

The Rhodomentum

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society Newsletter



March 2017



President's Message

This coming month we will have Bernie Dinter from Dinter Nursery in Duncan, speak to us about "The Changing Focus of Gardening". He is going to talk about how society's expectation of gardening is changing with the new millennium generation. It should be a very interesting talk.

Your Executive has had a busy month preparing for May – the plant sale, garden tour and bus trip.

I am praying that our weather will improve soon. This "el nina" has really cooled things off and I have lots to do outdoors.

You can order plants now from the "Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden". Go online to look at the plant descriptions at rhodygarden.org/cms/current-catalog. Make a list of what plants you would like to buy and submit the list to Craig Clarke at our next meeting.

All the best for now, Allen

EXECUTIVE

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

COMMITTEES

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

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Next Meeting

Thursday March 9, 7:30 pm Beban Park Social Centre

BERNIE DINTER

"The Changing Focus of Gardening"



OUR MARCH SPEAKER
BERNIE DINTER
THE CHANGING FOCUS OF GARDENING

Bernie Dinter has been in the nursery business for over 40 years, starting with a degree in Plant Science from the UBC Department of Agriculture. It has now changed its name to 'Land and Food Systems' reflecting the changing perception of growing plants.

Society's expectation of gardening is changing with the new millennium generation being

interested in gardening but from the perspective of growing food and sustaining the environment. Today's gardener is less knowledgeable but expects a garden to supply food, be bee and pollinator friendly, and reflect their environmental values. These values must be reflected by the businesses they deal with. Add to these challenges the decline of the independent garden centre and the presence of numerous box stores selling garden products. With the changing social values, the horticultural industry has to keep itself relevant.

RAFFLE PLANTS



R. 'Norma Hodge'

(unknown x 'Fabia') (Reg. 1979) Hybridizer: E. Langton 1979
Beautiful flower of varying shades of red and rose.

Azalea 'Everest' 5'

Mountains of white flowers, 2" across with a pale chartreuse blotch.
Broad and spreading. One of the best low growing whites.



***R. mucronatum var mucronatum* X 'Shinno-no-tsuki'**
Hybridizer: Morrison, B.Y

The 17th Annual N.R.S. Bus Tour
Saturday, May 20th, 2017



Continuing our tradition of visiting a great mixture of gardens, nurseries and special places, we're heading north to the Comox Valley and Campbell River area this year.



Cost: \$45 per person
includes 40 Knots Winery tour and tasting

Where do we meet? Woodgrove Mall parking lot near Chapters. The bus will be leaving at 7:30 am. We expect to return by 6:00 to 6:30 pm

Don't forget to bring a picnic lunch and appropriate clothing. Bring a friend!

To reserve a seat, send us an email at juneandjohn@shaw.ca

Seen in Passing

R. moupinense, R. sichotense, R. rosamundi, each giving us a beautiful early showing



Rhododendrons: forget the flowers,
check out the leaves

Robbie Blackhall-Miles



The Yakushima rhododendron's leaves are just as interesting as their flowers.

Photograph: Ben Ram

I am very lucky. I have one of the greatest and grandest gardens in the world right on my door step. The National Trust's [Bodnant Garden](#) is just a short drive from where I live in Snowdonia, and right now the garden is getting ready to put on a performance like no other in the world. Bodnant is famous for many things, but the one that stands out most for me is its amazing collection of rhododendrons. The flower buds of these superlative members of the Ericaceae are swelling and getting ready to burst into flower with technicolour abandon. Red through pink, orange and yellow to white, and with blue and purple to add, they are a show that must not be missed.



Rhododendrons light up the dell garden at Bodnant in a 'brazen show of the battle for pollination'.

Photograph: Alamy Stock Photo

However, alongside the rhododendron flowers come the people, upwards of 180,000 of them per year, and I am afraid that I find this a little difficult to bear. I have taken to visiting Bodnant when I am sure of some peace and quiet; midweek, in the evening and during the winter have become the times I haunt these acres of Welsh hillside. It's those winter visits that have become the most charming. To see Bodnant without its kaleidoscopic glare of colour is to see a very different garden indeed. I see the plants themselves and not the brazen show of the battle for pollination. My eyes are drawn out of the garden to the landscape that surrounds without the interference of rich pigment or hue, and the plants themselves are subtle and benign, not clashing or glaring.

...p 5



'Forgive the confession, but I have become a serial leaf turner.'

Photograph: Ben Ram

Most of all, I see the rhododendrons' most incredible leaves. Forgive the confession, but I have become a serial leaf turner. I walk around Bodnant's 80 acres, inspecting leaf undersides, looking and trying to understand. I have reached a point in this almost obsessive, pursuit where the brash red flowers can be shouting "look at me" and all I want to see is the plant's leaves.

I am looking at scales and hairs (or the lack thereof) in a bid to comprehend something that I am not sure I will ever fully grasp. With more than 1,000 different species, rhododendron taxonomy is rather difficult, but I am determined I will get it one day. Rhododendron leaves with scaly undersides are *lepidote*, and ones without are *elepidote*; characteristics, alongside a suite of others, that place them into their separate sub-genera and subsequently act as a guide to their species identification. Beyond that, they have a whole range of different indumentums (types of hairs) that distinguish them more accurately than their flowers. This intricate array of different styles of hair serve many purposes for these plants; shedding water, absorbing water, frost protection and acting as minuscule windbreaks to control the loss of water through transpiration. Whatever the purpose of the indumentum, the effort put in by the plants to produce it is not in vain. Rhodos live their life in a constant battle to accumulate nutrients to build their evergreen leaves. In areas of the world that see hot, wet monsoons and cold, dry seasons, these simple adaptations can be the difference between winning and losing.



Rhododendron 'Elizabeth Lockhart'. Photograph: Ben Ram

But, as a gardener, indumentums have taken me from being a mere rhodo appreciator to a rhodo fanatic. They give the plants something beyond the brief flowering period that takes place at some point between now and June, and spread the interest through the year. I will continue to visit Bodnant during the busy summer season, but I shall be doing so off-peak, seeing a very different view to the rest of the crowds. I will be looking a little deeper at the rhododendrons and seeing plants that are far more complex than their relatively simple, yet audacious, flowers lead you to believe.

The Guardian, February 23, 2017

Native Plants of BC

npsbc.ca



Erythronium oregonum (Giant white fawn lily)



Myosotis asiatica (Mountain Forget-Me-Not)



Cornus nuttallii (Pacific Dogwood)



Cirsium edule (Edible Thistle)

There are lots of great reasons to use native plants in your garden. Here are a few:

Native plants are beautiful!

Not only are there gorgeous native wildflowers, but also stately trees, attractive shrubs, luscious ferns and lovely groundcovers.

Native plants are adapted to our climatic conditions.

That means low maintenance! They're naturally programmed to withstand rainy winters and dry summers. And they're used to sharing with other species.

Native plants have superior wildlife values.

All kinds of wildlife use native plants – as food, as shelter, as places to nest or to reproduce.

Native plants have ecosystem values.

Native plants help regulate climate, prevent erosion, improve water quality, cycle nutrients and much much more.

Native plants contribute to biodiversity.

About 2,500 species of plants are native to BC. And while not all of them are available at your local nursery, they are critically important to maintaining biodiversity.

The Native Plant Society of BC encourages you to use native plants in your garden for the all these reasons and more. Just remember only to use plants that have been propagated from sustainably collected seeds and cuttings. Do NOT collect native plants from the wild (that includes parks, greenways and other natural spaces).

Where do I begin?

There are a number of great resources online and in bookstores to help get you started. Rather than reinvent the wheel here, we've put together a list of some of those resources. Click [here](#) to get it.

Where can I buy native plants?

They may not be at your local chain hardware store just yet, but there are nurseries, stores and other outlets that sell native plants. Click [here](#) to get the most up-to-date list.

NANAIMO RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

MINUTES NRS General Meeting Feb.9th, 2017

1) President's Report

Allen warmly welcomed the 28 attendees. It's brave of you all to come out in such miserable weather. The Species Foundation in Washington State is looking for donations. While the NRS has a group membership, individual donations or memberships are appreciated by the Foundation.

We have a change in tonight's program. There was a misunderstanding on how much the "Duchess of Dirt", Leslie Cox's talk was going to cost. Her fee was \$150 plus travel of \$125, which we felt was too much, so her talk was cancelled. Glen Jamieson has kindly agreed to speak to us tonight about Vireyas.

Allen will be attending the Spring District 1 Presidents' Meeting in Courtenay on March 14th.

- 2) Rhodo Botany - Chris Southwick shared a very informative demonstration and photo talk about Lepidotes and Elepidotes.
- 3) Secretary's Report - we have received letters of thanks from both the recipients of our scholarship and from the VIU grants department for our continued support.
- 4) Treasurer's Report - Gaylle gave an updated treasurer report with the only major outstanding commitment being paying for the hall rental for the show and sale.
- 5) Committee Reports
 - a. Bargain Table – Reinhold has sold all the plants
 - b. Library – Ann and Gaylle will be working on the library Feb 28
 - c. Membership – Krystyna S. reported no additional members
 - d. Program – Doug Kitts reported March speaker will be Bernie Dinter.
 - e. Raffle Table – Anne Davey/Val Harvey reported today's plants are Ponticum, Jean Marie de Montague, Schlipinbachia, Senator Jackson.
 - f. Social – Susan Lightburn circulated the goody book and filled that last 5 spots for this year.
 - g. Website - Craig Clarke
 - h. Sunshine – Ann B. thankfully no report
- 6) ARS Annual Spring Convention in Eureka, California, April 27-30
- 7) Plant Sale and Truss Show, Sun. May 7th

Brenda Lewis has agreed to look after the set up for this event.

Doug Blenkarn is looking after the Truss Show.

Chris Southwick is organizing the judging

Ann Beamish is contacting the growers

June Bouchard is looking after the cash registers

Susan Lightburn is looking after the coffee/tea/donuts etc.

Gaylle will organize the raffle table [and dig out her flower hat]

We need volunteers to make this a success. Please volunteer or help out if you are asked to give some of your time.

- 8) Year End Report to the BC government and the New Society Acts. Allen, Craig and Gaylle will be reviewing this with a view to determining our responsibility and timing.
- 9) Old Business

Update on the Garden Tour – Art Lightburn reported that to date we have 13 gardens but would like more non-rhododendron gardens if possible. If you have a sign from our first tour please advise Art as many are missing. Gaylle has commitments from Turley's Florist, Buckerfields, Green Thumb Nursery, Little Tree Garden Center and the Bridal shop in Lantzville to sell tickets for us.

- 10) The next Executive Meeting will be held on Thursday, Feb. 16th at 2pm at Allen and Gaylle's.
- 11) Meeting adjourned at 2000 hours and after a break we were treated to an excellent presentation on Vireyas by Glen Jamieson.

Mini Botany Lesson #3 Lepidotes and Elepidotes "Scales or Not Scales"

When botanists categorize rhododendrons and azaleas as to whether they have "scales" on their leaves and stems or not, they are referring to small structures that are about the diameter of a human hair and are most often easily visible with a hand lens. Botanists use the term "lepidote" to describe rhododendrons with scales and use the term "elepidote" to describe rhododendrons without scales. Most large-leaved rhododendrons and all azaleas are elepidotes. About one third of all rhododendron species are in a group of tropical rhododendrons called "vireyas". Vireyas and most small-leaved rhododendrons are lepidotes.

Lepidote Rhododendrons

29 October 2015 @ 07:27 | Posted by C. J. Patterson

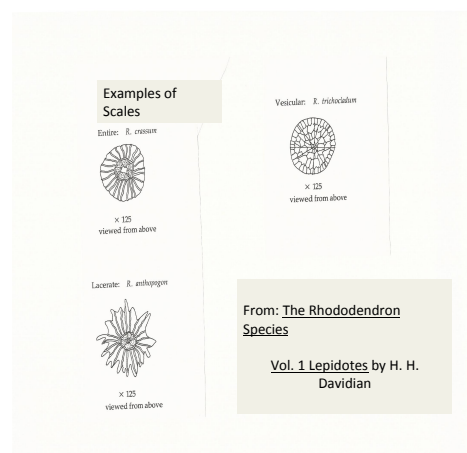
Rhododendron enthusiasts are often asked what they mean when they refer to a rhododendron as a "lepidote". The confusion is compounded when one sees quite a bit of space devoted to lepidotes in flower shows.

A nurseryman may tell you casually that it refers to the small-leaved evergreen rhododendron. This can be used as a generality...but not as a hard and fast rule...as there is a fair amount of overlap between lepidotes and the "large-leaved" elepidotes.



R. Ramapo ((*fastigiatum* x *carolinianum*) Oregon State University photo

Real traits that make it a useful distinction is lepidote rhododendrons have scales on the underside of the leaf which protect the plant's stomata (leaf pores) through which oxygen, carbon dioxide, and water vapour pass. The scales evolved originally to regulate moisture, to help keep water in the cells in dry times, and help shed it in times of surfeit. This allowed plants evolving in the tropics to live in the quick-drying forest duff on the very thin soils of the tropics, or even epiphytically on rocks or tree trunks. Turn a leaf of the lepidote over and look for the tiny scales; some are big enough to see with the naked eye, but a hand lens will reveal a world of otherwise hidden detail. Elepidotes, on the other hand, are without scales to cover their stomata.



But winter brings many of the same demands as the tropics on a plant...encasing it in wet snow or desiccating it with cold dry winds, and the scales evolved to become adept at dealing with harsh winters as well. As a result, lepidote rhododendrons have adopted and spread to nearly all environments, from tropical jungles and Siberian woodlands to mountain meadows and alpine tundra. Because of this wide tolerance of soils, temperatures and exposures, they are especially useful to gardeners in the Northeast United States. Other adaptations, such as fast regrowth after predation from grazing animals, and early bloom to deal with short growing seasons in cold climates, give us a plant that is easily pruned to shape and early to give the gardener a boost after a long winter.

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Most lepidotes have axillary buds...extra flower buds under the terminal flower bud or along the branch...and in bloom often smother the foliage until all you can see are the flowers. Lepidote species range from tiny creeping alpine suitable for the rock garden to tall forest and meadow plants for woodland wildflower gardens and formal borders.

Best of all, the hybrids developed by plant breeders bring hybrid vigour to the party, giving us a huge range of plants, among them some of the easiest and the hardiest rhododendrons to grow in cold climates. A commonly grown lepidote cultivar is "Rhododendron 'PJM'", which was hybridized by the Mezitts, and is now grown and admired all around the gardening world.

The large-leaved fancy varieties of rhododendrons may get all the big press...but for vigour, hardiness, adaptability, easy of culture, and sheer traffic-stopping, eye-popping show of flowers in the spring...my money is on the lepidotes!



From the Massachusetts Chapter Newsletter, September 2006

<http://www.rhodyman.net/rhodysp.html> Steve Henning

Rhododendrons are divided into 6 groups:

- **Elepidote Rhododendrons:**
Rhododendrons without scales, typically the larger leaved rhododendrons.
- **Lepidote Rhododendrons:**
Rhododendrons with scales, typically the smaller leaved rhododendrons.
- **Deciduous Azaleas:** Azaleas that typically put out new leaves each spring and drop them in the fall.
- **Evergreen Azaleas:** Azaleas that put out spring leaves and then summer leaves. Neither set lasts a full season.
- **Vireya Rhododendrons:** Lepidote rhododendrons that are tropical and will not withstand a freeze.
- **"The Other Rhododendron Groups":** The misfits: Azaleodendrons, Choniastrum, Ledum and Therorhodion



R. Yakushimanum (Oregon State university) This is **indumentum** (woolly hairs on the underside of the leaf) **NOT** scales.

