

NANAIMO RHODODENDRON SOCIETY



February 2007
February 2007



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Let's all make a big effort this year with our potluck & auction that was postponed in December. Bring items for the auction – rhododendrons, companion plants, home made articles, etc. Perhaps you have a larger rhododendron that has outgrown its bed?

If you also had some damage to your rhododendrons, remove the broken or damaged branches and prune off any broken stubs. Some may re-sprout from the trunks. Wait until Spring before you discard plants that have frost damage; those with brown leaves may also re-sprout later.

It will be good to get together again after having to cancel two meetings in a row.

Craig



EXECUTIVE

President	Craig Clarke	390-4090
Vice President	Paul Lawry	390-2370
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	John Deniseger	390-3605

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Program	Chris Southwick	758-0993
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Social	Pat Schulson	245-3369
Dollar Table	Reinhold Gorgosilich	758-6533

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society
Box 241, #1 – 5765 Turner Road
Nanaimo, BC V9T 6M4

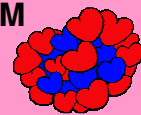
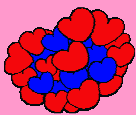
Website: nanaimo.rhodos.ca
email: nanaimo@rhodos.ca

NEXT MEETING

FEBRUARY 8, 2007

BEBAN PARK

6:30 PM



VALENTINE'S SOCIAL AND AUCTION

NANAIMO RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

TWIGS AND STEMS



Goodies for February meeting:

Everyone!



Milner Gardens

will be opening for us to have the chance to see the early spring garden on February 17 and March 3
10 am – 4 pm

entry by donation
lunch and tea will be available in the Camellia Tea Room
www.milnergardens.org



Italian Gardens Art and Architecture tour

6 cities, 13 days

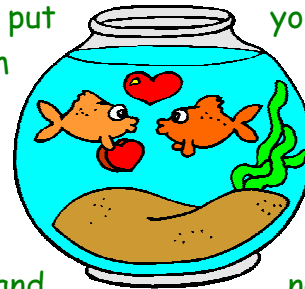
Stresa, Como, Venice, Florence, Siena, Rome
Escorted by Eryl Morton, Garden Designer
Round trip airfare and land package from \$4495 Cdn
Departs April 31, 2007

Prices are per person double occupancy, from Victoria or Vancouver
Flights, 3 star hotels, breakfasts, transportation and flight taxes included. Lunch, dinner and tips are additional.

Call toll free: 1-888-883-2929

VALENTINE'S SOCIAL AND AUCTION

Due to the inclement and unpredictable weather in December we decided to cancel our Christmas auction, and have rescheduled to the February meeting. As before, members are asked to bring one item for the auction. It could be a plant from your garden, something you have made, or some other item you think would be of interest to other members. Please no used items! In order that we can recognize everyone's donations, put your name on the item you bring to auction.



Please bring a plate of food to share. Beverages, plates and napkins will be provided by the club. Paul Lawry will be our able auctioneer. There will also be many items for raffle, and smaller contributions are welcome. We will donate 10% of the proceeds to the Salvation Army. There will also be a box for your donations of non-perishable food, which will also be given to the Salvation Army for their ongoing needs. Those who bring a donation for the food bank will be entered into a draw for a prize! This event is one of two major fund-raising events we have for the club's operating costs. We appreciate your contributions. **Bring a friend**, and enjoy a fun social evening!



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Proven Performers for District One Chapters

The ARS Public Education Committee asked chapters to compile lists of the best performing rhododendrons in their areas. The list below give plants with good form, foliage and flowers that are hardy and resistant to pests and diseases for the given area. The listed plants have proven their ability to perform well in members' gardens and are recommended to others.

Nanaimo Chapter (Nanaimo, Vancouver Island B.C.) USDA Zone 8

Elepidotes:

'Lem's Cameo'
'Loderi King George'
'Nancy Evans'
'One Thousand Butterflies'
'Point Defiance'
'President Roosevelt'
'Sir Charles Lemon'
'Teddy Bear'
'The Hon. Jean Marie de Montague'

Lepidotes:

R. augustinii

Deciduous Azaleas:

'Cecile'
'Klondyke'
R. luteum

Evergreen Azaleas:

'Hino-crimson'
'Hino-white'
'Vuyk's Rosyred'

Description of Rhododendron 'Sir Charles Lemon'



Photo by: Eleanor Philp

Seed Parent x Pollen Parent:	arboreum ssp cinnamomeum var. album form
Predominate Flower Color:	White
Flower / Truss Description:	Flower campanulate, white with faint red spotting. Ball-shaped truss holds about 10 flowers. Slow to bloom.
Bloom Time:	Early Midseason
Height (ft.) in 10 Yrs:	5
Cold Hardiness Temperature:	0°F (-18°C)
Foliage Description / Plant Habit:	Leaves narrow, with bright cinnamon-brown indumentum; the new leaves unfold white. Upright, tree-like habit. Give afternoon sun protection.
Elepidote (E) or Lepidote (L):	E

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Glossary of Terms

campanulate

Bell-shaped, cup-shaped.

cultivar

Shortened form of **cultivated variety**. A group of plants, selected for particular attributes, that are clearly distinct, uniform, and stable and that retain these characteristics when propagated by appropriate means.

Source: JARS V46:No.1:p21:y1992

Tips for Beginners: Good Soil Promises Rhodie Success

The article was compiled from Greer's Guidebook to Available Rhododendrons by Harold Greer, a past president of the ARS and owner of Greer Gardens in Eugene, Oregon.

"Rhododendrons are forgiving plants, but there are some things they just won't tolerate. So, it is important to understand their basic requirements," Mr. Greer tells the newcomer to rhododendron gardening.

The three basic requirements he lists all hinge on the quality of the soil in which - or on which - the rhododendron is planted. First, he says, they must have a constant supply of moisture. Second, they must never sit in stagnant water. And, third, they must be grown in a coarse, acid medium. Provide these conditions and you will succeed in growing a healthy rhododendron no matter where you live, provided the hybrid or species is suited to the climate, he promises. Then he goes on to tell you how to provide these conditions. One distinction to note here is that the "planting medium" and the "natural soil" may well be two different substances in your garden. You will provide the planting medium, while nature provides the natural soil, which is usually a less than ideal soil for rhododendrons.

Mr. Greer then tells you to go outside and take a look at your soil. "Consider the growing medium (the improved top layer of soil if there is one) and also the soil and drainage that is underneath the proposed planting. You must determine whether or not your soil has good drainage. If heavy clay is present you must overcome this barrier. Dig a small hole and run some water into it; if the water does not disappear in a very few minutes, you have poor drainage. This is not a sure test, but it will give you a good indication. Now examine the soil texture; is it sandy, or is it composed of fine clay particles? Sometimes the topmost soil layer will drain well, but there will be a hardpan underneath it that will not drain. So, watch for this condition." If your natural soil is perfect rhododendron soil, you can put this article down and take up your shovel and proceed. There are such soils, but most are not so fortunate.



What most soils need is air, as Mr. Greer goes on to explain. "First, something is needed that will provide adequate air spaces in the soil, and the slower this material decomposes the better. Second, something is needed that will hold a certain amount of water so that the plant does not dry out too rapidly. Barks are generally quite good, as they usually contain both fine and rough textured materials. However, the much heavier, coarser bark rock will not work well for this

purpose, although it will work as a mulch. Since they are on the outside of the tree, constantly exposed to the weather, nature has endowed barks with a sort of natural preservative which slows their break-down. The breaking down process of organic material requires nitrogen; consequently, the faster it breaks down, the more nitrogen it uses. Sawdust often breaks down very fast and, therefore, requires a lot of nitrogen. Some types tend to hold too much free water around

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each particle and can cause conditions that are too wet. This is particularly true in hot, wet summer areas and probably contributes to the myth that sawdust will kill a rhododendron.

"Leaves and needles of most kinds of trees are okay, although some kinds do break down rather fast and can be a hiding place for insects and diseases. Nut shells, spent hops, corn husks and a multitude of other things will work well as long as they are not alkaline and do not have toxic materials in them. If you do not know whether or not the material has been used with rhododendrons, try a small quantity for a time before going all out.

"For the finer water-holding part of the growing medium, the choice is often peat moss. In some areas good local peat moss is available, but in recent years good peat moss has been difficult to obtain, and often the powder that is sold as peat moss is worse than none at all. This is particularly true if you use only this very fine peat moss to mix with clay soil. The result will be a soppy soil that has no ability to hold air. Try to obtain the coarse nursery grind."

The next step is to mix the growing medium in which you will place the rhododendron. Mr. Greer goes on to tell how.

"The old formula of one-third sawdust or bark, one-third peat moss, and one-third garden loam* is all right, providing the humus material (sawdust, etc.) is coarse enough to supply the necessary amount of air in the soil. Up to one-third of the soil volume should be air space, so use common sense to provide a mix that will give you this result. Almost any combination will work as long as it provides the necessary air.

"Remember: The slower the humus breaks down the better because the longer those particles of humus are there, the longer the soil is going to contain a lot of needed oxygen (in the air spaces). And, remember that organic material which breaks down too rapidly consumes lots of nitrogen, which is going to have to be replaced."

Now the question is what to do about the native soil. Mr. Greer gives these instructions.

"We have already determined how to tell if we have good or bad drainage. If it is good, we can mix out planting medium into the top 6 to 10 inches of soil and we are ready to plant. We are also assuming that the native soil is acid. If the drainage is poor (and this is true in many locations) we will need to plant nearly on top of the native soil.

*"Loam" is a term applied to soil which has a mixture of large (sand), medium (silt) and small (clay) particles. It refers to the texture of the soil, not its fertility or amount of organic matter in it.

Source: JARS V49:No.1:p20:y1995

Tips for Beginners: Have You Entered A Show Lately?

Bruno Kaelin
Centreville, Virginia

If you listen to people who have never entered a rhododendron show, you might hear something like this: "I have no experience. I don't know what to do. How can I compete with those who have been showing a long time? They are almost professionals." The thought of competing in such an environment can be daunting, but it really should not be. Those who have been competing for a long time, those "professionals," had to start from the same place - no experience! So, how do you get experience? Obviously, by entering the competition.

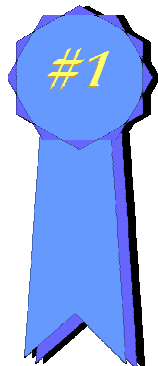
There are a number of things that may be done to enhance the chances of winning, but the first step is to jump in and enter a show. Once that decision has been made, start asking questions about everything that has a bearing on the show. Learn how to select and groom a truss. Plan to help out at the show. Help set up. Help tear down. Offer to assist the judges by being a recorder, or one who places the ribbons on the winners. Study the show schedule. To sum up, the thing to do is to *participate*.

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Of course, experience is the best teacher, but to provide a head start consider doing the following. Before growth has started, look over your collection of plants. Notice which have good leaves - those not eaten by insects and with few, if any, spots due to fungus. Look for plants with a good number of buds. If you do some of your searching now, you will have a good idea which of your plants to watch as the buds start to swell. You can start to see a good truss developing if the color starts showing evenly around the lower part of the bud and each bract holds an emerging flower. Those places on the bud where color does not show indicate that a flower is missing and that the truss will be incomplete, although one or two missing flowers is not a disaster.

The bud normally opens from the bottom to the top. Hopefully, not much time will elapse between the opening of the top and bottom of the bud so that most of the flowers will open at the same time, and you will end up with a good choice for an entry. If you feel that the flower will open too soon for the show, you may cut the truss early, placing it in a refrigerator to hold back its progress a few days. Sometimes the weather can be a problem because winds, heavy rains or thunder storms may ruin the truss you were planning to enter. Sometimes it is best to cut the truss to get it out of harm's way. Some people cover the truss on the plant with a plastic storage bag, but if you do so, remember to remove the plastic after the danger is past or you may "roast" the truss.

Perhaps it is time to discuss the ideal truss - the "Best In Show." I think most people have a picture of the ideal in their minds. The truss would be complete. There would be no missing flowers. All the flowers from top to bottom would be open and in good condition. There would be no spots of petal blight or other damage on the flowers. There would be no place on the truss where there is no flower, that is, the stem (pedicel), which supports the flowers, holds the flowers in place and does not allow the flowers to separate to show the skeleton. (With some cultivars, this is normal, but in my mind it is difficult for a lax or open truss to win the Best In Show.) The truss would be a straight elongation of the stem, as usually occurs near the top of the plant. Those at the side of the plant have a bent stem with the bud turning upward - sometimes at nearly a right angle - and are undesirable. There would be a collar of leaves appearing to support the flowers, and that collar would be complete and symmetrical. The leaves themselves would not be damaged by insects or diseases, and they would have a good green color without a hint of chlorosis or yellowing. Inside the truss there would be no dead pips (flower buds that were killed and blackened by the winter cold). All of the bracts and bud coverings would be removed so that all that can be seen inside the truss is the truss itself. The leaves would be natural, with no leaf shine, dirt, or other foreign material.



For azaleas, both deciduous and evergreen, and for lepidote rhododendrons the entry may be a spray or a single truss or group of trusses. The size limit for a spray is usually 15 inches in any direction. At the show the entry will be passed through a hoop of the proper size. Any branches extending beyond the hoop must be cut off by the exhibitor before the spray can be accepted.

Most of the time a large spray of azaleas or small-leaved rhododendrons will win over a smaller group of flowers. On the other hand a medium sized, near perfect entry will win over a large entry with obvious faults. There is a balance then between bigness and perfection about which the exhibitor must decide. Presentation of the flowers is important. Some cultivars of azaleas cover themselves with flowers. Others allow some of the leaves to show. In either case the presentation must be pleasing to the eye. If there is too much green, or if the flowers are at locations which detract from the overall appearance, that entry is not likely to win. Sometimes an exhibitor takes entries from the lower part of the plant where the branch may droop. The stamens and pistil in each flower turn upward. When this type of spray is inserted in a vase, the flowers are upside down. This type of entry is unlikely to win.

Over the years I have seen only a handful of near perfect entries. There always seems to be a few faults. But think about it. The buds and leaves have been there on the plant since the previous fall. They have had to stand up to drought or excess rain, the desiccating late winter sun, snowstorms, freezing rain, high winds, the ups and downs of temperature, humidity, and light, and maybe more. It is, after all this, that we seek perfection. So continue seeking, but also learn to accept some faults. In entering the show, you enter the best that you have of each cultivar.

To do well in the show you must present each entry as best as possible, and that implies grooming. The best place to start grooming is with a good choice of the truss or spray. First, the plant itself should be in good condition, so that the flowers are turgid, i.e., holding a lot of water in their cells. If it has been a dry season, make sure the plant receives water a day or two before the entry is cut. It is best to do the cutting in the morning, before the heat of the day robs the water. The entry should be cut the morning before the show to allow it time to season. As soon as reasonable after the truss or

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spray is cut it should be brought inside. Make a fresh cut at the bottom of the stem to cut off the cells which may have died. Either crush the stem or cut it at a steep angle to increase the amount of water the cut flowers can take up. I have found little difference between the methods. After preparing the stem place the truss in bottle or other container filled with rather warm water. Warm water is absorbed more quickly than cold. The idea of seasoning is to fill the truss or spray with water so that it can survive through the judging and the show.

When all the material has been cut and placed in water it is time to start grooming. Look at each truss carefully and try to make it perfect. Remove all extraneous matter from the truss and leaves. You might start by looking up into the underside of the truss to see what needs to be done. Sometimes the shape and spacing of the leaves allows this. You may have to gently separate the flowers to look inside. Everything that is not stem or flower should be removed: dead pips, bracts, parts from trees above the plant, insects, etc. What is left should be a clean skeleton. Be careful not to damage the flowers.

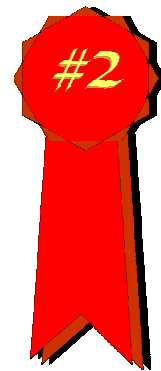
Look at the leaves. It is best to clean them with a moist paper towel to remove accumulated dirt, bird droppings, or other things that should not be there. Do not use anything to add shine to leaves as this will automatically disqualify the entry. Hopefully there will be no more than minor damage to a leaf or two. You can carefully cut the leaf or a rhododendron to remove minor damage. Trimming should be done in such a way as to maintain the shape of the leaf and enhance the appearance of the total entry. If a leaf is severely damaged consider removing it entirely. The question is, "Does the entry more nearly approach perfection with or without the damaged leaf?" Generally it is better to remove it. For all entries look closely at what is underneath or inside, and remove all extraneous material.

At this point I may look over the trusses to be entered and ask myself why I cut a particular one. It may leave a lot to be desired, and I question whether or not it should be entered. Almost always the answer should be yes. There have been many shows where a weak entry has taken a ribbon in a class because there were none better. To say it another way: if only almost perfect trusses were entered, there would hardly be a show. So bring the best you have of everything. You just never know what the judges will decide.

You now have a set of showstoppers sitting in the basement or kitchen or somewhere. The job is now to get them to the show site in good condition. There are many ways to do this. During transport, each truss must be separated from its neighbor so they do not damage each other as the vehicle goes around turns and over bumps. They must be in water, carried where there is no wind and where the air will not get too warm and wilt them. I have used shallow cartons upside down with holes cut in them for the bottles, which are then set in another carton. I have used soft drink crates to hold a few bottles. Some people have special boards with holes cut for containers. There are almost as many ways as there are people.

Your job is not over yet. Upon arrival at the show, the entry card must be filled out. Consult the show schedule to determine in which section each entry will be placed. On the entry card, enter the name of the cultivar, the section, and your name and town as indicated, and fold the card so that your name does not show. Attach the bottle holding the truss and either place it in the proper section or have one of the show place it for you. When this has been done you may go somewhere to await the outcome of judging.

Of course it would be better if, somehow, you were to help out in the show. During the judging outside the show committee may be in the showroom. One way of learning about shows is to committee that assists the judges. As the judges do the judging, there is a lot of discussion about the candidates for the ribbons, and by listening you can learn much of the criteria being determine the winner. There is usually a group attending each set of judges. Two or three judges may be used, and each set needs a recorder and two people to attach the ribbons, so ample opportunity to help. Much can be learned too by helping to set up and tear down the



the card to
committee
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no one
be one of the
among them
used to
sets of
there is
show.

Your chapter needs your participation. The more entries, the better and more beautiful is the show. "Professionals" were mentioned at the start of this article. Because they have been competing for a long time, they are no longer young, and may find it more demanding and difficult than it once was. It is probably best to start grooming some future "professionals" now, and you are invited to be among the group.