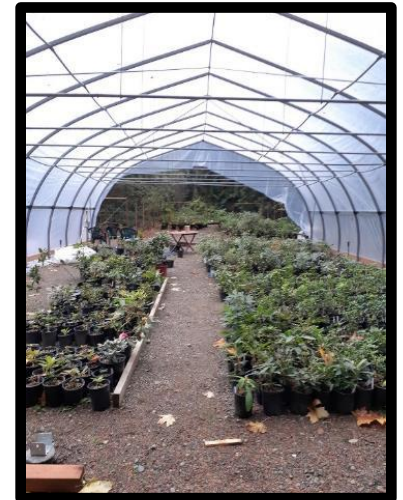
REMINDER:

Shadehouse Checking Crew for the upcoming month or so...

December 4th	John and June
December 18th	David and Joyce Mitchell
January 1st	Art and Susan Lightburn

Propagation News By Rosina Schmidt

It is a delight to report that our 2023 cuttings at the Paine Centre's greenhouse are doing well, thanks to the correct humidity level being kept steady and foremost, thanks to our propagators taking weekly turns to give those cuttings lots of TLC. Our 2022 cuttings are at Milner Garden's shade house, see the photo, and they too are progressing well, even though they probably will not be ready yet for the upcoming May sale. Best to give them another year of growing time. The plants at the shade house are being also looked after by NRS as well as MARS, by taking turns. **To all those great volunteers our warmest thanks!**



Plant of the Month by Ron Sutton

Rhododendron 'Elizabeth'

Here is a floriferous old hybrid that is a cross of two species rhododendrons, *R. forrestii ssp. forrestii repens* and *R. griersonianum*. It was hybridized in 1933 by Lord Aberconway. It makes a dwarf shrub to approximately 4-5 feet



high and is clothed in narrow dull green leaves about 3 inches long. In late April to early May, it blooms with lax trusses of 5 to 7 red flowers.

There is another form of this plant called *R. 'Red Elizabeth'*, which is a little different in that it produces mahogany coloured new leaf growth that eventually turns green.

What is unique to both plants is their reliable ability to bloom in spring and



also again in early autumn.

It is hardy to 0°F/ -18°C and tolerant of full sun, which it actually prefers. My plant is next to a light-coloured wall with southern exposure. It does get some shade though.



Photos taken May 3, last photo was taken October 10, with some open blooms remaining on November 22 when I prepared this post.

Do you remember Hirsutum? (Thank you, Susan and Art Lightburn for sharing this news with us.)

Many of us couldn't believe the wealth of information and photos that became available on Hirsutum. It was too good to be true. It required a continuing web presence and constant maintenance. In 2021, it lost its web presence and had lost maintenance in 2015. It was just announced that Canadian web-guru John Verwolf has created *Rhododendra* which is a functional replacement for Hirsutum. The new website is at <http://www.rhododendra.com/>

Rhododendron Glossary...



We're building our very own collection of terms related to rhododendrons, one word at a time. Each month, we'll add a new word or term to the glossary. If you have suggestions that you'd like us to add, please let us know.

This month's word is: chlorosis

The yellowing of the leaves, with the leaf veins often remaining green. The yellowing tends to be more prevalent on the younger leaves. Usually, it is a sign of mineral imbalance in the soil relating to soil pH and iron. Most soils contain enough iron but if the soil pH is too high, rhododendrons find it difficult to absorb. As a result, not enough of the green pigment, chlorophyll, can be produced, which in turn affects photosynthesis and plant health.

What to do? If the chlorosis is severe, you could apply a foliar fertilizer which will provide the leaves with iron in the short term. Another short-term option is the application of chelated iron, which is a form of iron which can be more readily absorbed by the plant. A longer-term solution involves checking the pH of your soil and adjusting it accordingly.

A potential red herring:

Magnesium in the form of Epsom salts is sometimes recommended for rhododendrons. Magnesium is an essential element and lack of it can cause yellowish areas between green leaf veins on older leaves. If the leaves are a solid green the addition of Epsom salts would not be useful. Work by Linda Chalker-Scott at the University of Washington has found that the application of Epsom salts to rhododendrons has no measurable effect on the plants.



Photo from Glendoick.com website

Refer to previous issues for

November 2023's word: *senescence*

October 2023's words: *Elepidote and Lepidote*

September 2023's word: *tomentum*

June 2023's word: *indumentum*

May 2023's word: *truss*



Rosina's Persimmon harvest! Christine Quist is holding the ladder as Scott Nicol picks the last of the fruit. (Photo by Rosina)


Did you know??? We are now on Facebook as the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society. Upcoming events will be posted there and members will be able to add photographs or items of interest to members. (Thank you, Margaret, for setting that up!)

Advanced Gardening Course at VIU, given jointly with the Vancouver Island Master Gardener Association (From Dorothee Kieser)

The Course, given alternate years will start in early January 2024. For additional information see:

[Master Gardener Program](#) | [Professional Development and Training](#) | [Vancouver Island University](#) | [Canada \(viu.ca\)](#)

Are you an experienced home gardener interested in advancing your skills?



Introducing the

Master Gardener

Certificate Program
at Vancouver Island University

Master Gardener

Certificate Program

A partnership between Vancouver Island University and Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association (VIMGA)

This course is based on the original Master Gardener program from Washington State University, established in 1973.

Designed for the experienced home gardener, this is an intensive training program providing up-to-date information on all gardening basics.

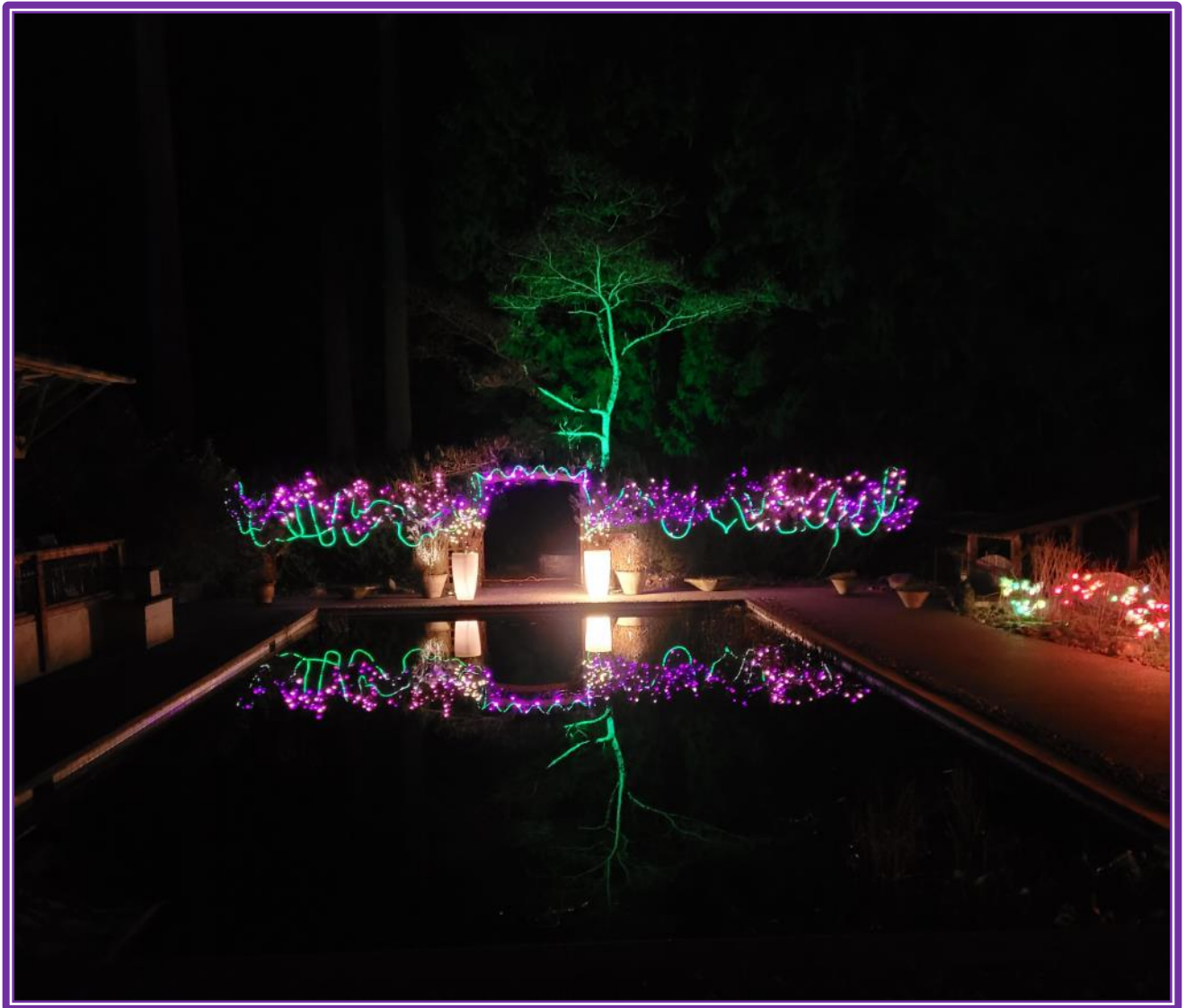
- Promote sustainable solutions to gardening problems
- Fill gaps in your gardening knowledge
- Meet other gardeners in an atmosphere of sharing and exploration
- Give back to your community and share your joy of gardening through volunteering.

Please visit pdt.viu.ca/master-gardener-program for more information.



*Looking forward to seeing you on
December 14th! Wishing you all...*

A Magical Christmas!!! ☺



Reflecting Pool at Milner's Christmas Magic

(Photo by June Bouchard, Dec.2021)