

The Rhodomentum

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society Newsletter
January 2018



President's Message

As I write this, Christmas is in the past and the New Year is rapidly approaching, so I would like to wish you all a "Happy New Year". I would like to thank all of our members who helped make our auction and potluck a success. The auction raised about \$1300 and the NRS donated \$130 to the Salvation Army. We also donated a lot of food and \$60 cash to "Loaves and Fishes". Well done!

I trust that you all had a good Christmas and are looking forward to 2018. The topic of our speaker for January is "Mason Bees". This should be a very informative and interesting presentation by the "Mason Bee Lady of Nanaimo". After the presentation, I believe you will be able to purchase Mason Bees and supplies to get them started.

I have been "babysitting" the rhodos I have in pots and especially R. Countess of Haddington, which I purchased at our Christmas Auction - thanks Chris! This rhodo is strongly scented, which I love, but is only hardy to -8 or -9 C.

I hope to see you all at our next meeting.

All the best,

Allen

EXECUTIVE

President	Allen McRae	758-7589
Vice President	vacant	
Past President	Chris Southwick	390-3415
Secretary	Ann Beamish	758-2574
Treasurer	Gayle McRae	758-7589
Directors	Glenda Barr	390-2822
	Craig Clarke	390-4090
	Art Lightburn	468-7516
	Don Noakes	
	Dick Beamish	758-2574

COMMITTEES

Advertising	Jan Moles / Gerry Moore
Library	Ann Beamish / Sandra Dorman
Newsletter	June Bouchard / John Deniseger
Membership	Krystyna Sosulski
Program	Doug Kitts
Raffle	Ann Davey & Val Harvey
Social	Susan Lightburn
Bargain Table	Reinhold Gorgosolich
Website	Craig Clarke
Bus Tour	

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Next meeting, Thursday, January 11th, at 7:30 – Beban Park Social Centre
Our speaker will be Rose McCully on Mason Bees

Twigs and Stems

Goodies for January:

Chris Southwick, Linda Moore, June and John

Calendar of Upcoming Events – spring can't be that far off ☺

Please note: The date of our annual Plant Sale and Truss show has been changed to Saturday, May 12th, 2018!

Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society, Wednesday Jan 10th, 2018- Regular meeting - 7:30 pm:
MARS photography night featuring photos taken by club members – hosted by Glen Jamieson

North Island Rhododendron Society, Tuesday, Jan 9th, 2018 – Regular Meeting – 7:30 pm:

The January 9th meeting will feature the ever popular **'Panel of Experts'**. Three members will speak on their area of expertise and answer questions from the audience. Our presenters will be, Judith Walker on 'Trees & Rhodos in Landscaping', Bernie Guyader on 'Alpine plants and dwarf rhodos', and Dany Fortin on 'Crevice Gardens.'. Doors open at 7:00pm and the meeting begins at 7:30. So be on time, as the presentations begin the evening program.

Upcoming Central Vancouver Island Seedy Saturdays:

Denman Island: January 27th, 10:00 to 3:00 - Denman Island Community Hall.

Qualicum Beach: February 3rd, 10:00 to 3:30 - Qualicum Beach Civic Center. **Theme:** Sow, Grow, Enjoy!

Comox Valley: March 3rd, 10:00 to 2:00 - Florence Filberg Center, Courtenay. **Theme:** Bountiful Harvest.

Nanaimo: Seedy Sunday on March 4th, 10:00 to 3:00 – NDSS.

Spring Sundays at VIU's Milner Gardens and Woodland:

Sundays February 4th to March 25th

Garden open 11:00am to 3:30pm, last entry 3:00pm.

Tea Room open 11:00am for tea, soup and scones with last seating 3:00pm.

Admission: adults \$6, youth \$4, includes tax. Children 12 and under accompanied by an adult, Milner Gardens members and current VIU students with card - free admission.

<https://www2.viu.ca/milnergardens/>

From our January presenter:

My presentation outline will be “how to get your yard started with the amazing Mason Bees – this will include from the beginning to the end of the Mason Bee season.

My normal seminar is 2 to 2 ½ hours, but due to your time limit it, will be much shorter – more like a “Reader’s Digest” version. I will also have a sales table which is wonderful, thank you.

As for a short bio: I first got interested in pollination about 10 years ago when we first arrived in Nanaimo from Victoria. We found our dream home and I wanted a garden and needed pollination.

After doing some research, I realized that Mason Bees would be my best option since we had just lost a large portion of our honey bees – which in turn led to our Mason Bee business.

I started a breeding program and now have 80 people growing bees for me. We sell Mason Bee boxes, tubes, cocoons, books and I give seminars.

We attend as many Seedy Saturdays and Sundays as possible. Any group that invites us for a seminar, I offer to return and do a hands-on cocoon washing workshop in October. We have been dubbed- “Mason Bee Specialists” – it’s a free title so I’ll take it – smile!

Enjoy the seminar & bring your questions.

Rose McCulley

J&R Farm

January Raffle Plants

Rhododendron ‘Checkmate’

Bronze winter foliage sets off the brilliant lavender/pink flowers of this small-leafed, dwarf hybrid and PJM relative. R. ‘Checkmate’ blooms in March or April and brings much-needed colour to the landscape.



‘Cosmopolitan’

H-5’ W-4’ (-23°C)

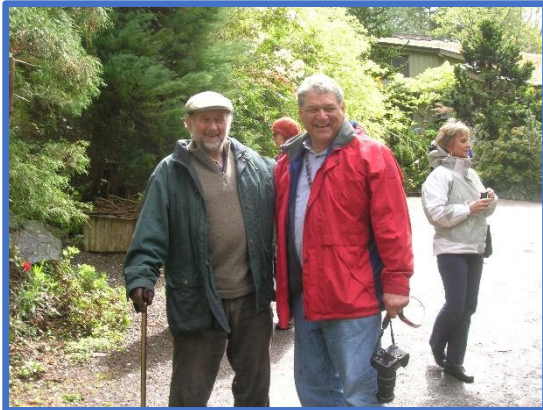
Conical-shaped trusses with funnel-shaped 10-18 flowers of pale-pink with a deep red flare in late spring and early summer and glossy, dark green leaves. The flowers of this bushy, evergreen rhododendron gradually fade to light pink. Neat and dense in habit.

Cunningham’s White X Vesuvius Hybridizer:
Hagen, Boskoop

The N.R.S. is celebrating its 25th anniversary!

We've come a long way since September 1992! We have lots to celebrate and be proud of! Through the years, we've all learned so much about rhododendrons and horticulture, participated in plant sales and shows, toured countless gardens but most of all we've met so many special people.

In the upcoming months, we'll be highlighting some of the club's past activities and events. Please send us your photos or stories – we'd love to hear from you!



Photos from some of our annual spring bus tours....



Feature Rhododendron

by John Deniseger

Rhododendron barbatum

Rhododendron barbatum is one of my favourite rhododendrons. A 10-year-old plant will be 4 to 5 feet high, but the plant will continue to grow into a small tree. In the mountains of Nepal, there are magnificent old growth forests of *R. barbatum* over 30 feet tall. In our climate, it typically blooms in early March. When *R. barbatum* blooms, it is a sure sign that spring has truly begun. The crimson ball shaped trusses consist of 10 to 20 flowers. It is hardy to -15 C and the leaves are up to 8 inches long. Another outstanding feature of *R. barbatum* is its smoky purple peeling bark, somewhat reminiscent of our native arbutus. This is a special plant which can be a real show piece in a woodland setting.



Milner Species Garden Update

The past year has seen considerable progress, thanks to volunteers from each of the 5 Vancouver Island chapters, as we move towards our goal of opening the Milner species garden in the spring of 2018. Considerable effort went into soil preparation and many rhododendrons were planted last spring and carefully monitored and watered through our summer drought. During the fall, volunteers spread about approximately 100 yd² of arborist mulch, covering 70% of the site. Another major development was the generous donation of a number of large rhododendrons by Art and Susan Lightburn. Thanks to their considerable effort, help from Windsor Plywood's contribution of equipment and assistance from volunteers, the plants were transported and placed in the species garden.

As the new year begins, work will continue on multiple fronts: a) completion of mulching; b) building deer fencing lattice panels; c) planting of more rhododendrons, trees, and companion plants. There will be opportunities for you to help out as we'll be having regular work bees through the winter into the spring. Working on the project with volunteers has been both rewarding and has been a lot of fun. The

garden is really beginning to take shape. It is anticipated that we'll be getting back to the work of mulching, fencing and planting in mid-January, weather permitting. If you'd like to join in the fun, please let John know at juneandjohn@shaw.ca.



NRS and MARS members working together with Milner staff to get some fall planting done!!!!

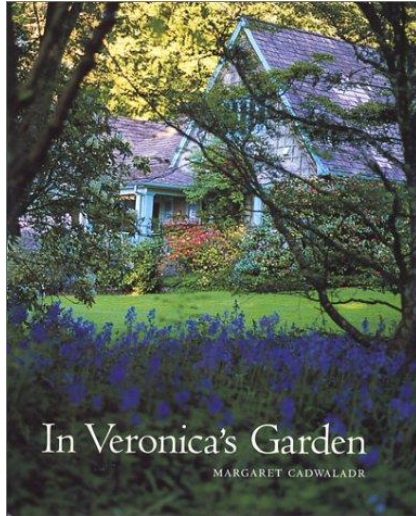


From your library

By June Bouchard

With the short days and long nights of winter upon us, we gardeners get a bit of respite from the back-breaking aspects of gardening. It's a time to look at "the bones" of our gardens and make notes of what we might like to change over the coming weeks or months. The seed catalogues appear in the nurseries or in our mailbox and we start planning what new crops we will be planting in our vegetable garden. Winter is also the perfect time to sit comfortably by the fire with a good book about gardening, and often get inspired for the upcoming season.

Consequently, January seems like an appropriate time to get a new column started in our newsletter featuring the books from our very own library. The NRS has an impressive collection of titles which, as most of you know, can be borrowed by the members. We will try to feature one in each issue of the newsletter and anyone is welcome to contribute a review – this is **your** newsletter and your contributions would be more than welcome!



If you have not read *In Veronica's Garden* by Margaret Cadwaladr, you might consider adding it to your "must-read" list for 2018. Although this book was published in 2002, the story it tells is timeless. The book starts with a description of the garden itself as it moves through the seasons. The subsequent chapters introduce Veronica Villiers, whose mother was Winston Churchill's cousin, from her early days in England, followed by her marriage to Desmond Fitzgerald and her move to Glin Castle in Ireland where Veronica's interest in gardening started to develop. The tale continues through the years, from widowhood to her marriage to Ray Milner and their move to Canada and the Qualicum Beach Estate, now known as Milner Gardens and Woodland. The story of the development of the gardens includes references to royal visitors, numerous anecdotes about Veronica's "colourful"

personality, a beautiful collection of historical photographs and photos of the garden itself. The final part of the book outlines the steps that were taken to save the garden towards the end of Veronica's life. It is interesting to note that the book begins with an introduction by Desmond Fitzgerald, Veronica's son and the current Knight of Glin. I thoroughly enjoyed spending a few days with Veronica and her beautiful garden over the Christmas break.

And speaking of books.....

Another book I have been enjoying lately is *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition* (2008) by Robert Pogue Harrison which I borrowed from the Vancouver Island Regional Library. From the dust jacket: "With *Gardens*, Robert Pogue Harrison graces readers with a thoughtful, wide-ranging examination of the many ways gardens evoke the human condition." In the chapter, "The Human Gardener", Harrison quotes Karel Capek from his book called *The Gardener's Year* (1929) – I thought you might enjoy it:

If it were of any use, every day the gardener would fall on his knees and pray somehow like this: 'O Lord, grant that in some way it may rain every day, say from about midnight until three o'clock in the morning, but, you see, it must be gentle and warm so that it can soak it; grant that at the same time it would not rain on campion, alyssum, helianthemum, lavender, and the others which you in your infinite wisdom know are drought-loving plants – I will write their names on a bit of paper if you like – and grant that the sun may shine the whole day long, but not everywhere (not, for instance, on spiraea, or on gentian, plantain lily, and rhododendron), and not too much; that there may be plenty of dew and little wind, enough worms, no plant lice and snails, no mildew, and that once a week thin liquid manure and guano may fall from heaven. Amen.' (pp58-59)

