



The Rhodomentum

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society Newsletter

May 2021



President's Message

Hello NRS Gardeners,

Yes, this horrible Covid-19 Pandemic is still reigning supreme in most of the world, but it is truly difficult to dwell on it with all those flowers blossoming around us: the fruit trees, the early perennials and of course, the rhododendrons. Ann and Dick Beamish report that there are about 100 rhodos in bloom in their wonderful garden. Just to hear that makes you openmouthed speechless. And we will have the opportunity to admire their garden come May 1st! (See p.5 for details.)

Some of our garden open houses have had to be cancelled due to BC's current health restrictions, but we have a great opportunity for you to choose a new Rhodo-addition to your garden. Our superb Chris Southwick is graciously tending the 2- and 3-gallon rhododendrons (our latest purchases from Rose Rogan), so make an appointment with Chris to have a look at them and choose the best. Chris might even have time to show you her spectacular Rhododendron collection. She has planted over 300 rhodos. (See p.4 for details)

I hope you had the opportunity to watch Chris's presentation on "Rhododendrons, Beauty, Diversity and Culture". It was superb! So well presented, so much knowledge to gain!

As Chris said, remember to deadhead your rhododendrons after they are finished blooming, tip prune the leaf buds, and fertilize the shrub after it finishes blooming. It is a good idea also to add new orchard bees' nests. During the wonderful sunny and warm days just behind us, there was a real bee-rush at my mason bee houses.

[Click here](#) for the information page on our website for the link to the lecture by FVC if you did not have the opportunity to see it when it was presented live. Brian White's 'Visit to Vietnam in Spring' is scheduled for the 29th of April at 7 p.m. It will be the next best thing to going there in person at this time. The ZOOM events sometimes are announced on short notice, so please check our website: [click here](#) or watch for those email updates.

Happy gardening and stay safe,

Rosina



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	Bryan Jubinville	668-2965
	Art Lightburn	468-7516
	Susan Lightburn	468-7516
	Gayle McRae	758-7589

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Sunshine	Ann Beamish
Propagation	Rosina Schmidt
Hailey Grove	Bryan Jubinville
Show and Sale	Jan Moles and Brenda Lewis
Nanaimo Rhododendron Society	
Box 241, #101-5170 Dunster Road	
Nanaimo, BC V9T 6M4	
Website: nanaimorhodos.ca	

Next Events – Zoom Presentations:

April 29th at 7pm - Brian White: "Treasures of the Cloud Forest" on his visit to Vietnam in Spring

May 6th at 7pm – Marion MacKay: "The New Zealand Ex Situ Rhododendron Conservation Project"

Zoom based speakers and seminars – links and passwords will be sent to you a few days prior to each event:



Vietnam In Spring: Treasures of the Cloud Forest

Brian White will present 'Vietnam In Spring', a talk that will complement Steve Hootman's November talk on 'Vietnam in the Fall'. Focused on the Five Fingers area, Brian will show us images of the rhododendrons in flower as well as some of the other plants found growing with them.

Location: Live Zoom connection

Date: Thursday, April 29, 2021

Time: 7:00 PM

Invitations and instructions for the ZOOM connection will be emailed to all registered members.

Brian White works in tourism, and worked with the people at Mt. Fancipans to construct a trail to the summit in a sustainable way.

The New Zealand Ex Situ Rhododendron Conservation Project

All the way from Massey University in New Zealand, senior lecturer Dr. Marion MacKay will present a talk on the New Zealand ex situ Rhododendron Conservation Project.

Because our audience is mostly private individuals who like to grow rhodos at home rather than folk from botanic gardens, the talk will speak to what the private collection holder can do or how they can participate (with also a bit on how the NZ work fits with the Global Conservation Consortium).

Location: Live Zoom connection

Date: May 6, 2021

Time: 7:00 PM PDT

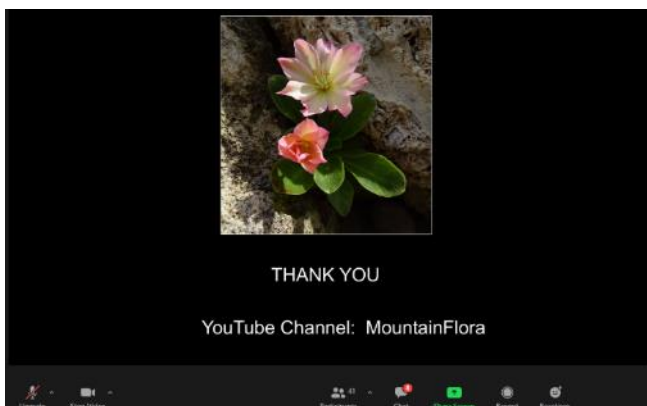
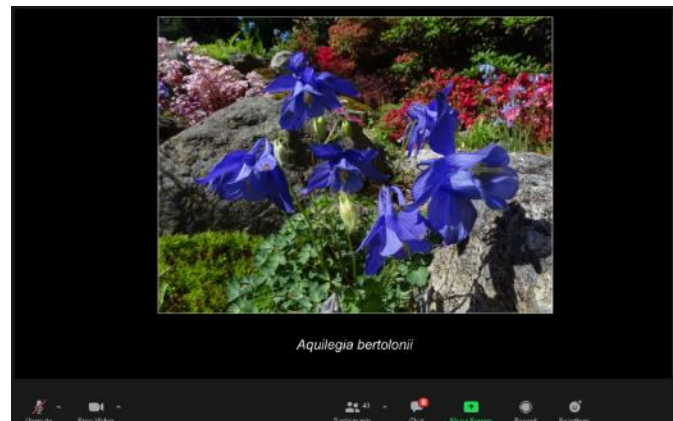
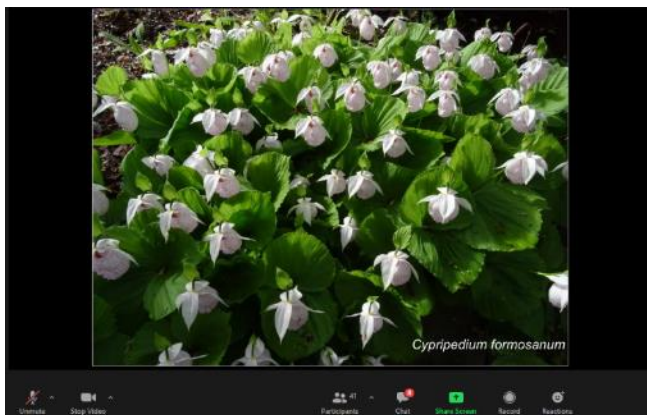
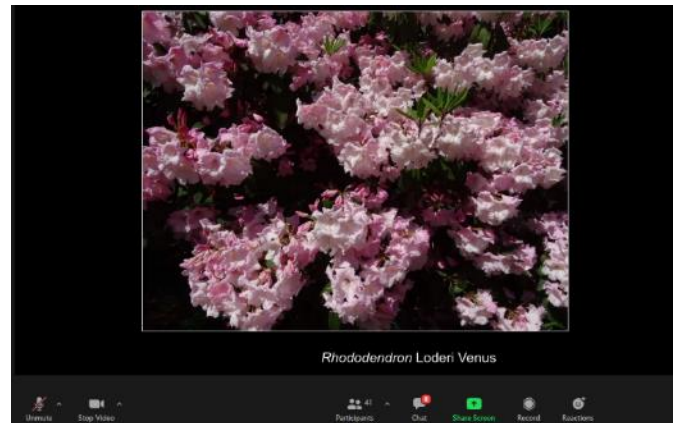
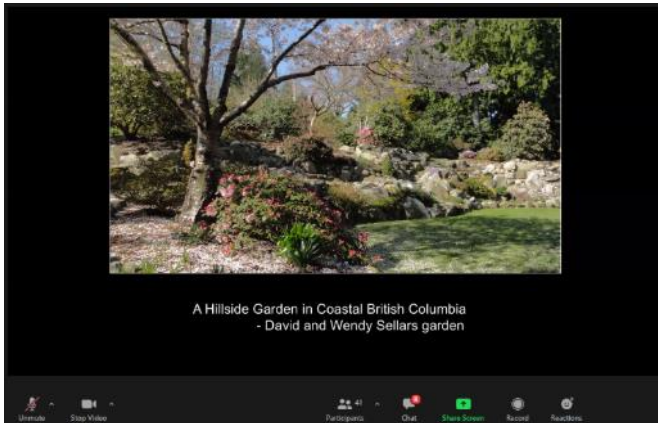
Invitations and instructions for the ZOOM connection will be emailed to all registered members.



Dr. Marion MacKay is a Senior Lecturer in Horticulture and Environmental Management who specializes in plant biodiversity and the conservation and management of plant-related aspects of the landscape/environment. Her current research examines the diversity of exotic plants in cultivation in New Zealand, including their utility for international conservation programmes. The genus Rhododendron is a current focus; from 2016-2020 Marion has been working with an international group to develop a global conservation strategy for this genus. Marion also studies New Zealand indigenous flora including native forest restoration projects and the target species programme of the New Zealand Indigenous Seed Bank project.

A Special Treat from the “Société des Rhododendrons du Québec”

On Sunday April 25th, we joined the Société for a special presentation via Zoom. The speaker was David Sellars from White Rock. He gave an excellent presentation on the development and evolution of their half-acre rhododendron and rock garden. In the 1980's, they began with an undeveloped property and have gradually turned it into a stunning showpiece, featuring spectacular alpine rock gardens and an amazing plant collection.



If you ever have a chance to see a presentation by David Sellars, we think that you'd enjoy it. You can also check out his you tube channel: Mountain Flora
Here's a sample: [Lewisia rediviva](#)

What's Coming Up?

Despite Covid19, we continue to plan things to do, places to go, events, and work bees... As part of the new normal, we continue to follow BC health guidelines and all of the usual protocols apply e.g., physical distancing, hand sanitizers, masks, etc. There will also be more on-line events coming – stay tuned!



WORK BEES:

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

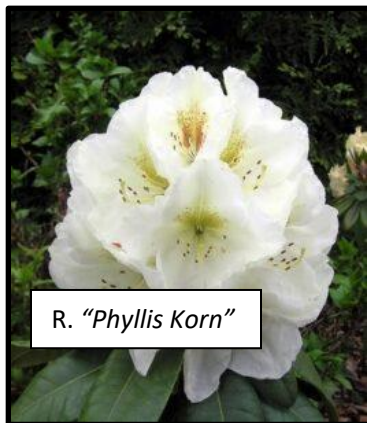
- Greig Rhododendron Species Garden at Milner –work bees have begun and will continue through the spring, likely on a weekly basis. Contact John at juneandjohn@shaw.ca if you'd like to join in.
- Hailey Grove at Bowen Park – work bees planned for the second Tuesday of each month – next one will be on Tuesday, May 11th from 10am to 2pm. Bring your lunch and sunny disposition. **Details on p. 11**



PLANT SALES and OPEN GARDENS ARE BEING PLANNED – it's a challenge...

**** COVID-19 RULES IN EFFECT: masks, hand sanitizer, physical distancing – NO WASHROOMS WILL BE AVAILABLE – STREET PARKING ONLY.**

PLANT SALE! The club has a number of plants that are being offered to members at great prices: 2 gallon \$23.00 and 3 gallon \$30.00. Chris Southwick is looking after these plants on the club's behalf. Rosina has put together photos and background information on these plants on our website [here](#). Here are a few examples to whet your appetite!



R. "Phyllis Korn"



R. "Grand Slam"



R. "Fashion Plate" – see Ron Sutton's "Plant of the Month"

Due to current BC Covid 19 guidelines, they are available by appointment only. Please contact Chris at 250 390-3415 or csouthwick@shaw.ca If you play your cards right, you'll likely be able to visit Chris's spectacular garden too.

OPEN GARDENS!



- **Saturday May 1st 3 to 5pm:** Dick and Ann Beamish's wonderful garden - 3904 Hammond Bay Rd. **Please note that this is limited to the first 6 people to register with them at rabeamish@shaw.ca**
- **Saturday May 29th 1 to 5pm:** Ron and Rea Sutton's in Fanny Bay – 7310 Cougar Smith Rd – **will include a plant sale!!**
- Milner Gardens and Woodland – **the gardens are open Thursday thru Sunday from 11 am to 5 pm.** Check their website for current details: [Click here](http://nanaimorhodos.ca/)

Stay connected - check our web-page - new things added regularly! <http://nanaimorhodos.ca/>

Odds and Ends....



Propagation update from Rosina:

- Our cuttings are all thriving well now that the warmer weather has arrived. A warm thank you to our members in whose care they are.
- The 2020 cuttings in Allan Murray's propagator and under his loving care are doing well too. Because of the Covid-19 restrictions, any plans with Paine Centre greenhouses are on hold for now.
- **Your Propagation Team still needs 2-gallon pots.** Please drop off at Rosina's place, 3196 Merry Men Way, Nanaimo. Many thanks!



Sad News...

Long time NRS member, Dr. Patricia Mark, passed away in April. Paddy, and her husband Mark Nixon, opened their beautiful Nanoose Bay garden to our club on many occasions including the NRS 2017 Spring Garden Tour, many bus tours, and our 2012 Fall Conference Garden tour. Paddy was a very enthusiastic gardener and a regular customer at our Annual Plant Sales at Beban Park. She was also a devoted animal lover and was very involved with the local SPCA, coordinating many fundraisers over the years, including the annual SPCA Calendar. On a personal note, she was also our family doctor for over 25 years and over the years, became a good friend – we will miss her dearly...



In Memoriam... Evelyn Weesjes 1928-2021

by Carmen Varcoe

Evelyn Weesjes, nee Jack, passed away April 16th on her own terms, on her sunny patio looking at bouquets of her rhododendrons and the garden beyond.

Born in Victoria, she obtained her horticultural degree at UBC in 1954. Hired shortly afterwards, Evelyn worked in their greenhouses and gardens, quickly becoming their chief propagator. Most people if lucky, have a green thumb...all of Evelyn's fingers were green. It was due to this talent, that Evelyn was responsible for growing on root stock from England's famous gardens that formed the groundwork for the Rhododendron Species Foundation in Federal Way, Washington. In 1970, Evelyn received the Gold Medal Award from the A. R. S. for such achievements.

While working at UBC, Evelyn forged a life long partnership with Nick who was the head groundskeeper. In those days, married couples were not permitted to work together at UBC. So, for 28 years they worked alongside each other and took their holidays together.

Upon retiring, they married and bought 9 acres of uncultivated land in North Saanich, Vancouver Island. Thus began their next journey together, creating "Towner Crest"- a beautiful park-like garden filled with many rhodos all propagated by Evelyn. Towner Crest has always remained open to the public. Evelyn & Nick worked daily in their garden, participated in many rhododendron shows, held 2 plant sales a year on their property and made many contributions to the success of the annual UVIC plant sale for Finnerty Gardens.

After Nick passed away in 2011, Evelyn carried on with total self reliance- mending the extensive irrigation system, managing the big chipper & cultivating a large vegetable garden. Also, during this time, she developed a keen interest in ferns and once again became an expert propagator with this genus. Even at 90, Evelyn was still able to work at least 1/2 day, but always relished a keen game of Montana canasta with her friends. Her generosity was unbounded, always donating plants to various garden clubs and friends.

Evelyn commented in her last days that she "had a good life with no regrets".

Generous to the end, her legacy is that Towner Crest will continue under new ownership. It was a great privilege to be her friend.



Dennis Bottemiller, Kenneth Cox, Hartwig Schepke and Lionel de Rothschild with Evelyn



Kenneth Cox with Evelyn

(Editors note: We've included a few photos taken as part of the May 2015 ARS Spring conference held in Sidney. Evelyn's Towner Crest was featured as part of the garden tours.)

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/timescolonist/obituary.aspx?n=evelyn-weesjes&pid=198422955>

If you'd like to read more about the story of Evelyn and Nick Weesjes and "Towner Crest", here's an article from the Journal of the American Rhododendron Society. Thank you, Rosina, for bringing it to our attention.

<https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/v56n2/v56n2-dale.htm>

Eco-friendly gardening — there are so many things that we can do to make our green thumbs truly “green”. Check out these sources of information to make your neighbours *“green with envy”*.

The information below comes from the following article: [Backyard Enhancement](#) - thanks to Rosina.



Adding native plants and using wildlife-friendly landscaping methods can greatly enhance your backyard habitat. The following resources will provide information on what can be added to backyards to improve them for local wildlife.

The SCCP has developed the [Gardening with Native Plants in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley](#) guide. This colourful, multi-page booklet will guide you in choosing top shrubs, trees, and flowers that will benefit local wildlife. Paper copies are available for purchase from the SCCP. The guide was inspired by the Habitat Acquisition Trust's [Gardening with Native Plants](#) guide created for the Victoria/Southern Vancouver Island region.

To find out where to view and buy native plants on the South Coast, the SCCP has developed a [list of local native plant nurseries and native plant demonstration gardens](#).

Another gardening website to provide inspiration is Metro Vancouver's [Grow Green](#) website - an on-line guide for eco-friendly lawns and gardens in Metro Vancouver, in partnership with UBC Botanical Garden.

In addition to specific species at risk factsheets, Environment Canada's Develop with Care series also provides general information for homeowners interested in preserving and enhancing the natural values of their property.

Pollinators provide an important natural service; many plants depend on these creatures to transfer pollen between plants, fertilizing them so they can reproduce. Without pollinators, many of our food crops could not grow. Attract pollinators to your yard with the Earthwise Society's list of [Bee-Friendly Plants for Your Garden and Farm](#) and the check out the [Xerces Society's](#) website for Invertebrate Conservation for a number of conservation resources. Incorporating native plants which flower at different times of the year will help support local pollinator populations. Always remember to avoid using pesticides which can kill beneficial insects like bees as well.

For information about the pollinators of BC and other bee-friendly plants, see [The Pollinators of Southern British Columbia](#), a webpage put together by Dr. Elizabeth Elle, professor at Simon Fraser University.

(Editor's note: one of the best sources of native plants is Streamside Nursery in Bowser – check out their website at <http://www.streamsidenativeplants.com/>)

“Gardening is about enjoying the smell of things growing in the soil, getting dirty without feeling guilty, and generally taking the time to soak up a little peace and serenity.” Lindley Karstens

Some Favourite Plants – so many plants, so little space...



Kalmiopsis leachiana – sent in by Doug Kitts
Native to SW Oregon – grows best in partial shade, with good moisture, about 1 foot high



A bi-colour Camellia that we picked up from Evelyn Weesjes during one of our club's bus tours



R. morii



R. "Yaku Incense"



Primula "Gold Lace"

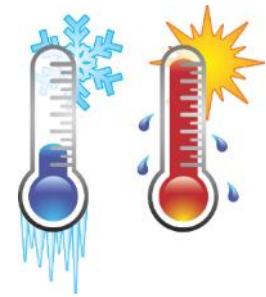


R. "Qualicum Pride"

How Hardy is my Rhodo? The Answer is: well, it depends.... by John Deniseger

Last month, we highlighted a number of tender, scented rhododendrons which are at best, borderline hardy for our area, which leads us to a discussion of plant hardiness.

The Nanaimo area is generally considered to be in plant hardiness zone 8, with winter minimums typically no lower than -7 to -12 C. If you have a rhododendron rated as being hardy to -9 C, it should survive in our area, right? Well, it might or it might not. There's a lot more to it than temperature....



A number of years ago, we were travelling in Bangkok, where the temperatures typically range between the mid-20's and mid-30's with high humidity. While we were there a "cold snap" occurred with temperature dipping to 17C. Coming from Canada, we weren't too worried. In fact, we viewed it as a relief from the heat. However, the authorities were worried about the homeless. When you're used to 35C, a dip to 17C can feel pretty chilly. The same principle applies to our favourite plants.

Our maritime climate generally leads to fairly mild winters with lots of rain. Our plants get used to these mild temperatures with the occasional light

frost. The challenge happens when we get that blast of cold arctic air. The plants need time to adjust and acclimatize (like the people in Bangkok). Without that, that rhododendron rated as hardy to -9C might not survive. November cold snaps can be the most difficult as the plants haven't made the transition yet. Over the last few years, we've had mild winters punctuated by a mid-February blast of colder air. That can be equally challenging for our rhodos. It's the speed of the temperature change and the duration, as well as the cold, that damages our plants.

When we get cold weather, snow cover can help protect our plants. I remember a few years ago, when we were still living in Nanaimo, we had about 18 inches of snow on the ground followed by -15C. When the snow melted, some of our rhodos were damaged above the snow line, but completely unscathed below the snow line. We also lost a few rhodos that were rated as hardy to -9C. That was also when we lost our *R. sinogrande* and *R. falconeri*.



What can we do to help protect our rhododendrons for winter? To prepare them, we start in the spring and summer. It's all about limiting the stress on the plants so that they are stronger, healthier and better able to deal with the stress of winter. Stressed, weak or diseased plants are less likely to survive the additional stress that winter can put on them. Heavy clay soils can weaken our plants, particularly during those soggy winter months. Mulch the plants well, preferably with coarser, loose material such as arborist's mulch. Don't let the plants suffer from drought stress during the summer. Mulch will help retain moisture and keep soil temperatures down. Limit your pruning to spring and early summer so that you're not causing new growth to occur late in the growing season. Don't fertilize your rhodos after early July so that the new growth will have a chance to harden off well in advance of winter. Take the time to observe your plants through the growing season. Some of them may be telling you that they're not particularly happy in their location.

Oh, and if you ever go to Bangkok, bring your sunscreen and don't forget to throw in a sweater, just in case. You never know... 😊

Plant of the month - by Ron Sutton

Rhododendron 'Fashion Plate'

Here is a hybrid plant that produces large 5" yellow flowers with a slight fragrance. It will grow to five feet in 10 years, and is reliably hardy to zone 7.

It has a complicated parentage: ([Gable's cream *fortunei* x *R. vernicosum* 'Mount Siga'] x 'Mary Belle') x ([('Dido' x *R. chlorops* 'Lackamas Cream') x *R. lacteum*] x 'Golden Star').

This rhododendron is said to take full sun. I have this plant, but it has yet to flower for me. If you want one, the NRS has 2 plants that are for sale.



Rose Rogan's Rhododendron Planting Mix (reprinted from our April 2018 newsletter as suggested by Ron Sutton)

Rose Rogan, owner of Perennial Ridge Farms, usually prepares an 8-yard mix, but has broken her recipe down into a 1-yard quantity to make it easier for all.

1-yard fine bark mulch
1 ½ bales of peat
8-pound nutricote (14-14-14)
1-pound superphosphate
1-pound trace elements
1-pound dolomite lime.

"When I make my big 8-yard mix, I spread the bark and peat out on a big cement slab. Next, I apply all the fertilizers on top. Then I rototill it 3 times over, until fully mixed; so, with the one-yard mix, it could be done by hand on a driveway slab or such." Rose Rogan

District 1 Rhododendron Chapters' Database

As we are losing our Rhododendron propagating professionals on the Island, it is of a great urgency for District 1 Chapters to propagate their own. It is also most important to concentrate on the current great diversity of rhodos in our own gardens and propagate the more exotic varieties that one can't purchase in retail stores.

The first step is to establish a database of those notable plants in our gardens, which are ready to be propagated. Each Chapter will establish a database of their gardens, and contribute to the database of District 1, which is to be established shortly. The cuttings are to be exchanged within the whole of District 1.

All NRS members will be contacted individually for their help towards this most important undertaking.

Rosina T. Schmidt

Hailey Rhododendron Grove at Bowen Park

by Bryan Jubinville

Hailey Gardens are looking up with the bonus of many rhodos in bloom right now. I look forward to seeing a lot more blooms in the coming weeks. This past month, we once again undertook to attack the invasive species in the gardens with several of the weeds taking major hits, most notable the Holly. We also continued hitting on the various other invasive weeds... they seem to be growing everywhere. We might win someday! In addition, we continued to undertake the winter debris clean up and pruning of damaged trees and shrubs.

The plan is to continue our efforts on **Tuesday, May 11th, starting at 10:00 hours until 14:00 hours**. Once again, it is a volunteer effort and if you can support the program with only a small amount of time, it will be time appreciated. We usually break for lunch at about *noonish* and if you want to come out for a picnic and simply socialize it would be great just to reconnect. Imagine a cup of hot chocolate, tea or coffee come with your favourite sandwich and a dessert of some kind in the fresh air amongst the rhodos would be fantastic!

Hope all are well.... maybe we will see you for the picnic lunch.

Cheers!

Bryan

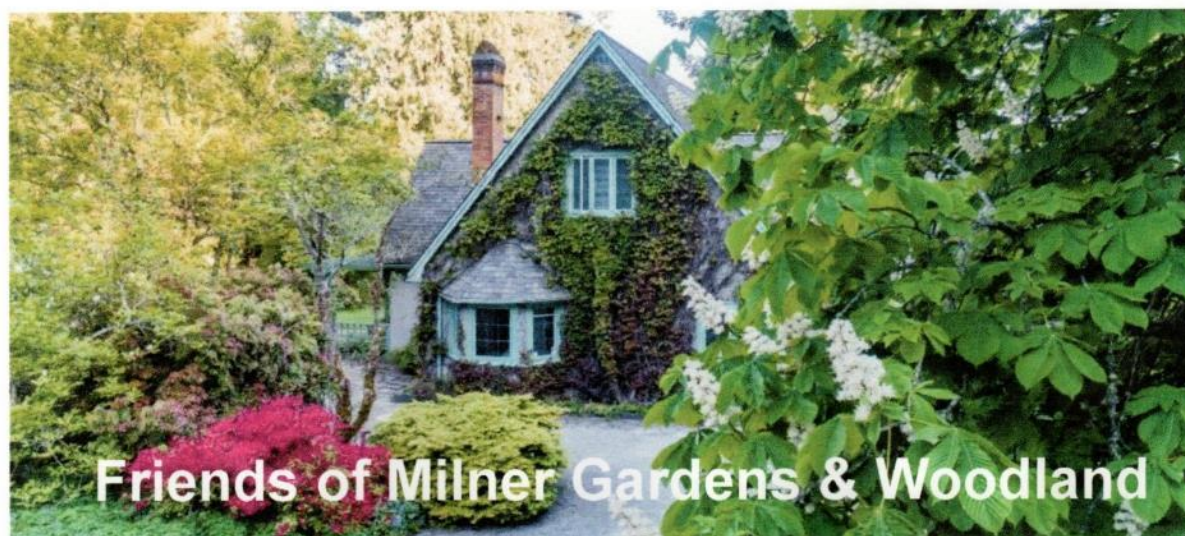
AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY
2021
VIRTUAL AND LIVE CONVENTION
RHODOS DOWN EAST: EXPLORING
THE NORTH ATLANTIC REGION
June 3-6, 2021

**Virtual Convention and onsite events at
the Old Orchard Inn, Wolfville, Nova
Scotia**



While the pandemic has made in-person attendance difficult, the host Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society has taken a more creative approach. The ARS spring convention will be both virtual and live. Registration for the virtual conference is now open! All presentations, garden tours and networking opportunities will be available online. Early bird registration for the virtual convention is open. Prices will increase on April 1st, 2021. The overall deadline for registration is May 1st, 2021. Visit the convention website for more details at: [convention details](#). Speakers include **Ken Cox**, famed Scottish rhododendron breeder from Glendoick Nursery in Scotland; **Joe Bruso**, rhododendron breeder from Massachusetts; and **Todd Boland** from Newfoundland's Memorial University Botanical Garden. The Convention will start with a lecture on "Introduction to Mi'kma'ki" by **Gerald Gloade**, a Mi'kmaw Naturalist and educator who will tell the stories of the first people that explain the natural history since the area was covered by ice.

Garden tours, both virtual and in-person, will include the **Kentville Research Centre**, **Annapolis Valley Historic Gardens** and **Peggy's Cove barrens** as well as private gardens. Networking opportunities will include the **Breeder's Roundtable** where you can hear about the latest trends in Rhododendron breeding, the **ARS Next Gen Project** which will show how to involve the next generation in your local ARS club, as well as social events that feature the seafood, cider and wine from our local producers.



**Purchase your discounted annual
Friends of Milner Gardens Membership
by showing your Garden Club/Rhododendron Society
member card at the Milner Gardens' Welcome Centre
Offer valid March through May 2021**

Discounted rates: Individual \$20 or Household \$35

2021 season hours: milnergardens.viu.ca/hours-admission
Renewals: Please bring your current Milner Gardens membership
card to confirm your new expiry date

Benefits of a Milner Gardens Membership:

✓ Unlimited admission during regular open hours ✓ Advance entry
to Spring/Fall Plant Sales ✓ e-Newsletter ✓ 10% discount off Gift
Shop/Nursery regular priced items ✓ Guest Passes discounted to
\$9 each ✓ Milner Gardens and Woodland Society membership

Questions? Visit milnergardens.viu.ca/membership-benefits
or email MilnerGardens@shaw.ca or voice message 250.752.6153

Thank you for your support!



Milner Gardens & Woodland Announces Creation of an Endowment Supporting the Gardens' Rhododendrons

With great thanks to a group of generous supporters, Milner Gardens & Woodland is very happy to announce the creation of an endowment that will support the well being of the Rhododendron collections at Milner Gardens & Woodland into the future. This support will ensure the collections' long term health so it can continue to be used to show our community the diversity and complexity of the genus. The Rhododendron Legacy Endowment is focused on the longer term upkeep, enhancement, and study of the Rhododendron collections at Milner Gardens & Woodland.

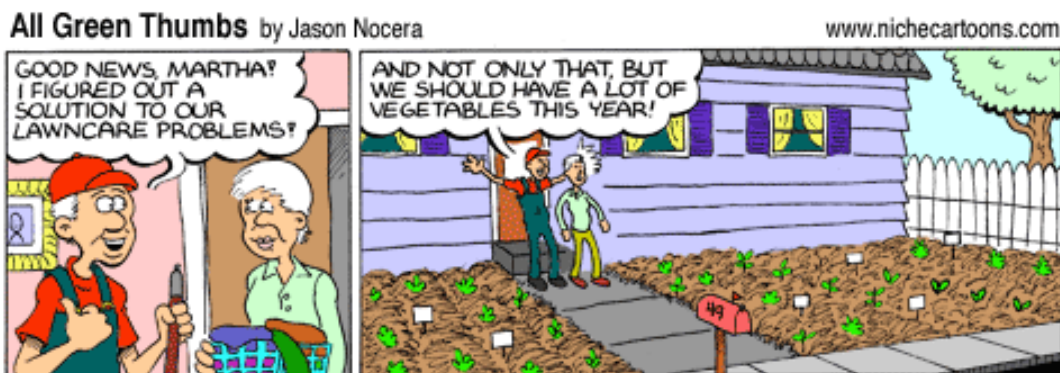
Thanks to initial gifts from the Vancouver Island chapters of the American Rhododendron Society (District One), Jean Greig, and a generous anonymous donor, the endowment was established in 2020.

It is the hope of the founding donors that the fund will continue to grow and strengthen the support of the Rhododendron collections at Milner Gardens & Woodland and their use in educating our communities about this amazing genus.

Please go the [Milner Gardens & Woodland Rhododendron Legacy Endowment's page](#) to donate to it now or contact [Susie Caswell](#) to learn of other ways you can help build this fund or one of the other endowments that are helping secure Milner Gardens & Woodland's future.

We would be happy to discuss how you can make a difference today, tomorrow or in the future.

Anyone interested in [supporting the endowment today can do so here](#) or [contact us](#) for more information.



Thinking “beyond the pandemic” ... (From the Nanaimo-Ladysmith Retired Teachers Association)

Seven best doctors in the world:

1. Sunlight
2. Rest
3. Exercise
4. Diet
5. Self Confidence
6. Friends

Maintain them in all stages of life and enjoy a healthy life.

The older we get; the fewer things seem worth waiting in line for, and the more honest you are!



Seven Things I Have Learned from the Pandemic: (by Katherine Martinko)

1. Stocking Up Is Always a Good Idea.
2. Time Spent with Family Is Not Wasted.
3. Slowing Down Has Many Benefits.
4. Yes, You Can Teach Your Own Kids.
5. When in Doubt, Send Them Out (kids that is!).
6. Meaningful Travel Doesn't Require Going Far.
7. The Outdoors Is Wonderful for Entertaining.

Habits we should all keep after the pandemic:

Supporting small local businesses.

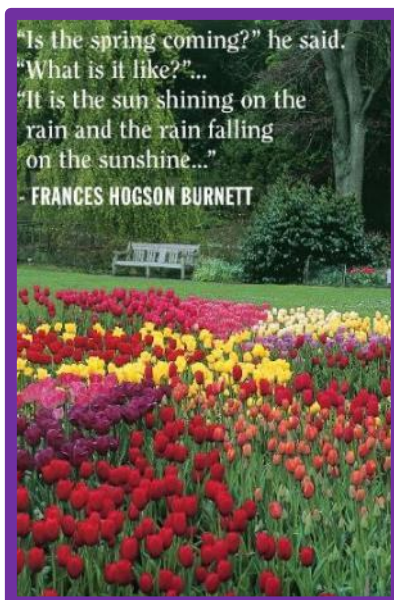
Making “concern for our most vulnerable” an urgent priority.

Slowing down.

Checking in with people.

Thinking about what really matters.

Realizing that we’re all in this together.



*~Stay Safe Everyone
and
Enjoy your “May
Flowers”! ☺*