



The Rhodomentum

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society Newsletter



January 2022



President's Message

Hello NRS Gardeners,

Happy New Year! The year of the Garden!

The second "Corona year" is now behind us and I would like to take the opportunity to thank you all for your wonderful cooperation! Despite the numerous difficulties caused by the pandemic, we have achieved a lot for our club this past year and have been able to maintain regular connections, via Zoom, garden open houses, Hailey Grove work bees, propagation sessions, and just recently again through the in-person meetings. I am confident that we will master all challenges in the coming year as well, and will continue to work successfully on further developing our goals of promoting the good gardening ways in general and the promotion of the Genus Rhododendron in particular.

Was it not splendid that the BC's Health restrictions came after our Christmas Party? It was wonderful to see so many members attending. Those charcuterie food boxes were full of lovely surprises and a great idea for the current times. Our Christmas 2021 auction was once again an amazing success! To Loaves & Fishes, we contributed numerous boxes full of canned food and \$222.00 in cash. The NRS's auction netted a profit of \$1,066.00 - a great thank-you to all the organizers, donors, and purchasers! It shows what a great club we have developed!

This being "*The Year of the Garden*", we are hoping to have many members' garden open houses as well as public garden open houses with plant sales included. And if this never-ending pandemic permits, we'll also have our grand Spring plant sale at our old location, the Beban Centennial Building. After this snow-wonder is all gone, we better roll up our sleeves and make our gardens more beautiful than ever.

The Zoom presentations will continue to be developed and offered, as it connects all the Chapters worldwide and will be announced as they occur on our www.nanaimorhodos.ca pages. Don't miss them! Our January in-person meeting had to be cancelled due to the BC's Health regulations, but I hope to see you at the **Hailey Grove** work party on the 11th of January 10am to 2 pm, and on the Zoom screen on Saturday, January 15th at 11 am. Best to mark your calendar!

Happy Year of the Garden, and please stay safe!

Rosina Schmidt

Unfortunately, due to current Health Guidelines, our January meeting has been cancelled.

OUR EXECUTIVE

President	Rosina Schmidt	751-3386
Vice President	Chris Southwick	390-3415
Past President	Allen McRae	758-7589
Secretary	Deborah Francis	
Treasurer	Ron Sutton	416 951-1373
Directors	Ann Beamish	758-2574
	Dorothee Kieser	390-4136
	Gayle McRae	758-7589

COMMITTEES:

Advertising	Allen McRae
Library	Ann Beamish / Gayle McRae
Newsletter	June Bouchard / John Deniseger
Membership	Jan Moles
Program	by Committee
Raffle	Ann Davey & Val Harvey
Social	Deborah Francis
Bargain Table	Reinhold Gorgosilich
Website	Deborah Francis/Rosina Schmidt
Bus Tour	David & Joyce Mitchell
Sunshine	Wanda Brenton
Propagation	Rosina Schmidt
Hailey Grove	Kevin Francis
Show and Sale	Jan Moles and Brenda Lewis

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A look back at our Christmas auction...

It was so nice to see such a great turnout for our December Christmas event and auction, while re-connecting with many members and meeting new ones. The auction was a great success, netting well over \$1000 for the club. In the spirit of the season, we also made a significant contribution of food and cash to Loaves and Fishes. As always, there are many people to thank: Paul for being our auctioneer, Gayle for co-ordinating the beautiful table favours, Jan and Liz for picking up the Charcuterie boxes and to everyone who donated items, bid successfully (or unsuccessfully 😊), helped set up and take down, organize, track successful bidders, sell raffle tickets....and everything else to contribute to the success of the evening.



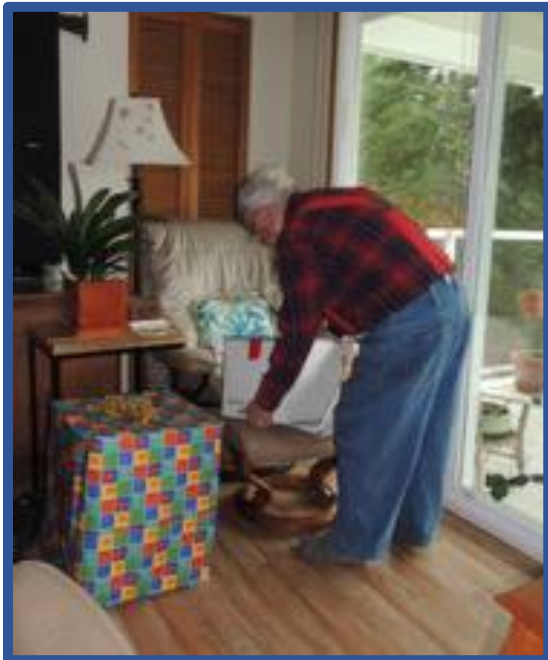


Remember the Secret Auction Item that Allan Murray successfully bid on? He didn't open it until Christmas morning!

Here's a look back at the clues from each table:

1. An investor's dream – lots of growth potential!
2. Can sometimes be associated with gold...
3. Can be used indoors or outdoors.
4. It has a twin! (A second, larger box was revealed at that point).
5. It's not illegal...
6. It comes with bonus items

Here are some Christmas morning photos at the Murrays.... (Could you have waited that long?) 😊

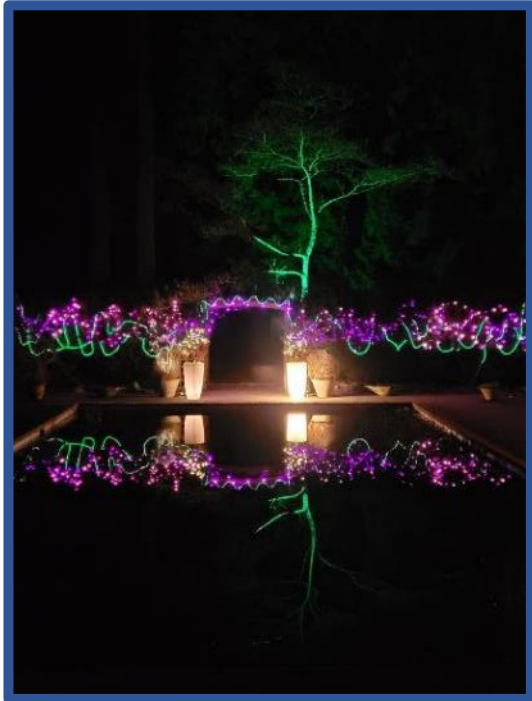


Inside the secret boxes were a set of 4 beautiful nested pots, with a sunflower theme. Inside each of the two boxes were bonus items: a Christmas tree and a small *Crinodendron* plant.

Public Gardens to brighten the spirit over the holidays!

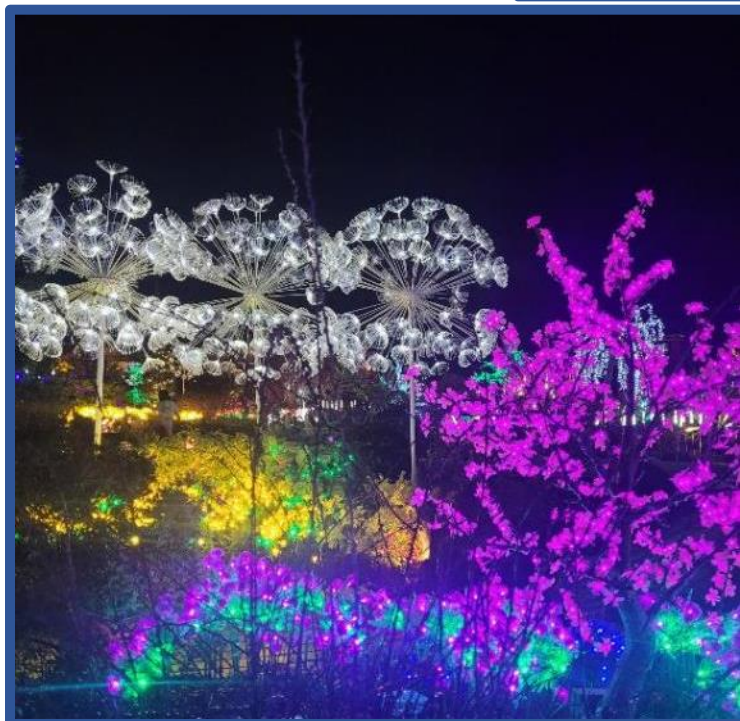
In December, we decided to make a point of visiting Christmas Light displays in some Vancouver Island public gardens. While the pandemic had limited our options, this was a way of celebrating the season.

We first visited Milner Gardens and Woodlands in Qualicum Beach.





For Winter Solstice, we went to see the light-up at Kingfisher Resort in Royston.





Our last stop was at Butchart Gardens...
in the snow!



January Meeting – Looking Back at Last Summer: Roundtable discussion

(Editors Note: While our January meeting has been cancelled, we decided to leave the write up in place as the topic is still worth thinking about....)

The west coast has had a difficult weather year, to say the least. The fall brought seemingly relentless rain and severe flooding to some areas. We always seemed to have our rain gear hanging up to dry. Yet, prior to the rain arriving in mid-September, we'd been suffering through an extreme 3-month drought (we had 13 mm of rain in Bowser over 3 months). The late June "heat dome" with temperatures approaching 40 degrees Celsius is permanently etched in our memories. In our gardens, last summer was a challenge, and in some ways, perhaps you could call it a "wake up call".



At our January meeting, rather than having a guest speaker, we had planned a roundtable discussion which would include everyone attending, including invited guests from other clubs. The discussion was to revolve around last summer's drought and "heat dome":

What damage did we observe in our gardens, particularly on our favourite rhododendrons?

Which rhododendrons are more heat and sun tolerant than others?

What can we do to protect our plants over the short term and long term?

What do we need to change in our gardens?

What can we learn from others?

These are all important topics as the realities of climate change become more and more real. Experts are predicting that these kinds of extreme summers are going to be happening with increasing frequency.

Our club continues to gather information that we can all use. We are collectively building a list of sun/heat tolerant and sun/heat sensitive plants. If you'd like to contribute, begin by making a list of rhododendrons in your garden that have significant sun exposure. From there, create 3 categories: severe sunburn, slight sunburn and no damage. Please send your list to dorotheekieser@shaw.ca. While conditions will vary from garden to garden depending on site specific conditions such as irrigation, soil structure, and mulching, the information should still be of interest as we move forward.

(Ed. note: See the latest issue of the Journal of the American Rhododendron Society for more information on sunburned leaves...)

On our website, Rosina has added a list of some of the Rhodos that perform better in heat. You'll find them at: <http://nanaimorhodos.ca/rhododendron-species-for-changing-climate/>.



What can we do as gardeners to help fight climate change?

We thought we'd share a couple of articles from other District 1 chapters. We are not the only ones reflecting and realizing that we need to make changes. They'll get you thinking about last summer as well as the future, and some things that we can all do....



Rhododendron Gardens in a Changing Climate *by Jo-Ann Canning, Master Gardener*

(Editor's Note: An earlier version of this article appeared in the October MARS newsletter. Jo-Ann updated it and added more rhododendron content for us. In February, Jo-Ann will be giving us a presentation on "Bulbs in the Rhododendron Garden")

Last June's heat dome was once considered a one in a 1,000-year event. Environment Canada now predicts it will happen every 5 to 10 years. Ouch! But we gardeners are a hardy genus with several unique species: rambling farm folk, carefully potted container planters, veggie munching urbanites, quietly manic rhodo-philes peering from behind shrubby lepidotes. We can flow with these changes by rethinking our gardens.

If we take stock now, our gardens will evolve with the changing climate, and planning our strategies can make each perform several tasks. Let's start with what we know -- and we actually know a lot. We understand how climate change negatively impacts our gardens. We already mitigate effects of weather events, like protecting half-hardy plants, and creating seasonal shade. We understand about rain barrels, mulch, rain gardens, and using the seasonal sun window. In many situations we just need to coordinate and expand the scope of these activities.

The Four Rs of Garden Change: Review, Rejuvenate, Relocate, Replace



We observe our plants all the time, yet sometimes forget to connect them to a larger picture. Each is a starting point to control change or adapt to what we cannot change. Chris Southwick, noted rhododendron grower, shared the following observations, illustrating how several decision alternatives can arise from observing a single genus of plants through a season:

*"The rhodos that seemed to burn the least were those that had tomentum, like some of the cultivars and hybrids with *R. yakushmanum* in their parentage.*

Those rhodos with shade, or at least partial shade during direct sunlight in the middle of the day, fared better than those without any protection during that

hot time. Rhodos that had new growth or very young new shoots were vulnerable, so later-blooming cultivars seemed less prone to burning.

... Where I had pruned some overhanging conifer and Japanese maple branches, the underlying rhodos were more vulnerable and did not tolerate direct sunlight as well as those that were already hardened to direct sun. [Next year, I won't] prune the overhanging trees too early in the season."



Review to Renew

Begin with what you know, and move forward with questions. Begin by naming each area and jotting down last growing season's observations, then ask, "What went wrong here, what went right? What patterns emerge? Where do the patterns repeat?" Is it hard-scape, sun window, right-plant-right-place, or landscape management related? Categorizing activity this way can point to long-range solutions that can be achieved incrementally.

Now you have all the data you need. The following is basic, but it works: write out a three-year plan for each area, with a seasonal timeline based on the problems you have observed. Wish lists are dangerous, so keep asking yourself: "Will this actually solve a climate change problem in this area?"

Renovate or Relocate?

Moving some large structural rhodos isn't an option, so what landscape issues can you resolve without relocating anyone? Will renovative pruning nearby understory trees, hedges or fences help? A thuja hedge may create shade, but those feeder roots are thirsty and invasive. Root-prune with a shovel and dig a shallow trench between hedge and the rhodos. It controls the first without damage, and protects the latter.

You could flip over the sod under a nearby deciduous tree and cover the area with mulch to the drip lines. The rhodos won't have to compete as much next summer with hardier shade tree, and both will reap the benefits of cool, moist ground and more nutrients, some from the rotting grass sod.

Can you help ailing rhodos by relocating them? Look at your sun pattern. We are approaching the shortest days. Track the full moon from 22:00 hours to dawn on December 20, 21, 22, and you will see the sun window six months ahead, in June, Summer Solstice —a big clue as to who will steal shade and moisture. Track January's full moon and next July reveals itself. Knowing now the sun window for next summer means you may find a new place for a rhodo and a competitor, then relocate both perfectly in early spring, well before the heat hits. Three feet to the left can make all the difference.

Replace to Renew

Replace competing plants, one at a time, or one bed at a time, in a good rhodo area especially on the margins where several species could thrive. Tag these plants for other places according to sun and water needs. Yes, some will end up in plant sales, but you'll be surprised how many other places in your garden they'll also thrive. Now look at the new bare spots. Oh, my! You now have a new a spot for another rhodo! If it is a large area at the edge of a rhodo area, you could build a terraced mound on the protected side with more sun-tolerant plants (like some you tagged for moving) on the sunny side. Soon the garden will be better balanced and more interesting, with fewer plants stealing resources the rhodos need. And you may have created new places for a wider variety of species in your favourite genus.

And Finally, a Fifth R: Redesign From Your Notes

You've made your 3-year plan and mitigated some of the effects of heat and sun. Now, turn to the necessity of water conservation to refine your changes. The Nanaimo Regional District has great brochures on water smart gardening at <https://www.rdn.bc.ca/outdoor> .

Mother Earth and gravity become our friends with a little planning. Ours is an island of mini-climates, and the vernal spring is a key feature in most of those below 35m altitude. A shallow pond or rain garden mimics the native seasonal stream or vernal spring. A rain garden turns a boggy low spot into a usable water source for the landscape and makes the soil healthier, more friendly to rhodos.

On higher ground, a shallow pond made from pond mats with a sluice gate at one end and a mini-ditch or pipe can use spring rains to feed the landscape, or a single plant later on. A cubic foot (30 cm x 30 cm x 30 cm) is 7.5 gallons, so it doesn't take a big area, or very many small ones, to create a self-watering landscape. Ponds can be an addition to eaves troughs as a source for filling rain barrels. Rain gardens and seasonal ponds attract birds and bats who feast on many garden pests and biting insects. And, unlike a rain garden which fills and drains from the seasonal underground water flow, mat-bottomed ponds are easily changed because the mats are movable. Some of your plants tagged for relocation will thrive here, including rhodos. And there is no such thing as too many.

Where you can't mitigate extremes, embrace them. When I lived in the Southwest, a Navajo neighbour said, "Don't beg the thunder god for rain, learn to drink less." Evolve your lawn with a weeding project. Each new hole becomes a planting spot for drought tolerant creeping clover or meadow mix seeds. Autumn and winter rains will keep the seeds damp, and each weeding makes the lawn more resilient. You can also turn a thirsty lawn into wide green paths between new perennial veggie beds (which take about one third the water of a lawn), or a low-maintenance bed of tallish ornamental grasses and a heat-loving fig tree.

Leisure Time in Your Evolving Garden

How can you make your garden's leisure time more pleasant while you mitigate the effects of climate change? A movable storage bench can become a garden hideaway while shading a large vulnerable shrub when surrounded by a free-standing pergola made from fence lattice with a bamboo curtain hung at the back. The structure is light yet sturdy, and all pieces easily removed when winter light is needed.

A fast-growing dwarf weeping tree, like birch, cherry, crabapple, or elm will make a blooming umbrella protecting a lawn chair while removing reflective surfaces so stressful to rhododendrons. Keep soil from compacting with a repurposed wooden pallet through which a trunk can expand. While the tree grows, bean trellises around the pallet and an umbrella next to the young tree will protect you and nearby rhodos from the sun. There may even be a new, shady spot for a rhodo in a planter or in-ground. Shade, food, pollinators, beauty, and mitigating climate change!

Now What?

Congratulations! You have a climate change plan that is manageable and dynamic. Take a breath. The sound of rain on the roof sings a lullaby at the end of the day. Yuletide lights at night create rainbows in puddles. Time to cocoon. Time to work on the garden design, enjoy the rhododendrons' winter textures, and dream of spring.

Stay connected - check our web page - new things added regularly!

<http://nanaimorhodos.ca/>

Climate Change -- Greening!!

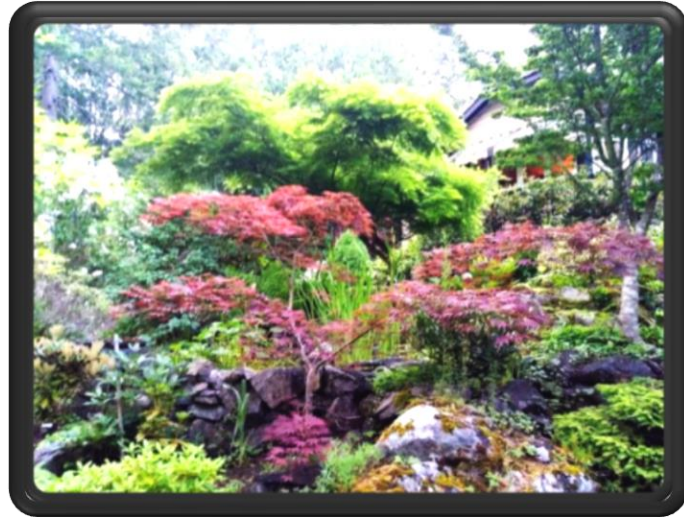
By Verna Buhler

(This article is from the November Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society newsletter – thank you Verna!)

If the very term
“climate change”
doesn't make us
shiver, we're probably
not paying enough
attention.

We've been pumping a
lot of CO₂ into our
atmosphere; the results
are only beginning to
show.

What can we do today
to make a difference?



We know that step number one is to decrease our carbon dioxide output.

But what about the damage that's already been done?

The best way we know to combat CO₂ emissions is by planting trees and other plants; they naturally take in carbon dioxide and turn it back to clean, breathable oxygen. They do this by converting it into wood or other plant matter. So, the more plants, the better. Yes, very true. And selecting trees and plants that are better at CO₂ conversion than others makes sense as well.

Consider choosing species that are fast-growing, long-lived, and low maintenance. This means they'll store carbon dioxide more efficiently and continue growing and thriving even if you move away and are no longer there to care for them.

Consider a plant's space needs at maturity as well as its ability to thrive in the soil and climate of the area. Consider planting shade trees in a way that will help you lower your cooling costs in the summer by shading the hottest portion of your home. Try to avoid trees that will need artificial fertilizers or pesticides.

Densely populated places like cities and many suburbs, tropical regions, and areas that have been clear cut need this CO₂ storage option most. But really, anywhere you can plant a tree where it will thrive is good.

Greening: Planting a few plants and trees really can make a difference!

If we involve our communities and join together with others to add more and more *green* to our world, a grass-roots movement can really make a big impact!

For more information, research the term “*greening*”.

Upcoming Programs are Planned:

While our January meeting has been cancelled, we're hoping to be able to get together again soon. Our program committee has been working hard putting together a variety of presentations for the new year:

	Speaker	Topic
February 10 th	Jo-Ann Canning	Spring bulbs for a Rhododendron Garden
March 10 th	Rose Pruffer	Pruning Rhododendrons
Friday, April 22nd **Note the date change	Lionel de Rothschild	Exbury – specific topic to be confirmed

District One Zoom -based presentation on Saturday, January 15th at 11am:

In the Shadow of Mighty Kangchenjunga: A botanical expedition to the Bhutan and Sikkim Himalaya



This month, we welcome Seamus O'Brien from Ireland via Zoom. In 2014, Seamus led an expedition of Irish horticulturalists and tree enthusiasts to the mountains of Bhutan and Sikkim, following the routes of early botanical explorers such as William Griffith, Joseph Hooker, Frank Ludlow and George Sheriff. His travels took him from tropical valleys to icy glaciers, to woodlands and mountain tops. Seamus will entertain us with his recollections of these adventures at this talk.

Location: Live Zoom connection

Date: Saturday, January 15, 2022

Time: 11:00 AM Pacific Standard Time (7:00 PM Ireland)

Invitations and instructions for the ZOOM connection will be emailed closer to the date.

Seamus O'Brien manages the National Botanic Gardens of Ireland Kilmacurragh. He is a veteran of many plant expeditions, author of "In the Footsteps of Augustine Henry" and "In the Footsteps of Joseph Dalton Hooker".



Hailey Rhododendron Grove at Bowen Park by Rosina Schmidt

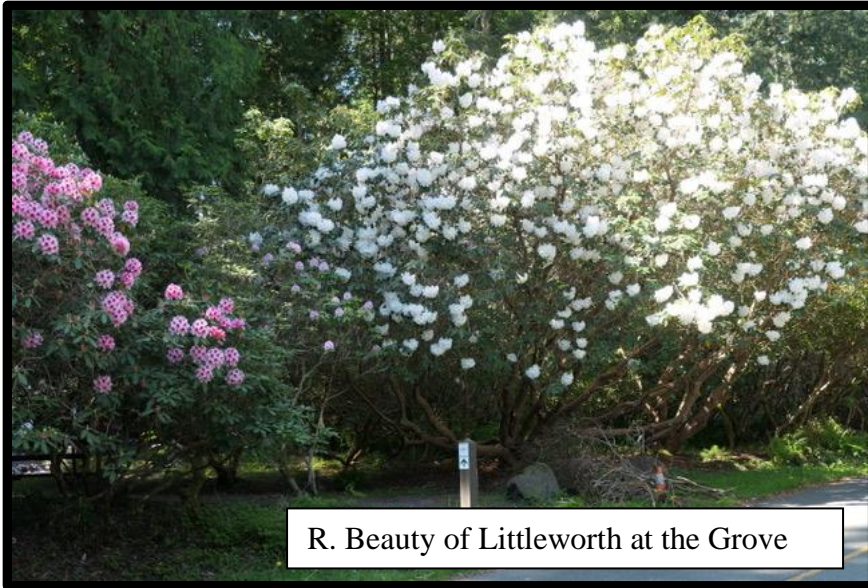
Over the past few years, the NRS led by Bryan Jubinville, has put a lot of effort into reinvigorating Hailey Rhododendron Grove. Thanks to the support of many members, including regulars such as Art and Susan Lightburn, we have made a difference! Kevin Francis has taken the reins from Bryan in organizing the monthly work bees. Our great thank-you to Bryan and everyone for their diligent devotion to this Nanaimo gem. The next work party is planned for Tuesday, January 11, 2022 – 10am to 2pm. Please bring lunch and warm garden gloves!



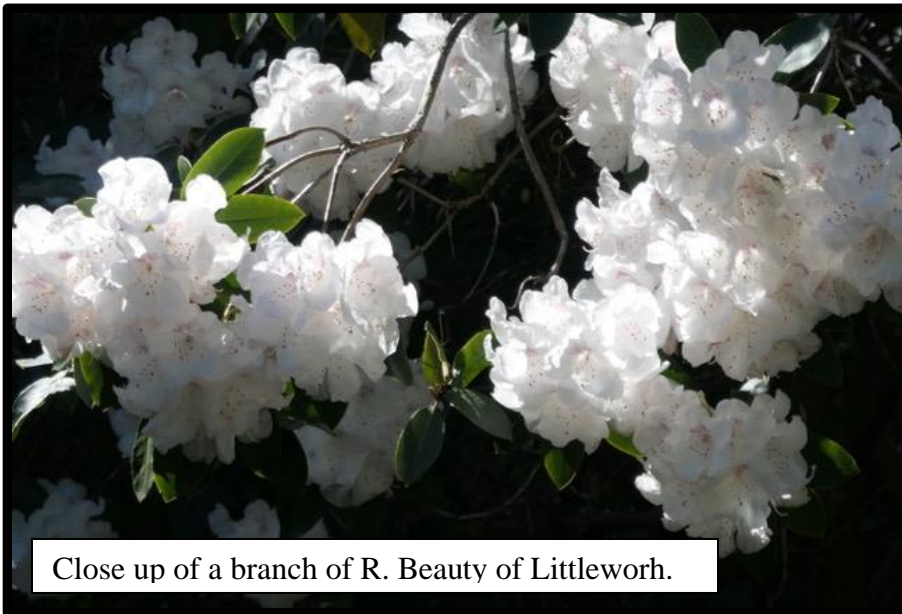
A path freshly raked. December 14th, 2021



About 100 years old stem of R. 'Beauty of Littleworth'



R. Beauty of Littleworth at the Grove



Close up of a branch of R. Beauty of Littleworth.

WORK BEES:

An opportunity to spend time outdoors in a beautiful rhododendron garden, while socializing with friends (at a distance, of course...) Sounds pretty attractive doesn't it....

- Hailey Grove at Bowen Park – The next monthly work bee will be on Tuesday, January 11th, weather permitting. Bring your lunch and sunny disposition. 😊
- The Shade House project at Milner: when the construction phase starts, we'll be looking for volunteers in the new year. Stay tuned...

Garden Photos of the Month - top three photos from Rosina



R. 'Yaku Angel'



Phormium (New Zealand grass) all wrapped up

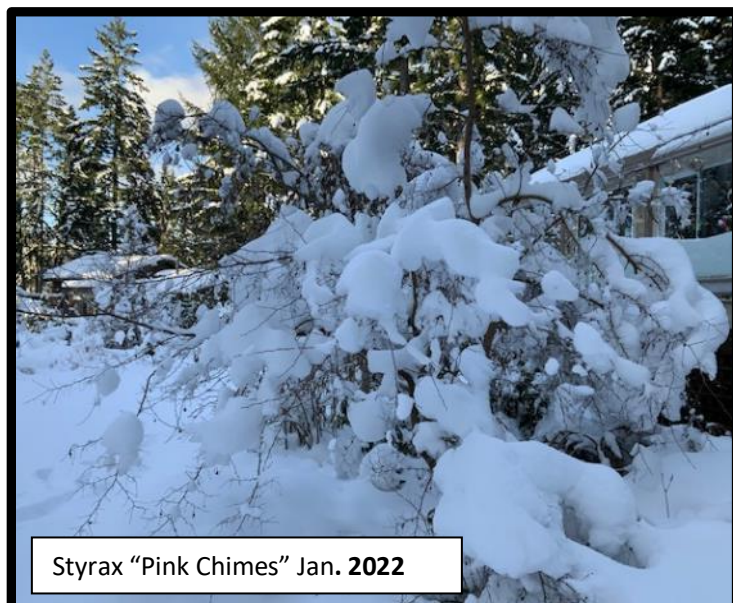


Buried in snow overnight

Next 2 photos from Chris's garden - more on p.18.



Cornus "Midwinter Fire" Jan. 2021



Styrax "Pink Chimes" Jan. 2022

Plant of the month by Ron Sutton

***Polygala chamaebuxus* var. *grandiflora* (shrubby milkwort)**

This little evergreen alpine plant is a great companion plant to grow with other low growing plants. It has green lance like leaves and produces bright yellow-magenta, bi-colour flowers in late April. This dense growing plant will grow 6-8 inches high and 2-3 feet wide in well drained acidic soil. It can be grown in full sun to shade. I have mine in mostly sun. It was unaffected by the heat of 2021 and is said to be drought tolerant. It is hardy down to zone 6, and is low maintenance.

Here is my plant, photo taken May 2nd and purchased from Green Thumb.



The Year of the Garden by John Deniseger

Championed by the Canadian Garden Council, 2022 has been declared “Year of the Garden”. Of course, for many of us, it’s always been “the year of the garden”. The proclamation is intended to recognize the significance that gardens and gardening plays in our lives. Since the pandemic began, gardening has seen a renewal in energy and passion across all age groups. It’s been an important part of our mental and physical health, reconnecting us with nature and the gardens of our youth. We’ve all been spending more time in our gardens and our backyards. Last spring, it was difficult to find seed packages for many of our favourite vegetables and annuals. Shortages of potting soil and other garden related items became common. Gardening continues to undergo a transformation as we think about food security, sustainability, attracting pollinators, and our long term health. Climate change is a real threat, and we know that planting shade trees, food gardens and green roofs can be part of “making a difference”.



As the year unfolds, we’ll be encouraged to visit public gardens, participate in garden tours, spruce up our own gardens, grow more food, recognize garden heroes, join garden clubs and more. Imagine, they’ll be encouraging us to do the things that we already love doing! Bring it on!!!

For more on this topic, see:

<https://www.theobserver.ca/opinion/columnists/the-year-of-the-garden-couldnt-come-at-a-better-time>

<https://www.communitiesinbloom.ca/year-of-the-garden-2022/>

<https://gardenscanada.ca/year-of-the-garden-garden-family/>

Welcome to the 2022 ARS Spring International Convention

Hosted by the chapters of ARS District 4
Portland – Tualatin Valley – Eugene – Willamette – Siuslaw



After a two-year delay of our scheduled 75th Anniversary celebration, we're excited to announce a reunion of the ARS in its founding city, Portland, Oregon. Here you will find all elements of the planned 2020 convention, including the Pre-Tour (new dates: May 2-3) and Post-Tour (new dates: May 8-10), while including even more enhancements to the original features. [Click here](#) for a preview video of the event.

****ARS 2022 Registration opening Wednesday, December 1, 2021**

Covid Considerations

In an effort to assure the health and safety of all participants, the decision has been made to require proof of full vaccination for all registrants. You will need to confirm your vaccine status on registering, and proof will be required at the registration desk on check-in. Masks will be required in the hotel, on buses, and at all meetings and events. Please be aware that conditions may change as the convention comes closer and a revised policy may be issued. We recommend that you sign up for convention updates, below, to be apprised of changes in policy as they occur. Thank you for your cooperation.

A few more photos from Chris's garden, taken January 6th, 2022:



Well, despite all of this snow, spring is just around the corner. The photo of the snowdrops below was taken in Sooke on Sunday, January 2nd, 2022! ☺



Happy New Year everyone!!!

