

# The Rhodomentum



## Nanaimo Rhododendron Society Newsletter March 2018



### President's Message

My Lee's Scarlet rhododendrons are suffering with all this cold and snow. I love snow, but it belongs on the mountains, not down here. Things are coming together for our Plant Sale and Truss Show. A great big thank you to Doug Blenkarn for all the work he did for the Truss Show. Once again, I would like all our members to think about serving a term on the Executive. It isn't really that demanding! I really enjoyed seeing all those pictures of wild flowers in the Alps, at our last meeting. This coming month's presentation by our own Diana Walker on Clematis, should be very interesting, as they can make great companion plants for a rhododendron garden. Once again, after the snow goes, please look around your garden to see if you have a larger rhodo to donate for the plant sale in May. Hope to see you all at our next meeting on March 8<sup>th</sup>.

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	Joyce and David Mitchell

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email: [rhodomentum@nanaimorhodos.ca](mailto:rhodomentum@nanaimorhodos.ca)

Next meeting, Thursday, March 8th, at 7:30 – Beban Park Social Centre

### Growing Clematis

By Diana Walker

## Twigs and Stems



### Goodies for March:

Mary Jane Derksen, Sandra Millen, Don Noakes

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

### Calendar of Upcoming Events:

#### ***Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society, Wednesday March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018- Regular meeting - 7:30 pm:***

- March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018 7:30 pm - Rose McCulley: How to get your yard started with the amazing mason bees
- MARS plant sale and truss show: April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018 - 10:00 to 2:00 at the Parksville Curling Club

#### ***North Island Rhododendron Society, Tuesday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018 – Regular Meeting – 7:30 pm:***

- **The March meeting** will feature Bill McMillan – “Five must see gardens of the Victoria area”
- NIRS plant sale and truss show: Sunday April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018 - 10:00 to 1:00, K’ómoks First Nation Hall on Comox Road

#### ***Nanaimo Horticultural Society, Wednesday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018 - First Unitarian Fellowship Church of Nanaimo, 595 Townsite Rd***

- Miracle of Soil! How Building Soil Will Change Your Soil and Everyone You Touch
- Speaker: Dirk Becker

#### ***Upcoming Central Vancouver Island Seedy Saturdays:***

- Comox Valley: March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10:00 to 2:00 - Florence Filberg Center, Courtenay. **Theme:** Bountiful Harvest.
- Nanaimo: Seedy Sunday on March 4<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 to 3:00 – NDSS.

#### ***Spring Sundays at VIU’s Milner Gardens and Woodland:***

- Sundays February 4<sup>th</sup> to March 25<sup>th</sup>
- 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/>

## Our March Program:

### *Clematis by Diana Walker*

Diana was born in Ireland and her interest in and love of plants and insects was nourished by her maternal grandfather who was a horticulturalist who always referred to his plants by their Latin names rather than the common names. One of the first words she learned to spell was “chrysanthemum”, and she never knew that antirrhinums were snapdragons until she came to Canada at age 21. Diana wanted to study botany, horticulture and entomology, but family circumstances prevented going on to university so she trained as a secretary which, while affording her a way to make a living, didn’t make her happy!

Diana kept a keen interest in plants all through raising a family; however, living in apartments in hot and humid Toronto for 17 years and in cold (very cold) Northern Ontario for 10 years, did little to encourage gardening (except inside).

When she moved to Vancouver Island in 1981 and discovered the climate was so much like Ireland’s, she went crazy with delight! Her first garden of ¾ acres contained five ponds, 225 roses (pre-clematis era), and 12 fruit trees. The garden went from a literal hayfield to winning first prize for best garden in Duncan three years running during the mid to late 80’s – although hundreds of resident garter snakes were not appreciated by this Irish lady!

After retiring from the District of North Cowichan in 2000, Diana moved to Nanaimo to a much smaller garden which included one clematis in very bad shape which she brought back to life and which she blames as the start of her obsession, as the total count in her urban garden is now at 166. They are literally draped around, hanging from, climbing on, and winding through anything and everything she can find. There is always room for one more!!

She graduated from the Master Gardener course at VIU in 2008 and completed the Advanced MG Course at Van Dusen Gardens in 2014.

She was privileged to speak to Raymond Evison in 2011, one of the top UK hybridizers, at one of his presentations in Vancouver, and came away with as many of his creations as she could safely manage on the ferry! This past June during her visit to her homeland, she also met and had lunch with Dr. Mary Toomey, a very well-known clematarian and entomologist.

Although at pruning time Diana is sorely tempted to dump the lot, the love affair continues!

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Need a ride to one of our meetings?



Call Chris at 250-390-3415 or send her an email at [csouthwick@shaw.ca](mailto:csouthwick@shaw.ca)

Minutes of the NRS February Meeting

February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018

1. President's Report – Allen welcomed everyone to tonight's meeting. A number of things came up at our last Executive Meeting.
2. Our Executive was approached by MARS to have a one-day conference with them in October. The Executive approved this. John Deniseger and Chris Southwick will represent the NRS on the Organizing Committee.
3. Jan Moles will be in charge of the Truss Show this spring, taking over from Doug Blenkarn, who has done such a great job these past years. The judging will begin at 8 am, so trusses must be in by 7:30 am. It is recommended that you bring in your trusses the night before so that they will be ready for the judges in the morning. The NRS has purchased about 58, 2 gallon plants at wholesale prices from Green Thumb for the Plant Sale. **A huge thank you to Doug Blenkarn for all his years of organizing our Plant Sale.**
4. Brenda Lewis, who is chairing the Plant Sale, would like all members to look at their gardens to see if they could donate larger plants for the sale, which we would sell at our table.
5. Plant Raffle – Anne or Val – Raffle Plants: Campylogynum, Wild Ginger, and Hennewillem, and a Maidenhair Fern.
6. Bargain Table – Reinhold has one Bergeia left (sold).
7. Guest Speaker: Art Lightburn introduced our Speakers Ian Duncan and Ann Allen who shared their amazing biking journey through Austria (700+ km) photographing more Alpine plants than any of us even knew existed. A beautiful presentation seamlessly presented.
8. Coffee Break
9. Draw for the Raffle plants –Winners: Sandra Mullin, Chris Southwick, John Deniseger and Burkhard Dressler.
10. Secretary's Report – Ann reported no correspondence.
11. Treasurer's Report – Gayle reported on the account activity (details available on request), we did purchase 50+ plants from Green Thumb Nursery for our Show and Sale.
12. Library – Ann reported that this is a work in progress.
13. Membership – Krystyna reported we have submitted our fees to the ARS.
14. Sunshine – Ann thanked the club for the card they sent during her recent illness. It truly was nice to receive.
15. Rhodomentum – June/John always looking for articles, photos. The executive job descriptions will go in as they are fine tuned.
16. Succession Planning – Gayle or Allen: Brief description of duties for the different positions, at present President and Treasurer – however, since the meeting, Art has found the others so following review they will also be available. **MOST** if not all the executive has held various positions for many years and it is time for others to enjoy the roles.
17. David and Joyce Mitchell have taken over the planning of the Bus Trip, **YEARS OF THANKS TO JOHN AND JUNE FOR ORGANIZING IT.**
18. Announcement: Upcoming garden presentations: March 3 at Oliver Woods Center there will be presentation Digging into Spring, and March 4 at Nanaimo District Secondary School is Seedy Sunday. Next Executive Meeting at Craig Clarke's on Feb. 15th at 2 pm

## **The N.R.S. is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> 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!



### **The Strength of Our Club** by John Deniseger

We attended our first NRS meeting in early 1993. We thought that we'd be attending one meeting and probably come back occasionally. The speaker that night was Terry Richmond who talked about Yak hybrids. We went home with several Yak hybrids (Yaku Incense and Yaku Sunrise I think). We also met new people who soon became friends. Needless to say, we were back for the next meeting and soon joined the club. We've learned so much through the years from our excellent speakers and from other club members. We've enjoyed the various club events (auction, tours, sale/show etc). Here we are 25 years later and what keeps us coming back? It's the people that ultimately make our club strong and vibrant. I sometimes think that we use rhododendrons and horticulture as an excuse to socialize and get together. We enjoy seeing each other, sharing gardening stories, telling a few tall tales and making the club work. Our executive from year to year has done a very good job of keeping our club moving forward. There have been many members taking their turn and doing their part. Later this spring, we'll be looking for new members for our executive. Whether you've been on the N.R.S. board a few years ago or are new to the club, I would encourage you to consider joining in. It's a chance to get to know members better, and keep our club strong while taking your turn. You'll be glad you did!



*People.... the strength of our club!*

Seen in Passing...



photo: Art Lightburn

Where did I leave my shovel?

Seagulls standing in shallow water doing a very fast rhythmic shuffle stirring the bottom and picking off the small creatures floating to the surface.

Black squirrels pulling down my birdfeeder to get at the suet and seeds contained.

Lee Scarlet and *R. sichotense* blooms turned to mush by the -6 by the sea.

## Greig Rhododendron Species Garden Update

Yes, it's official! It is with great pleasure that we are announcing the official naming of the new species garden at Milner as the Greig Rhododendron Species Garden! The naming recognizes their role in the development of the gardens at Milner and the major contributions of the Greig family to rhododendrons and horticulture in our part of the world and beyond.



The fencing crew!

Work on site continues to move forward as the garden takes shape. The new permanent deer fence along the back of the garden has been completed. Feature trees have been selected and should be ready for planting by mid-March. Mulching of the final 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the site will begin by mid-March. More rhododendrons and companion plants will be added over the upcoming weeks. There are many other details being worked on site or behind the scenes. We are steadily working towards the official opening of the garden, which is planned for **Sunday April 22<sup>nd</sup>**. Mark your calendars! We should have more details at our next meeting.

There will be opportunities for you to help out as we'll be having mulching and planting work bees through the spring. If you'd like to join in the fun, drop by the garden for one of the sessions or let John know you're interested at [juneandjohn@shaw.ca](mailto:juneandjohn@shaw.ca).

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**Have you seen something "...in passing..."??? Please let us know - we can include it in our next newsletter!**



New member Ron Sutton brought an April 2016 Vancouver Sun article by Steve Whysall to our attention. [Thank you, Ron!](#)

The article's headline: It's Rhodo Season: where to buy, where to see them

The author begins by praising rhododendrons as the one plant that separates and distinguishes west coast gardens from the rest of Canada. Before long, he provides the reader with a "tongue in cheek" glimpse inside the world of the rhodo fanatic. Apparently, there are two key words which will allow anyone to hold their own when facing a rhodoholic. We all become weak in the knees at the mere mention of "indumentum" or "species". Norm Todd would have called it a paroxysm ☺. And then there's a gender bias and a tendency to the colour red. Oh, and never send your husband shopping for a rhododendron.... you'll have to read the article for all of the details. Here's the link to the article:

<http://vancouversun.com/news/staff-blogs/its-rhodo-season-where-to-buy-where-to-see-them>

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## Raffle Plants for March meeting:

### 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 'Shinnyo-no-tsuki'  
Hybridizer: Morrison, B.Y



### Ostbo Red Elizabeth

**growth habit:** dwarf (2 feet high x 3 feet wide) **USDA Zone:** 7



**Exposure:** filtered to full sun

**Growing Conditions:** evenly moist, well drained acidic soils

**Parentage:** ('Elizabeth' hybrid or sport)

**Primary Color:** red

**Bloom Time:** early mid-season

**Comments:** New spring leaves stay mahogany-red through the seasons becoming muted as winter begins. Little is known about the origin of this plant except it came from Ostbo some years ago, but was never propagated. No one knows for sure whether it's a hybrid or a sport of 'Elizabeth'. It does have the same red flowers and growth habit as 'Elizabeth'. Also sold as 'Elizabeth Red Foliage'.





**We're planning a new  
gardening event!!!**

The N.R.S. and M.A.R.S. are teaming up to create a 1-day gardening event. We are putting together a day full of interesting speakers for all gardeners including of course, rhododendron enthusiasts. Chris

Southwick and John Denisegeer are representing our club on the organizing committee. Stay tuned for further information.

When: Sunday, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Where: Parksville Conference Center



**The Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Garden  
Society Annual Spring Flower Show**

**Friday, April 20-1 pm to 8 pm**

**Saturday, April 21- 9 am to 3 pm**

**Club Members' Plant Sale -11 am on Saturday**

**Come to see rock and alpine, succulent, woodland and wetland plants. There will be plant and seed sales, door prizes, a silent auction, tea and more!**

**Cadboro Bay United Church**

**2625 Arbutus Road,**

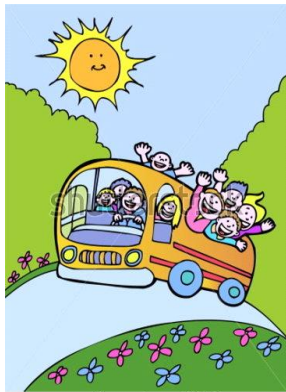
**Victoria**

**Admission by donation**

**Mark your calendar!**

**The 18<sup>th</sup> Annual N.R.S. Bus Tour**

**Saturday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018**



Continuing our tradition of visiting a great mixture of gardens, nurseries and special places!!! More details at the March meeting and in upcoming newsletters.

But it's not too early to book your seat – contact David and Joyce Mitchell at 250-245-5601 or David's cell at 250-729-6498 or email at

[drumsbythesea@shaw.ca](mailto:drumsbythesea@shaw.ca)



(Thanks to Craig Clarke for bringing the following article to our attention. You'll find the original article from the West Coast Seeds web page at: <https://www.westcoastseeds.com/garden-wisdom/european-chafer-beetles/>)

## European Chafer Beetles (POSTED FEBRUARY 19, 2017 BY MARK MACDONALD)



Although they arrived from Europe, they're well at home now in BC's Lower Mainland and many other regions. This lively beetle (*Amphimallon majalis*) has an annual life cycle that is worth understanding in an attempt to control it. The beetle spends its childhood and teen years as a grub in the soil, feeding on the roots of grasses, particularly in lawn areas. As an adult, it emerges, mates, and then lays the eggs for a new generation.

In the larval stage, the chafer can cause some damage to lawns resulting in brown patches. But because they are so substantial, they make an ideal source of protein for birds and mammals. The grubs are at their largest (and most appetizing) exactly when local wildlife is preparing for spring nesting and breeding. It's the crows, skunks, and raccoons that cause most of the damage to lawns as they search out these succulent morsels.

### The Chafer Life Cycle

In the spring, from April to late June, the adult beetles emerge from the ground and gather near the tops of deciduous trees to mate. Soon after, the females descend and deposit as many as fifty eggs each in the soil.

The eggs hatch in July and the larvae begin feeding on the roots of turf grass. If they're present in dense numbers, this can result in the ground having a spongy feel as the grubs tunnel beneath it. Brown patches of lawn can result from infestations.

The grubs continue to grow as they feed from October to March. During this whole length of time, damage may be caused by foraging birds and mammals, but it intensifies as the larvae grow. In the Vancouver region, the damage is most intense as March approaches. The grubs typically linger within 5cm (2") of the soil surface, but they will burrow deeper in cold weather. In May, the grubs pupate in preparation for emergence as new spring adults.

### Organic Solutions for the European Chafer

The first option is to cultivate a really healthy lawn that will naturally recover from the presence of the grubs. This is labour-intensive, and involves routine aerating, dethatching, fertilizing, and deep watering of grassy areas.

A second option is to apply [predatory nematodes](#) in the third week in July, just when they might parasitize the eggs and early larval stage of the chafers. While nematodes are a good solution for many soil dwelling beetle species, timing is critical in the control of chafer beetles. The application of nematodes involves soaking the treated area before and after so they can get down into the soil. You may need to apply for a water exemption permit, depending on water restrictions in your area. Simply call your city hall to find out more.

We prefer the third option, which is to simply replace lawn grasses, or to incorporate other plants that will provide the same green space, but not provide forage for chafers. By integrating multiple species,

you transform a monoculture (turf grass) into an area with greater biodiversity. Whenever this can be accomplished, it provides forage and shelter for a larger number of organisms, which seems like a step in the right direction.

**Here are some of our favourite seeding options:**

[Micro-Clover](#) — This works best if the lawn is removed and newly seeded at a rate of 50g per 100 square feet. It still requires mowing, but it grows in densely and smothers most weeds. If mowed regularly, the leaf size becomes tiny, hence “micro” clover. It does not form thatch, and will not attract chafer beetles.



[Tall Fescue, Turf Type](#) — It’s fescue to the rescue! Fescue has deeper roots than conventional lawn grasses, and it’s an incredibly sturdy plant. It will stand up to traffic, drought, cold, shade, pets, mowing, and chafer beetles.

[Chafer Beetle Resistant Lawn Blend](#) — Here’s a pre-mixed blend of micro-clover and tall fescue. It works best as a new planting, rather than inter-seeding with existing lawn. The clover fixes nitrogen, which acts as a natural fertilizer for the fescue resulting in greener, lusher growth.



[Easy Care Groundcover](#) — This blend of slow growing grasses and drought tolerant flowers stays low and tidy. It contains hard fescue, ryegrass, clover, English daisies, white yarrow, and Baby Blue Eyes. Any of these can be planted on their own, of course, or integrated into existing lawns. When you mow this ground cover, the yarrow smells fantastic. This is the best choice for filling in an area quickly, as in covering a septic berm.

[Alternative Lawn Wildflower Blend](#) — How about getting rid of lawn altogether? This blend of thirteen low-growing, flowering plants is like a rich carpet of colour, and it self-sows to come back year after year. It can be mixed with any of the above, but be aware that it won’t perform well under regular mowing. It will attract and feed key pollinators all summer long.

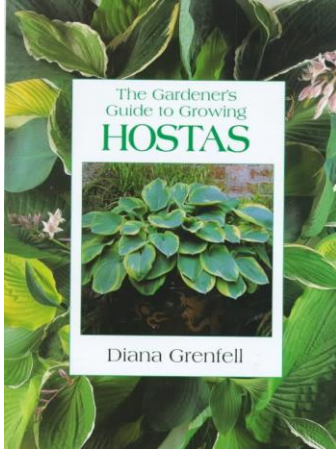


Whatever strategy you choose, the European chafer is here to stay. City bylaws prohibit the use of pesticides as a solution, so these organic solutions make good sense.

“Don’t blame me – they’re delicious!”

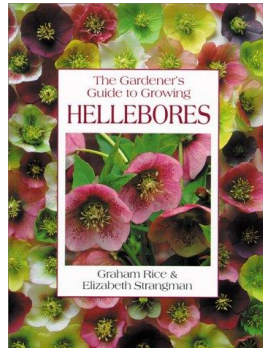
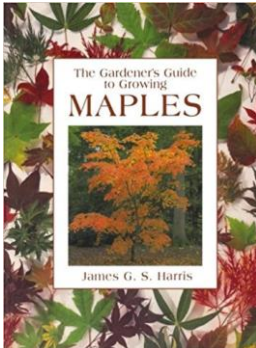
## From your library... by June Bouchard

*The Gardener's Guide to Growing Hostas* by Diana Grenfell



I remember very clearly the very first Hosta we bought for our Green Acres garden back in 1986. We had just been in our house a few months and had been told that a certain plant called “hosta” would be a good choice for our mostly shaded yard. We headed to Long Lake Nursery and asked if they had any hostas. The very helpful young lady brought us a pretty variegated plant – in all honesty, she could have shown us any plant as we truly had no idea what a hosta looked like. We have long lost the label but we believe it might have been mediovariegata – in any case, part of it has followed us to our current garden and it is still delightful. We have since learned a great deal more about hostas and have acquired many of them, from dwarf varieties to some very large specimens. *The Gardener's Guide to Growing Hostas* by Diana Grenfell is an excellent reference book for those curious to

know more about those lovely plants as well as budding gardeners. As quoted from the book cover, it “features a wealth of essential advice on cultivation, propagation and garden uses and an extensive A-Z plant directory listing over 400 cultivars and forms.” There are many colourful photographs as well as pencil drawings – wonderful for identification purposes.



Check it out at the library as well as a number of others from the same “Gardener’s Guide” collection by Timber Press.

**Please consider recommending / reviewing books – either from our library or other specific books that you feel might be of interest to other NRS members – any contributions would be much appreciated.**

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### What does our Executive do?

At our last meeting, we heard that there will be a number of vacancies on our club’s executive. Allen and Gaylle handed out the following summary of their roles as President and Treasurer. You’ll see more information on other executive positions in upcoming newsletters...

#### Here are the President’s duties:

1. Chair the monthly regular and executive meetings (and prepare agenda). Participate in biannual District 1 President’s meetings.



2. Oversee the activities of our club and ensure that all preparations are in place for events  
- e.g. ensure Beban Park facilities are booked for various club activities well in advance.
3. Check that program coordinator has arranged for a speaker for upcoming meeting.
4. Ensure that committee chair positions are filled and that their functions are carried out.
5. Provide liaison role with the A.R.S.

Allen, our President, says his experience has allowed him to socialize with other members of the Executive and provided an additional incentive to attend conferences in different parts of Canada and the U.S. This provided the opportunity to visit wonderful gardens he would not otherwise have seen.

**Here's what the Treasurer does:**

1. Collection, disbursements and accounting of monies in and out of the club treasury.
2. Handles all banking related to the club.
3. Attends both the general and executive meeting each month and presents a financial report to each group. [ good fun –good eats at each]
4. Collect mail monthly from the club's mailbox at Print Three.
5. Make sure that all fees are paid up to date e.g. Beban rentals, insurance, Species Foundation membership fee, ARS district one fee, etc.
6. This altogether involves about 2 hours more or less per month (excluding time spent at meetings).

"Being on the executive in any capacity gives one a more intense commitment to the organization and a chance to interact with the people involved. It also provides a person with a sense of giving one's best to the organization." Gaylle, NRS Treasurer



Trails in a winter rhodo garden.

Photo by Susan Lightburn

*Looking forward to  
seeing you all at the  
March meeting! 😊*