

The Rhodomentum



Nanaimo Rhododendron Society Newsletter

February 2019



Happy Valentine's Day!

This is always the “danger” season in the garden, particularly during mild winters like this one. We’re seeing buds swelling in our flowering currants, early flowering rhodos in bloom are teasing us with large buds. We’re itching to get out into the garden on those sunny days. Early spring fever can hit us hard. But then, hopefully, we realize that while there are some things we can do now, it’s still pretty early. Yes, spring is in sight (you may need good binoculars to see it), but winter is far from over. It’s time to get those fruit trees pruned, check your plants for winter damage, and dream about what’s coming soon.

Our executive and committees are busy organizing our usual spring calendar of events. As always, details will follow in the newsletter and at our regular meetings.

See you at the meeting, on Valentine’s Day!

John and June

EXECUTIVE

President	Vacant	
Vice President	Rosina Schmidt	751-3386
Past President	Allen McRae	758-7589
Secretary	Jan Moles	758-2574
Treasurer	Liz Higgins	390-9340

Directors

Craig Clarke	390-4090
Art Lightburn	468-7516
Susan Lightburn	468-7516
Don Noakes	778 441-4783

COMMITTEES

Advertising	Jan Moles / June Bouchard
Library	Ann Beamish / Sandra Dorman
Newsletter	June Bouchard / John Deniseeger
Membership	Krystyna Sosulski
Program	Committee
Raffle	Ann Davey & Val Harvey
Social	Susan Lightburn
Bargain Table	Reinhold Gorgosolich
Website	Craig Clarke
Bus Tour	David & Joyce Mitchell

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Nanaimo, BC V9T 6M4

Website: nanaimorhodos.ca
email: rhodomentum@nanaimorhodos.ca

Next meeting: Thursday, February 14th, at 7:30, Beban Park Social Center

Sue Grant and Garth Wedemire

“A Tour of Wales: historic homes, gardens and rhododendrons”.



February program: Garth Wedemire (with more than a little help from Sue 😊)

“A Tour of Wales: Historic Homes, Gardens and Rhododendrons”

Based on a 2018 tour with the Scottish Rhododendron Society

Garth has been a member of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society since 1975 and was one of the founding members of the Fraser Valley chapter. He has received two Bronze medals (Vancouver and Fraser Valley) and a Silver medal from District 1. Garth, and his wife Sue, moved to Comox a few years ago and are now active members of the North Island Rhododendron Society. Using his knowledge as a math and computer studies teacher, he has been instrumental in developing and maintaining many of the websites in District 1. His love of the genus Rhododendron has led him to travel to Nepal, China and to many gardens throughout Canada, the U.S., New Zealand and Great Britain.

Useful Links

Victoria Rhododendron Society: victoriarhodo.ca/index.html

Cowichan Rhododendron Society: cowichanrhodos.ca/

Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society: marsrhodos.ca/

North Island Rhododendron Society: nirsrhodos.ca/ws/

The American Rhododendron Society: rhododendron.org/

Linda Gilkeson's website: lindagilkeson.ca/

Nanoose Bay Garden Club: nanoosegardenclub.ca/

Need a ride to one of our meetings?



Call Chris at 250-390-3415 or 250-616-2742 (cell)

or send her an email at csouthwick@shaw.ca

Twigs and Stems

Calendar of Upcoming Events:

Goodies for February meeting - thank you to the following people:

Gayle McRae; Rosina Schmidt; Elaine Hutchison.

Seedy Saturdays:

February 2nd QB Civic Center, 10:00 to 15:30: "Seeding the Future".

February 16th, Victoria Conference Center: 10:00 to 16:30.

February 23rd, Tofino Botanical Gardens.

March 2nd, Comox Valley at the Florence Filberg Center: 10:00 to 15:00.

March 3rd, Nanaimo Seedy Sunday: at Nanaimo District Secondary School; 10:00 to 3:00.

Milner Gardens and Woodland: closed in January, spring Sunday openings begin February 3rd.

Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society: QB Civic Center, 7:30 pm, February 13th – "The Gardener" - an award-winning documentary

Nanaimo Horticultural Society: First United Fellowship Church, 595 Townsite Rd, February 9th, noon- workshop by El Martel – "Lawn damage by chafer beetles and other pests"; 1 pm Kathy Claxton – "Keep calm, plant on – make gardening fit you!"

Nanoose Garden Club: Nanoose Library Center and Event Hall, 1:15 pm, "Ponds" – Scott Stevenson

North Island Rhododendron Society: United Church in Comox, 7:30 pm, February 12th – John Denise: "Why I Garden"

Coffee anyone???



Our meeting Coffee Breaks just wouldn't be the same without someone coordinating it. ...

Please consider stepping up to help with this and our two annual potlucks – it might just be the perfect volunteering opportunity to share with a friend – maybe do alternate months? Talk to Susan at our next meeting to find out more – she would be happy to help get you started.

And of course, the position of president is still vacant – another opportunity that could be shared with a friend!



Minutes of NRS meeting – January 10, 2019

- Opened by Art Lightburn (temporary chair) at 7:37 pm.
- Art welcomed guests: Robin & Linda Fitzgerald, Don & John Beckley, Dorothy's husband Robert, and Jen Calder & Jen Arnold from Chemainus.
- A short discussion ensued on the early flowering of many rhodos as weather had been so mild, also on how the members had fared in the high winds and with power outages.
- Art and Ann Beamish reminded the group that the Kenneth Cox (Scotland) Rhodo book was available for purchase - an excellent book. Could be purchased from the ARS through Garth Wedemire, cost \$80. ARS have the American rights.
- Art reminded the meeting of the plant table, only 1 plant left.

Treasurer's Report:

Bank Balance on 8 Nov 2018:	\$9,976.78	
Revenue:		\$2,171.15 (bulk of it from Christmas auction at \$1,531.)
Expenses:		\$3,108.91
1 outstanding cheque		\$ 100.
Balance available on 10 Jan 2019	\$8, 738.94	

Secretary's Report_

- One piece of correspondence in form of letter from VIU, thanking us for our participation in the student bursary programme.
- Jan asked the meeting to give their consent to the use of their data (phone, address, email) needed for data protection purposes. A list to fill in and sign was put on front desk. Craig explained to the meeting why it was needed, and that it is part of the new Society's Act requirements.

Old Business:

The Christmas potluck was a great success; Art thanked all who had helped and a special thank you to David & Joyce, Mr. and Mrs. Claus who handled the auction so well.

NRS Vacant positions:

Once again, the meeting was reminded that we still need to fill the following posts:

- to take over Susan's duties with refreshments; Susan volunteered to help any new person who would take it on. Part of the task is to make sure the book is filled out with who will provide the goodies for each monthly meeting - three people per month. Volunteers needed: 2 for April and 3 for May.
- we need a new permanent president, Art and Susan are chairing January and February, after that we have no-one.
- there is a committee for programming, but we will need a new one for next year; the meeting was requested to think about it. It is not an onerous task when there is a team who come with suggestions; this year it took two meetings to program the whole year.

New Business

John Deniseger briefed the meeting on Milner gardens:

- a tree came down on the new fence;

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society

- there will be approximately 3 work bees, probably end of January, beginning of February, moving plants, companion planting, help needed.

John Deniseger reported on progress for 2019 Western Regional Conference:

- hosted by Mars, on 27/28/29 September 2019, venue is Conference Centre in Parksville;
- very interesting speakers already booked, including, Nancy Moore, Mark Colombel, Dennis Bottemiller, Richard Hebda, Linda Gilkeson, Steve Hootman, Nancy Turner, Mike Stewart, Geoff Ball, Ron Long;
- there will be garden tours on the Saturday afternoon;
- registration will be open later in the spring, the details will be in next ARS journal;
- we will be looking for helpers, for registration and many other jobs.

February Programme: Sue and Garth Wedemire on 'Gardens of Wales' as seen on last trip with Scottish Rhododendron Society.

Plant raffle: Ann Davey described the five very interesting rhodos to be won in the raffle.

Question from meeting: When is the Truss show and Plant Sale; Answer: Saturday 11 May.

Next Executive meeting at Allen & Gaylle's; Art reminded everyone that you do not have to be on the exec to go to meetings.

The meeting continued with very interesting talk and demonstration of pruning by Scott Wiskerke.



A few important points when pruning – among many more:

- KEY: Prune for “form and function”.
- Less is more!
- Cutting for best growth with fewest cuts.
- Reproductive vs Vegetative.
- Remove “dead, diseased, damaged”.
- July/August: best time to prune ornamental trees.
- **Don't miss pruning demo: Saturday, Feb. 9th – details below.**



Raffle plants for February meeting

Carmen (*R. sanguinum* ssp. *didynum* X *R. forrestii* ssp. *Rothchild*) 1' -18 °C 4/5/4 EM

A very choice dwarf, dark-red rhododendron. Plants are prostrate, very slow growing, and form a low emerald green mound. The flowers seem oversized, and are dark red and waxy. It blooms in May.



Sir Charles Lemon (natural hybrid of *R. arboreum* ssp. *cinnamomeum*)

A superb plant with something to offer year-round. White flowers with faint red spotting, blooming in April. May take a few years to bloom. Foliage dark green with bright cinnamon-brown indumentum. The new leaves unfold white. In 10 years, it will be 5 feet in height. Needs



afternoon sun protection. Stunning when backlit by the evening sun. Hardy to -18 C. Sir Joseph Hooker collected the seed in northern India in 1849-51. The seed produced a prized specimen in Cornwall, which was propagated and subsequently become the source of all R. "*Sir Charles Lemon*" around the world.



Pruning Demo: February 9th, 10 am

Do you have more questions on pruning? Maybe you'd like some hands-on learning? Following up on last month's pruning discussion, Scott Wiskerke will conduct a Pruning Demonstration at the Kiesers on Saturday February 9 at 10AM: Turn off Metral to Doumont Road. Follow Doumont Road past the Black Bear Pub for 300 m, & turn right onto Pearce Road. Follow the potholes on Pearce Road for 300 m. Take the driveway on the left, through the gate, past the barn and you will have arrived at Dorothee's: 6299 Pearce Road. **We'll send a confirmation email out to club members a couple of days in advance to confirm – just in case the weather doesn't cooperate.**

NRS Program

Date	Speaker	Topic
February 14, 2019	Sue Grant and Garth Wedemire	Gardens of Wales Tour
March 14, 2019	Ole Jonny Larsen – all the way from Norway	Main presentation: Rhododendron Culture in Scandinavia; and short presentation on Jean Rasmussen in Norway (Frank Kingdon Ward's 2 nd wife)
April 11, 2019	Margot Moser	Native Plants
May 9, 2019	Graham Sakaki – Research and Community Engagement Coordinator for the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute (MABRRI).	Mt Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve and Milner Phenology Project

If Seedy Saturdays are appearing, can spring be far away?

Here's the first in our area to get us started:

17TH Annual Qualicum Beach Seedy Saturday, Feb 2nd

10:00 to 3:30, at the Qualicum Beach Civic Center

Theme: *"Seeding the Future"*

Admission: by donation

Speakers: Carolyn Herriot – *"Eco Nutrition: The Future of Food"*.

Larry Church – *"Mason Bees through the seasons"*.

Seen in Passing.....



- The best lunar eclipse on a clear winter night.
- Dare we say, early signs of spring??
- Early rhodo blooms beginning to pop up.
- Snowdrops and Winter Aconites in bloom.
- Sea lions "barking".

Rhododendron “*Cynthia*” in Ladysmith – the aftermath of the December storm

By John Deniseger

In 2017, Ladysmith’s iconic rhododendron was listed as one of “the world’s great trees” by the Bored Panda website. Rhododendron “*Cynthia*” is thought to have been planted by George Fraser in 1878 and stood 9 meters high and 8 meters wide.

As we all know, we had a huge windstorm blow through the southern BC coast on December 20th. BC Hydro called it “the most damaging windstorm in their history”. Unfortunately, *Cynthia* (or “*Lady Cynthia*” as it has become known locally) was severely damaged by the windstorm. Two of its three stems or trunks were broken at the base. It didn’t take long before word of the damage spread. A CBC article soon followed: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/ladysmith-lady-cynthia-rhododendron-damage-1.4967587>.



Ladysmith Chamber of Commerce photo taken in 2017

soon followed: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/ladysmith-lady-cynthia-rhododendron-damage-1.4967587>.

In early January, members from various ARS Vancouver Island chapters met with the owner, Peter Richmond, to offer advice and to take cuttings – just in case... A second follow up visit was made on January 11th. The big question was how to save what was left, as the damage was pretty significant. The general consensus seems to be that severe pruning of the remaining stem will be necessary in order to take the strain off of the weakened plant. Otherwise, the next windstorm or heavy snow load could be fatal.

Susan Lightburn’s photos below give us a sense of the damage:



Here’s a good photo of the remaining stem or trunk. *Cynthia* still has a “good side” for photos.



You can see the two stems broken off at the base.

Chris Southwick inspecting the damage. It looks like root rot....

Rhododendron pruning – some tips from Kenneth Cox (adapted from his book, Woodland Gardening) by John Deniseger

1. Mature rhododendrons – often show signs of dieback due to overcrowding, over-shading, drought etc. Cut back until the wood inside is green and healthy.
2. The easiest rhododendrons to prune, and most responsive to pruning, are lepidotes (scaly leaved) and both deciduous and evergreen azaleas. They can be pruned anywhere and they will sprout from the stem or branches even if you cut them back severely. (In broad terms, lepidotes are the smaller leaved rhododendrons.)
3. Larger leaved rhododendrons grow a little differently in that new shoots emerge from a whorl of leaves. For these, cut back to a whorl of leaves.
4. Cutting back can be done over a 2- or 3-year period so that the remainder of the plant can supply energy through the leaves. This is also a good way to see if you get good regrowth. If the plant doesn't respond, stop pruning.
5. The best time to prune rhododendrons is immediately after flowering. This gives the plant a reasonable time for regrowth. Azaleas and dwarf rhodos may even flower the following year. Otherwise, winter pruning is another option, although you will be pruning off the flower buds for the coming flowering season
6. On older plants, if you can see signs of growth and growth buds from the trunks, it should respond well to pruning. If not, you're less likely to be successful.
7. Some rhododendrons don't respond well to pruning. These include subsections *Falconera* and *Grandia*, rhododendrons with smooth bark such as *R. barbatum*, *R. griffithianum* and their hybrids.
8. Unhealthy plants suffering from poor drainage, drought or disease are less likely to respond to pruning than healthy, vigorous plants.



Pinching Rhododendrons – if you've ever spent anytime walking around the garden with Paul Wurz, you'll likely have seen him pinching terminal or central growth buds as you tour the garden. This is done as the bud elongates in spring, to encourage multiple branching from lateral buds which form in the leaf axils of each whorl of leaves. This practice turns the plants into bushier, multi-stemmed specimens. Once the plants start flowering freely, most growth comes from lateral shoots below the flower buds so that nature does its own pinching. Larger species are more tree like and should generally be left to form a single trunk until they obtain a good height.

Editor's Note: Based on these tips, Rhododendron "Cynthia" may be a challenge. While winter pruning is fine, it will limit blooming for this year (#5). On the other hand, it would appear to have been suffering from poor drainage and drought so that it may not respond well to pruning (#8). Hopefully, it can be pruned back to green, healthy wood (#1) and there are dormant growth buds (#6). Time will tell....

Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society presents



The Gardener – an award-winning documentary

Wednesday, February 13, 2019

Qualicum Beach Civic Centre, 7:30 pm

- Beautiful Quebec masterpiece, decades in the making
- The work of three generations of the Cabot family



Happy Valentine's Day!

Looking forward to seeing you all at the meeting!