



The Rhodomentum

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society Newsletter

February 2021



President's Message

Hello everyone!

"It is the best of times; it is the worst of times". "The Best" – as the pandemic vaccinations are progressing – slowly but surely; and "the worst" as there is so much irreparable damage being done; so many souls are no longer with us...

And yet, one can't help but have smiles in one's heart by looking out of the window and seeing R. 'Lee's Scarlet', R. 'Len Living' (a Mary Greig cross), R. 'Christmas Cheer', the Hellebores and the snow drops in full bloom. One can only cheer that more and more NRS members participate at each of our ZOOM presentations, so all that work bears nice rewards. Thank you all!

A very warm welcome to our new members, Jen Calder and Wanda Brenton!

I don't have space to list all of our upcoming events here but our webpage continues to be updated in due time. **(Editor's Note: Please also see events listed on p. 4)** Besides the very interesting ZOOM presentations on the 1st, 3rd, and 6th of February, there is our HAILEY GROVE WORK BEE on the 9th, as well as the Garden Open House on the 27th at Gaylle and Allen McRae's charming garden (details on p.6). Please see www.nanaimorhodos.ca for more information. I am looking forward to see you at all the events!

Hurrah, for the end of this pandemic tunnel!

Rosina Schmidt



OUR EXECUTIVE

President	Rosina Schmidt	751-3386
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Library	Ann Beamish / Sandra Dorman
Newsletter	June Bouchard / John Deniseger
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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 meeting: Saturday, February 6th at 10 am ~

Location: Zoom online

Ken Nentwig – Water Efficient Landscape

Our February Speaker via Zoom – Ken Nentwig on "Water Efficient Landscape"

As gardeners, we are connected to nature and the cycle of the seasons. We've learned about beneficial insects, how to attract pollinators, the benefits of mason bees, mulching, composting, soil building, invasive species and much more. Now it's time to learn about water, a precious resource that we all too often take for granted. Join us on **February 6th at 10 am** as Ken Nentwig shows us how we can create a "water efficient landscape", building on the idea of rain gardens and conserving water in our gardens. This would include converting downspouts, water barrels, importance of healthy soil, construction of rain gardens, etc.



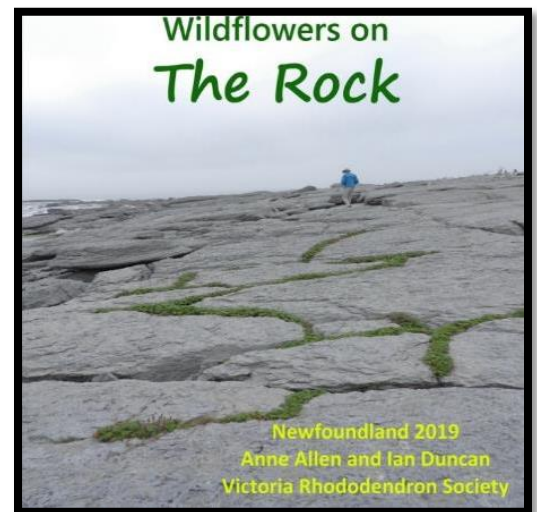
"Ken is a retired landscape architect currently involved in training programs internationally. He is a course developer/facilitator at Gaia College and at Pacific Horticulture College, and has presented courses at UVIC. Previously a College Professor at University of Guelph, Ridgetown Campus (ON), he took an early retirement and moved to Vancouver Island in 2010. Ken has developed and manages the Canadian RWH Practitioners Certification Program for CANARM. He also consults on RWH system design for residential, commercial, and public systems."

The zoom link will be sent out in the days leading up to the presentation.



Also in February:

February 1st at 7:30 -The Victoria Rhododendron Society invites you to join us for a botanical journey around Canada's eastern island province, Newfoundland, aka, 'The Rock'. Wildflowers on the Rock – a presentation by Anne Allen and Ian Duncan of the VRS. Newfoundlanders are proud of the fact that while the rest of the world has to put up with 4 seasons, they have only 2: Winter and August. Anne and Ian chose August to explore the island. Many of you will remember Anne and Ian as they gave us an excellent presentation on their trip through Austria's Inn River valley a few years ago. Event: Victoria Rhodo February General Meeting
Subject: Wildflowers on 'The Rock' by Anne Allen and Ian Duncan
Time: Feb 1, 2021 7:30 PM Vancouver time



3rd of February at 7:00 - "Ericaceous Plants of Vancouver Island" presented by Agnes Lynn. Further information will follow via email.

Looking back at January: On January 15th, Linda Gilkeson gave an excellent presentation on “Year-Round Gardening”. With 84 attendees from across Vancouver Island, it was very well attended, while generating lots of discussion and interesting questions. We’ve ordered our seeds, have the compost ready in the compost box, the tools have been cleaned.... can’t wait for spring! It didn’t really snow this week, did it?...



Odds and Ends....



- **Propagation update from Rosina:** We are delighted to report that our 2019 cuttings, now growing in one-gallon pots, are doing very well – some under Bryan’s, others under Chris’, and Deborah’s as well as Rosina’s care. They are waiting for the warmer days to burst their new leaves, but it will take probably a year until they are ready to be transplanted into 2-gallon pots. Our 2020 cuttings, which are under the loving care of Allan Murray in his propagator, are doing splendid, reports Liz. They keep Allan busy and out of mischief...
- **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 Houses” – update from Rosina:**
This year we will be having members’ garden “open houses” starting with February 2021 and following each month with at least one garden for us to admire. 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.
In March and May, 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. All proceeds go to the club. Please mark your calendar, so you will not miss it. Hope to see you there!
- **What’s Blooming now?** Our webmaster Rosina has added a page on our web site showing what’s currently in bloom. 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!

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 on hold until further notice – hope to have a mulching bee in February.
- Hailey Grove at Bowen Park – work bees planned for Tuesday February 9th from 10am to 2pm. Bring your lunch and sunny disposition. **Details on p. 5.**



Open Gardens



It's still a little early but we live on the west coast. Spring is just around the corner.... this is just the beginning!

- Open Garden at Allen and Gayle McRae's: an opportunity to see the early blooming rhododendrons – **Saturday, February 27th – Details on p. 6.**
- Open Garden at Art and Susan Lightburn's – as we slip into spring: will include a plant sale – **Saturday, March 27th**
- April and May will see more open gardens hosted by Dick and Ann Beamish, Chris Southwick, June and John – with more to come. Check future newsletters or [our website](http://nanaimorhodos.ca/) for updates.
- Milner Gardens and Woodland – **from February 5th through Saturday March 27th, the gardens will be open on Fridays and Saturdays from 11 am to 3 pm.** Check their website for current details: <https://milnergardens.viu.ca/hours-admission>

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

Monday, February 1st, at 7:30: Anne Allen & Ian Duncan – *Wildflowers on the Rock*

Wednesday, February 3rd at 7:00 - "Ericaceous Plants of Vancouver Island" presented by Agnes Lynn. More info to come via email.

Saturday, February 6th at 10 am: Ken Nentwig – "*Water Efficient Landscape*"

Saturday, March 6th, at 1 pm – Linda Chalker-Scott – *Raised Garden Beds for Vegetables* – a zoom presentation through the Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association

Saturday, March 20th at 7pm: Brian Minter – *What's New in Edible Gardening*

While Zoom presentations can't replace in person meetings, it has the potential to allow us to access an amazing range of speakers and topics, while strengthening the ARS community.



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

Seen in Passing...

- Snowdrops coming into bloom
- Lots of sea lions awaiting the herring spawn
- More and more bald eagles appearing
- Snowflakes?
- NHL hockey



Hailey Rhododendron Grove at Bowen Park



Throughout 2020, NRS volunteers held a number of work bees to begin the clean-up of the Hailey Rhododendron Grove at Bowen Park. Working with Nanaimo Parks and Recreation staff, and following COVID 19 protocols, more work bees are planned through the spring. **The next work bee is scheduled for Tuesday, February 9th from 10 am to 2 pm.**

Hope you can join us!!

Plant of the month by Ron Sutton

Rhododendron 'Ebony Pearl'

This rhododendron is one of my favourites, it has a lot going for it. The shiny foliage has an unusual colour, kind of a blackish olive green, and the new leaves open a shiny maroon colour. It makes beautiful dark reddish pink trusses, with large flowers. The flower trusses sit neatly above a collar of leaves. If there is one negative about this plant, it's that its growth can get a bit leggy. I have started pinching mine, in an effort to keep it compact. This plant will contrast nicely with lighter green foliage of other shrubs. It is said to be hardy to -21°C and will grow to 6 feet in 10 years. It blooms mid to late May. The photo shown was taken of my plant on May 19.

My experience with this plant, has found that it will handle a fair amount of direct sun.

Parentage: it is said to be a sport of Rhododendron 'Pink Pearl'.





Hi Fellow Rhodies!

This is Allen and Gaylle McRae here to welcome you to our Open Garden event on Saturday, February 27th!

It's January 23rd and pretty chilly here on Tree House Lane, 2 degrees Celsius. Not a lot is happening in our garden – the rhododendrons are sitting still and waiting for the “Spring Blossom Event” ahead. However, our 3 Lee’s Scarlets which have been in bloom for weeks, our Winter Jasmine, Christmas Rose (*Helleborus Niger*), *Camellia Japonica* ‘Apple Blossom’, and even some snow drops give us some much welcome colour and brightness during this most dreary time of year on the island. 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 by later in the spring, we can get our long-awaited greenhouse and raised beds erected. 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, February 27th – 1pm to 4 pm – weather permitting and postponed to Sun. Feb 28th if needed.

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

***Please note: There will be no plant sale at this time.



Camellia Japonica ‘Apple Blossom’



R. ‘Lee’s Scarlet’

*"The flowers of late winter
and early spring occupy
places in our hearts well out
of proportion to their size."
- Gertrude S. Wister*

The Story of Rhododendron 'Gord's Legacy' (and a little club history) – by John Deniseger

Long time club members will remember Gord Galloway, who was an active member and served as club president in the late 1990's. Gord took an interest in collecting rhododendron seeds from various locations to see what kind of plants might be produced. Using his skills as a carpenter, he built several "germination tables" with overhead lighting, bottom heat and misting systems. It didn't take long before he was growing substantial numbers of seedlings. Unfortunately, before his seedlings could mature, Gord was diagnosed with cancer and passed away all too soon in 2000.

Some of his larger seedlings were shared with interested club members and have since become large plants. Many of them were open pollinated *R. sutchense* or *R. callophyllum*, while others were of completely unknown parentage. We have a number of Gord's seedlings in our garden here in Bowser. Most of them have done quite well, despite being grown in less-than-ideal conditions, at least initially.

We nicknamed our favourite of Gord's seedlings "Gord's Legacy". It was initially left in a pot in our former Nanaimo garden for far too long which certainly slowed its development. When we began our new garden in Bowser 8 years ago, we planted "Gord's Legacy" in a much more ideal location. It's been thriving ever since and has become one of the highlights of our spring garden.



A couple of years ago, Paul Wurz and Brian Staton (NIRS members) were visiting our garden. It didn't take long before we were standing in front of "Gord's Legacy" as they asked "what is it?" At the time, it was at the peak of its glory, in full bloom, with a slight perfume. They'd never seen anything quite like it and strongly encouraged me to register it as a new hybrid. Never having attempted to register a new hybrid before, I was a little intimidated by the idea. Last spring, like many of us, we really savored our garden as the COVID restrictions began. I decided that it was time to finally see if I could register "Gord's Legacy".

The process was actually fairly straightforward, although as you can imagine, it required attention to detail and a little research into appropriate botanical terminology. Overall, it really wasn't that difficult or onerous. I submitted the package, including photographs, to the ARS registrar last spring, with the understanding that the pandemic would likely slow down the process. In early January, I received confirmation that *R. 'Gord's*

Legacy' had been officially accepted by the ARS and the RHS as a registered hybrid!

Here's a description of *R. 'Gord's Legacy'*:

In late April, the individual flower buds begin to open. Initially, as the buds lengthen, dark pink to red bracts unfurl, followed after a few days by creamy pink lily-like individual flowers held up by very long 5-inch red pedicels. The lax trusses are loosely held consisting of 8 individual flowers, which have 2 parallel red flares in the upper lobe. The flowers are slightly scented, somewhat reminiscent of *R. 'Loderi King George'*. We grow it in a location where it is protected from the hot afternoon sun. It's quite hardy for our climate and has never shown any winter damage due to our occasional wintery outbursts. The leaves are a deep green and the plant is now growing at about 4 to 5 inches per year. It typically begins to bloom in late April and the flowers are quite long lasting. It's well budded for this spring! Given



that it was simply seed collected from open pollination and there is no record of where the seed was collected, we don't know the parentage. However, I wouldn't be surprised if there's some Loderi in its background. And if you're wondering – Paul Wurz is attempting to root cuttings.....





I think we can all relate to this cartoon sent to us by Paddy Mark and Mark Nixon. Remember those bus trips, plant sales and visits to nurseries??? Haven't we all wandered around our gardens with a pot in hand, looking for a place to put our latest acquisition... ??? ☺

"If a plant is sad, do other plants photosympathize with it???"

Anti-depressant microbes in soil: how soil makes your brain happy!

(Thank you, Susan and Art Lightburn, for submitting this article to the newsletter – yes, gardening is good for you!)



<https://realfarmacy.com/antidepressant-soil/>

Soil microbes have been found to have similar effects on the brain as Prozac, without the negative side effects and potential for chemical [dependency and withdrawal](#).

It turns out getting in the garden and getting dirty is a natural antidepressant due to unique microbes in healthy organic soil. Working and playing in soil can actually make you happier and healthier.

What gardeners and farmers have talked about for millennia is now verifiable by science. Feeling like your garden or farm is your happy place is no coincidence!

The soil microbe mycobacterium vaccae has been found to mirror the effect on neurons in the brain that drugs like Prozac can provide, but without side effects. The way it works is the “happy” microbes in soil cause cytokine levels to rise, which leads to the production of more serotonin. This bacterium is found in healthy soil and when humans are exposed to it, the microbe stimulates serotonin production. Serotonin makes us feel relaxed and happier. Conversely, lack of serotonin has been linked to depression, anxiety, OCD, and bipolar disorders.

Some studies on cancer patients have demonstrated better quality of life and less stress when patients were given mycobacterium vaccae. Scientists also tested the microbe via injection and ingestion on rats and compared results to a control group. They found that cognitive ability, lower stress, and better concentration were notable benefits that lasted 3 weeks time. Mycobacterium antidepressant microbes in soil are also being investigated for improving cognitive function, Crohn’s disease, and even rheumatoid arthritis.

Farmers and gardeners come in contact with this bacterium by having topical contact with it, inhaling it, and getting it into their bloodstreams when they have small cuts or other pathways for infection.

So, while the physical act of gardening may reduce stress and lift moods in and of itself, it is fascinating to know there is some science to add to the happy gardener sentiment. With no adverse health effects caused by mycobacterium vaccae and so much to gain, you might as well grow something. As a bonus you’ll produce fresh, local food, or at least something pretty to smell and look at if flowers and ornamentals are your thing. Bees and other pollinators will appreciate it too!

Sources:

“Identification of an Immune-Responsive Mesolimbocortical Serotonergic System: Potential Role in Regulation of Emotional Behavior,” by Christopher Lowry et al., published online on March 28, 2007 in Neuroscience.

[Mind & Brain/Depression and Happiness – Raw Data “Is Dirt the New Prozac?”](#) by Josie Glausiusz, Discover Magazine, July 2007 Issue.

In Susan and Art Lightburn's Garden...

R. sichotense blooms between January and March and is presently blooming in Art Lightburn's garden. From Siberia, it is a hardy survivor. In the fall, the aromatic leaves turn a maroon colour, turning back to green in the spring.



What extremes we go to for
saving our blooms!

(Photos by Art Lightburn)



Peter Lewis 1949 - 2020

Sadly, another well-known Vancouver Island ARS member passed away last summer. Peter Lewis, an important and valuable member of the Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society passed away on July 26th, 2020. Peter was best known for his creations using water. Some of his best-known works include the Great Divide Waterfall in Edmonton (photo on right, from the Edmonton Journal, July 2004), a 15-meter-wide umbrella fountain for EXPO 86, and the Olympic



Fountain in London. His own water garden at his home in the Cowichan Valley was spectacular and a highlight of the gardens featured as part of the 2015 ARS conference in Sidney. More information on his life and major achievements can be found in the October 2020 CVRS newsletter at: <http://cowichanrhodos.ca/newsletter.pdf> There's also a very good article titled "Going with the Flow" by Peter Lewis in the ARS Journal Volume 70, no 3 Summer 2016.

February

"The February sunshine steeps your boughs and tints the buds and swells the leaves within."

- William C. Bryant



HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY