

NANAIMO RHODODENDRON SOCIETY



March 2006
March 2006



FROM THE PRESIDENT

I hope that by the time you read this, that some of the rhododendron seeds which were planted by members at the last meeting will have germinated. Unfortunately, I will have to miss the meeting, but look forward to seeing some plants in April. Glenda Barr will give a few pointers on what to do next. Please ask Mike Miller if you can help him with our booth at the "Island Garden and Flower Show". We need a volunteer to help with nominations for the May elections of the executive. I hope you will all enjoy the talk on "Water in the Garden" by Aaron Wing.

Happy gardening-see you in April. Allen



EXECUTIVE

President	Allen McRae	758-7589
Vice President	Craig Clarke	390-4090
Secretary	Kathryn Grant	245-7879
Treasurer	Gayle McRae	758-7589
Directors	Valerie Harvey	754-6659
	Debbie Gaboury	758-1204
	Glenda Barr	390-2822
	Pat Schulson	245-3369
	Mike Miller	758-2879
	Chris Southwick	758-0993

COMMITTEES

Advertising	Mike Miller	758-2879
Library	Ann Beamish	758-2574
	Helene Sullivan	758-7023
Newsletter	Kathryn Grant	245-7879
Program	Craig Clarke	390-4090
Raffle	Ann Davey & Val Harvey	
Social	Pat Schulson	245-3369
Dollar Table	Reinhold Gorgosilich	758-6533

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

NEXT MEETING

MARCH 9, 2006

BEBAN PARK

7:30 PM

AARON WING - SHIBUSA PONDS

“WATER IN THE GARDEN”

NANAIMO RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

TWIGS AND STEMS



Goodies for March meeting:
Ted and Barbara Little
Chris Southwick

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GREER'S GUIDEBOOK TO AVAILABLE RHODODENDRONS

Available for purchase at all meetings
\$22 for members, \$25 for non-members

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The North Island Rhododendron Society is planning on installing a new bed at our Rhodo Garden in Courtenay this fall. We are planting only Vancouver Island hybrids, plants that have been bred and born on the Island.

At this time we are trying to locate as many of these plants as possible. We would be happy to accept donations, but we do have a small budget.

Contact Harry Wright NIRS
Ph: (250) 338-8345
Email: haidaau@mars.ark.com

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Bring cuttings, seedling or divisions for the dollar table!

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Donations for the Raffle are always welcome!



Rhododendron prevents other plants growing around it

An official could be employed in an attempt to control the spread of the rhododendron plant in Snowdonia.

It is part of a £300,000 effort by the Snowdonia National Park Authority to control the plant, whose rapid spread threatens native species.

Areas like Dinas Mawddwy and Morfa Mawddach, near Barmouth, are becoming overwhelmed by ***Rhododendron ponticum***, which forces out all other plants.

Rhododendron bushes have increased by 22% since 1986 in some areas.

The plant poses one of the greatest threats to the unique habitat of Snowdonia and has already taken root over thousands of hectares.

It poses one of the greatest threats to the unique and internationally important habitats of Snowdonia, including the native woodland and heathlands.

It is also hoped that the appointment of a specialist officer would help control other weeds which are becoming problematic, such as Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam.



Last September, in an attempt to control the number of rhododendrons in the Beddgelert area, the National Trust organised a weekend of rhododendron bashing.

Around 600 people helped rid Craflwyn, near Beddgelert, of the plant.

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During the clear-up, warden Dave Smith explained the effects the rhododendrons had.

"As it takes over the land it creates a dark space, it's poisonous so nothing can eat it or grow around it, it creates a sort of green desert," he said.

NANAIMO RHODODENDRON SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING February 9, 2006

Called to order at 7:35 pm by President Allen McRae. There were 35 members and guests present.

The library has been moved to its new home in the storage cupboard. Allen read out the list of missing books.

Secretary's report: Minutes of the January meeting were adopted. Correspondence: newsletters from various clubs; email from Amy Arellano seeking a location for her May wedding.

Treasurer's report: bank balance Dec 31: \$2,510.05; income 161.06, expenses 781.10, current balance \$1890.01. Library fund: \$24.32.

Social: goodies volunteers needed for March and April.

Program: March – Aaron Wing – Water in Gardens
 April – Paul Wurz – Lofthouse Legacy
 May – Ron Knight – topic TBA

Garden Show March 10 – 12. Michael Miller is coordinating a display and volunteers. Michael would like members to select samples of large or unusual rhododendron leaves and put in them in a solution of 50% water and 50% glycerin to preserve. Michael passed around a sign-up sheet for volunteers.

Membership: if you are a new member and have not received your nametag please let Glenda know.

Bus trip: Chris proposed April 29, going to Port Alberni. Terry Richmond will organize a tour of gardens in the area. Sign-up sheet will be available next meeting.

Richard and Linda White have sold their house. They only have a few rhododendrons left, so call first if you want to go and buy any.

Door prizes won by: Anne Williamson, Michael Miller.

Raffle prizes won by Ted Little, Karin Schulz, Pat Schulson, Philip Paull, Ted Little, Allen McRae, Michael Miller, Jordan Ellis, Bill Hardy.

Jordan Ellis gave a professional and informative talk on the composting program at International Composting Corporation.



Hidden Acres Rhododendrons

Paul & Lynn Wurz
4367 Gordon Rd.
Campbell River, B.C.
1-250-287-4301
pwurz@oberon.ark.com

<http://hiddenacresbc.tripod.com>

growers of specialty rhododendrons

MAY 13 TRUSS SHOW

Start planning now for our annual truss show, May 13, in the Centennial Building at Beban Park. Look around your garden and see which plants will be "show-worthy".

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Paul Lawry is planning to prepare show labels in advance, and would like to have a list of plants members are likely to

bring in for the show. Please let Paul know at 390-2370 or plawry@shaw.ca.

A.R.S. Western Regional Fall Conference 2006

September 22nd - 24th, 2006

Conference Location - Harrison Hot Springs & Spa

Nestled between the steep slopes of the surrounding mountains of the upper Fraser Valley, at the base of Mt. Cheam 2107 m (6,913 ft) lies a mystical jewel of a community.

The **2006 Western Regional Conference** is to be held at the **Harrison Hot Springs Resort & Spa** from Friday, September 22nd - Sunday, September 24th.

The town of Harrison Hot Springs is renowned for its breathtaking scenery and for the natural hot springs. It is situated at the southern end of Harrison Lake which runs for a total length of almost 48 miles. The view from the town is spectacular with the surrounding mountains bordering the entire length of the lake. The sunsets are magnificent and are dominated by Echo Island located in the southern part of the lake. The lake reaches a depth of 1,000 feet and can be quite hazardous with daily winds, sometimes gusting to 40 mph and choppy waves from 3-4 feet high.

The lakeside is sparsely populated and access is possibly only by boat or remote logging trails. The shores of the Harrison Lake provide great trout fishing opportunities using light spinning tackle or fly gear. The Harrison River arises from the southern end of the lake adjacent to the hotel and travels south connecting with the mighty Fraser River where great salmon fishing opportunities exist from May until November. This area provides possibly the best sturgeon fishing anywhere in the world, twelve months of the year. Sturgeon can live up to 200 years and may reach lengths of over 14'.

The Harrison River joins the Fraser River at Harrison Mills, which is the site of the historic community of Kilby which was once a thriving sawmill town. The Kilby Heritage Site provides an insight into the life and times of the residents in the 1920's.

Along the river and lake are 33 panels of Indian paintings left by the ancestors of the Chehalis people documenting their history and spirituality. The Harrison River and Lake form part of an ancient trade route used by native peoples to travel between the coast and the interior of British Columbia long before the first white prospectors arrived. The route was subsequently used by the early gold seekers on their way to the Fraser Canyon and the Caribou trail. The hot springs are believed to have been first discovered in 1857 and shortly thereafter the first hotel was constructed and visitors from all over the world have been enjoying the natural fed springs and baths ever since.

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The town has a population of approximately 1,300 people but hosts many thousands throughout the year. It is home to the **World Sand Sculpture Championship** and the 16th Annual Event will be held on September 5th - 10th. During this event, the best Master Sand Sculptors in the world will be competing for over \$50,000 in prize money. The exhibition of finished sculptures will remain on display during the course of the Conference from dawn until dusk following the competition until October 9. It is an amazing spectacle and the masterpieces will remain intact even if it should rain.

The Harrison Hot Springs Resort & Spa is a luxury hotel with many superior facilities. The resort hosts five hot indoor and outdoor pools, each fed by the natural mineral hot springs that have remained a primary attraction for visitors for more than 100 years. The resort has its own golf course and many other outdoor recreational facilities. The Healing Springs Spa was built at a cost of \$2.2 million dollars and is a recent addition which was opened in 2001 and provides state of the art therapeutic equipment and treatment rooms. The dining facilities are superior and include the world renown "Copper Room.."

The **Conference reception** and **plant sale** will be located in the Exhibition Hall adjacent to the hotel and the **lectures** and **banquet** in the Conference Centre. The **reception area** for the lectures and banquet will be located in a magnificent room affording panoramic views along the entire length of the Harrison Lake.

There is a **free draw** for the first 50 registrants and a separate draw for overseas participants.

The location for the Conference is truly spectacular, the facilities superb and the agenda well organized. Our mandate is to educate, entertain, and to provide a totally refreshing experience.

Please come and join us.

www.arsfallconference2006.com
email: info@arsfallconference2006.com
Info: (604) 853-8839

ARS Seed Exchange

The ARS seed exchange is now posted on the ARS website: http://www.rhododendron.org/seed_exchange_list2006.htm There is also a searchable file at <http://www.rhododendron.org/exchangearch.asp>

If members are interested Craig Clarke will coordinate a club order. Please contact Craig.



Missing Books

The following books are missing from our library:

<i>Rhododendrons and Azaleas</i>	Geoff Beyant
<i>Rhododendrons: A Care Manual</i>	Kenneth Cox
<i>A Curious Life: Peggy Abkazi</i>	Katherine Gordon
<i>Dirr's Hardy Trees & Shrubs</i>	Michael Dirr
<i>In Veronica's Garden</i>	Margaret Cadwaladr
<i>Aroids</i>	Deni Brown
<i>Garden Voices</i>	Edwinna Von Baeyer
<i>The New Flower Expert</i>	D. Gg. Hessayon
<i>Trilliums</i>	Frederick Case
<i>Gardeners Guide to Hellebores</i>	Rice&Graham
<i>Reader's Digest Encyclopedia Garden Plants & Flowers</i>	Magna Books
<i>Ferns for Home and Garden</i>	Thomas Graham
<i>Colour in the Winter Garden</i>	Peter Cox
<i>The Smaller Rhododendrons</i>	Peter Cox
<i>Greer's Guide to Available Rhododendrons (hardcover)</i>	Harold E. Greer
<i>Rhododendron Species Encyclopedia</i>	Peter Cox
<i>Cox's Guide to Choosing Rhododendrons</i>	P. Cox

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As you can see, these are some of our more valuable books. Please have a thorough search at home and see if you have any of these books lurking.

The Birds and the Bees

by **Norman Todd**

At the American Rhododendron Society convention held in Victoria this last spring two of the world's great rhododendron gurus participated in a short but significant ritual. **Peter Cox**, plant explorer, author, and hybridizer had traveled from the UK to present the Royal Horticultural Society's Loder Rhododendron Cup to **Warren Berg** of Washington State, plant explorer and hybridizer.

Both men have made outstanding contributions to the knowledge of the Asian flora and to the cultivation of Asian plants in Western gardens. For many gardeners it is the creation of new hybrid rhododendrons that ensures their lasting renown. For a hybrid to be a success it must be significantly better or markedly different from its parents. There are now in excess of 30,000 registered rhododendron hybrids. It is probably safe to say that a mere 10% of that number meets these two criteria.

Both Cox and Berg have demonstrated a ruthless scrutiny in the protracted assessment of the new progeny of their hybridizing efforts. A hybrid from Cox or Berg is almost always worth growing. Cox is the creator of a series of hybrids of small stature to which he gave the names of birds. Berg's most well known hybrids contain a 'Bee' in their bonnet. There are more Birds than there are Bees. Several of these plants have been around for about 25 years but it is not easy to find commercial sources for some of them. They are more easily available in British nurseries than they are in British Columbia and consequently are seen in more gardens over there. I recall admiring several of the Birds in a plot that was probably not more than 100 square feet behind the iron railing of a Georgian terrace house on a busy street in the center of Glasgow. It was a tasteful tribute to Peter Cox's efforts.

Here are the names of the Birds known to me, 'Chiffchaff, 'Chikor, 'Curlew, 'Egret, 'Eider, 'Grouse, 'Merganser, 'Phalarope, 'Pipit [a natural hybrid], 'Razorbill, 'Snipe, 'Wigeon and 'Wren.

These are all Lepidote rhododendrons, i.e. the undersides of the leaves and often other parts of the plants have scales. Whether a rhododendron has scales or not is an important factor in determining its botanical classification. Berg's Bees are comprised of both Lepidote and Elepidote rhododendrons.

Here are the names of the Bees that I know, 'Ginny Gee, 'Golden Bee, 'Honey Bee, 'Jan Bee, 'King Bee, 'Patty Bee, 'Too Bee, 'Wanna Bee and 'Wee Bee. I grow a plant called 'Queen Bee, however, I suspect someone preferred the title Queen to King [maybe an ardent feminist] because the 'Queen and the 'King are to my eye identical. Furthermore, the name 'Queen Bee is officially given to a plant that was registered by another hybridizer in 1962 and I am sure that Warren Berg would not endorse a name, even in a casual way, which was already taken.

A small area would accommodate all of the above for a period of say 20 years. If my memory is correct there is a bank in the Cox garden/nursery at Glendoick, Scotland with some, or maybe all, of the original Birds and some of these plants are now taller than a human. I have a plant of 'Egret that is over 30 years old and it is almost shoulder height. **Albert de Mezey**, of local horticultural fame, and recently deceased at the age of 102, once advised me, "to grow rhododendrons one needs a physical age of 30 and a longevity of 300." This is true but one also needs a garden that is ever expanding as the darn things can become quite big during that period of time.

It is always satisfying to give one's prejudiced opinions an airing, so I offer some comments on the worthiness of some of these plants. In this age of governance by opinion poll one cannot ignore the preference of the buying public. The winner is without doubt 'Patty Bee. 'Patty Bee is a cross

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between *keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy and *fletcherianum*. It passes the test of being better than either parent in several characteristics — although I would not like to be without either. 'Patty Bee is more floriferous and reliably so from an early age; it is easier to please; the yellow flowers are of deeper intensity and of greater substance. Given a well drained but never dry, fairly open location, it will flourish and not outgrow a 75cm space for many years. The runner-up in the sales department is 'Ginny Gee. I can hear the protests already; "This is not a Bee". Warren Berg introduced both hybrids about the same time [1970s]. I suspect he had not settled on a line of Bees at that time and perhaps now he wishes he had perfect continuity. But perhaps not: 'Ginny Gee is clearly a commemorative name and for that reason is cherished both by Warren and the chosen honouree. It grows in the same fashion as 'Patty Bee. Its leaves are not so glossy and the flowers are pale pink and white. They both bloom in April. Having dwarf narcissus or other bulbs as companions solaces the sensibilities, even of those with acutely refined tastes.

My personal favourite is 'Razorbill. Peter Cox writes that this is a chance seedling of *spinuliferum*. Imagine being so fortunate as unexpectedly discovering such a treasure! The flowers on 'Razorbill are most unusual being up-facing tubes of rosy pink grouped in sizeable clusters. They are produced in profusion in March.



R. 'Razorbill'
Photo by Kenneth Cox

Cox's most famous dwarf is probably 'Curlew. This won the Cory Cup at the Royal Horticultural Society for the best hybrid of any genus [1980?]. It has proportionately very large flowers for the size of the leaf. It is surprisingly robust given the miffiness of both parents, *ludlowii* and *fletcherianum*. I have seen the first parent only at the Cox nursery and brought back two plants to Victoria. One I gave to a much better grower than I but neither of us was able to satisfy its temperamental needs. 'Curlew's flowers are a bright yellow with deeper shading and greenish brown spotting. Its bark is attractive and it has a somewhat open but interesting architecture. It does not like a hot site and resents too much fertilizer.

'Chikor is a tiny bushy plant with soft yellow flowers in profusion — if well grown. This is one plant that certainly does better in the cooler Scottish summers. Gardeners who like the challenge of growing the higher elevation Asiatic primulas will enjoy 'Chikor. Chikor is a partridge-like Asian bird.

I really like Berg's 'Wee Bee. It is very similar to 'Too Bee being a sister seedling. Warren tried to register it as 'Not Too Bee but evidently this was not allowed. The flower buds of 'Wee Bee are of quite a dark hue; some call the colour turkey red. They open to a rose pink on the outside and pale yellow on the inside. If I had space for only one plant I would choose 'Wee Bee over 'Ginny Gee. Thank goodness they are dwarfs so this seldom becomes a gut wrenching decision.

Most of these plants are described in *Greer's Guidebook to Available Rhododendrons*, third edition. This book is recommended as an inexpensive reference. However, the best reference is to see thrifty plants in a local garden. The easy ones pay their rent every month; the more difficult ones boost the ego and give a muted reward when a whimsical name like 'Too Bee or 'Wanna Bee rolls subtly off the tongue of a showing off gardener.

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