

NANAIMO RHODODENDRON SOCIETY



October 2011



FROM THE PRESIDENT

As I write this, it's raining hard outside. I've turned off the irrigation system, although I know I may yet be turning it on again. It's that time of year when we can be fooled. It's also one of the best times to move those rhododendrons that are in the wrong place for one reason or another.

At the September meeting, a sign up sheet was circulated asking for volunteers to join the club's committee team. Thank you to those of you who signed up. Sharing the load and working together really makes a difference! We're still looking for a Christmas auction coordinator to work with our auctioneers, Joyce and David (thanks for returning for an encore performance). The role is largely to follow up with local businesses who have committed to donating items for our auction – June sends letters out in advance. In addition, we're also looking for someone to work with me on organizing our annual spring bus tour.

Burkhard has organized a fall colour walk in the Cowichan Valley. While it may not be for everyone, the fall colours coupled with the returning salmon make for an interesting day. Hope many of you will be able to join us on this outing. Now if the weather can only cooperate!

Hope to see you all at the October meeting at our usual time of 7:30. I'm sure you'll enjoy this month's speaker, Mike Stewart, former ARS president and 2009 ARS Gold medal recipient.

John

EXECUTIVE

President	John Deniseger	390-3605
Past President	Paul Lawry	806-2370
Vice President	Sandra Dorman	390-0136
Secretary	June Bouchard	390-3605
Treasurer	Gerry Moore	756-1427
Directors	Glenda Allard Barr	390-2822
	Chris Southwick	390-3415
	Debbie Gaboury	758-1204
	Reinhold Gorgosilich	758-6533
	Burkhard Dressler	758-1738

COMMITTEES

Advertising	vacant	
Library	Ann Beamish	758-2574
Newsletter	Kathryn Grant	245-7879
Membership	Debbie Gaboury	
Program	Glenda Allard Barr	390-2822
Raffle	Ann Davey & Val Harvey	
Social	Sandra Dorman	390-0136
Bargain Table	Reinhold Gorgosilich	758-6533

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society
Box 241, #1 – 5765 Turner Road
Nanaimo, BC V9T 6M4
Website: nanaimo.rhodos.ca
email: nanaimo@rhodos.ca

NEXT MEETING

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13

BEBAN PARK SOCIAL CENTRE

7:30 pm

MIKE STEWART

DWARF RHODODENDRONS: SPECIES AND THEIR HYBRID RELATIVES

NANAIMO RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

TWIGS and STEMs



GOODIES FOR OCTOBER MEETING

*Joyce Mitchell
Jan and Edith
Glenda Allard Barr*

MILNER GARDENS AND WOODLAND FALL COLOUR DAYS

*Sundays October 16th - 30th
Tea room open 11 am - 3 pm
Admission by donation*

*Harry Wright, with the North Island
Rhododendron Society is working on a new
edition of Rhododendron hybrids and species
being grown in Vancouver Island gardens - he
would appreciate a list of what you're
growing in your garden. Please contact
Harry directly at: haidaau@shaw.ca*

OUR OCTOBER SPEAKER MIKE STEWART

Mike Stewart, former president of the American Rhododendron Society, will be presenting "Dwarf Rhododendrons: Species and their Hybrid Relatives". Mike, along with his wife Maria, owns Dover Nursery in Sandy, Oregon, which is known for its outstanding selection of rhododendrons - both species and hybrids - the best to be found. He is a Gold Medal recipient (the highest award from the ARS) and a professional with excellent speaking skills that everyone enjoys. He never knows when to say no in the service of rhododendrons and is the Vice President of the Rhododendron Species Foundation. What he says is always worth hearing!

Membership Renewal:

It is that time of year again! Membership dues are an important source of funds for our club as well as the ARS. They help to pay for our speakers, meeting room expense and newsletter expense. The dues portion going to the American Rhododendron Society helps pay for the production of the Journal as well as maintaining various rhododendron programmes.

Exchange rates have been very favourable to the society in the last couple of years. Recently they have taken a turn for the worse. We can minimize these costs by having all members renew as early as possible.

The membership renewal fees are as follows:

Individual membership	\$40.00
Family Membership	\$45.00
Associate Membership	\$15.00

Debbie Gaboury and I will have a table at the October 13th meeting to take renewals as well as any new memberships.

Thanks
Gerry Moore

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2011 Fall Colour Walk along Cowichan River October 15th

Our 2011 Fall Colour Walk will be along the Skutz-66 Mile Trestle loop along the Cowichan River. The 8 km hike will provide us with beautiful views along the river and, if - we are lucky and the weather is fine, with great colours on large maple trees, in places thickly covered with dark green moss.

Anybody who can walk 8 km in a city park should have no problems to make it along the Cowichan River. The trail travels through a steep canyon environment high above the river but the hike is not strenuous. There are only a few steep sections. If you have a hiking stick, please bring it along. It might help you not to trip over some tree roots. You need some sturdy shoes or boots with appropriate soles.

The walk will take us 2 ½ to 3 ½ hours to complete. Add some time for a picnic lunch (sorry, not provided).

We will be leaving Nanaimo at 10 a.m. from the Parkway Trail parking lot at the intersection of Hwy 19 and Northfield Road. I suggest we do some car-pooling.

For those who live south of town and who want to drive directly to the trail head, please follow these directions:

Take Hwy 19 from Nanaimo for about 51 km to Hwy 18 (Cowichan Valley Highway). Turn right and follow Hwy 18 for 18.8 km and turn left, direction Skutz Falls in Cowichan River Provincial Park. Turn left again right away and follow Cowichan Lake Road for just about 1 km. Then turn right at Mayo Road and follow it to its end where there is a parking lot located close to the Skutz Falls forest service bridge. The trail head is just across this bridge. - It will take you one hour to travel from Nanaimo to the service bridge. So, we could start our walk at 11 a.m.



Please note: Hiking in a forest environment poses some inherent risks. The organizers of the hike and the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society assume no responsibility for any mishap that might happen. 😊

Burkhard Dressler
250-758-1738

NANAIMO RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

NRS Meeting Minutes Thursday, September 8th, 2011

Meeting started shortly after 7:00.
Number of people attending: 48

1. Welcome back everyone!

- Thank you everyone for your delicious contributions to our potluck!
- Welcome to new members Angelina and Fran!
- Tonight's theme is "It's the people that make our club!"
- Reference made to ARS new president Don Smart's message in the latest edition of our journal that "People Attract People!" – Don encourages members to get "involved in activities – not just at meetings, but at plant shows, sales, information booths at local nurseries, visiting other garden clubs, and talking to the media or civic groups." (*ARS Journal*, summer 2011, p. 121)
- Talking of ARS Journal, congratulations to Doug Blenkarn for being published in the latest issue – great article Doug!

2. Tonight's format:

- Slightly different with a short presentation after the business portion of our meeting and before the break.
- The main feature will be after the break as usual.

3. Secretary's report:

- Announcement that on October 29th, there will be a "Mushroom Festival" at Lake Cowichan.
- It will be mentioned in the next newsletter.

4. Treasurer's report:

- NRS account: \$4516.22
- ARS 2012 Conference account: \$3570.01
- Our current membership is 54 members, down from 57 last year.
- It's now time to renew our membership: Gerry encourages us all to renew by the October meeting if possible.
- Fees are the same at \$45.00 / family or \$40.00 / single.

5. Social /Sunshine:

- Thanks to Pat Schulson for the lovely dahlias used as our centerpieces.
- Sandra is circulating the book to invite people to sign up to bring goodies to the upcoming meetings this season.
- By break time, the sign up book was all filled in – thank you everyone!

6. Program:

- October: Mike Stewart, past president of the ARS, will be coming from Oregon – program not confirmed yet but probably "Dwarf Species and Hybrids".
- November: Garth Wedemire will be presenting part 2 of "To MARS and back".
- December: our annual Christmas auction.

7. Committee teams:

- The NRS has many committees up and running.
- President John Deniseger is encouraging people to sign up to co-chair some of those committees to make the load lighter on everyone, especially with the upcoming conference next year.
- A sign up sheet is circulated – thank you to everyone who has volunteered to help on the various committees – there are still some vacancies – please contact John if interested to join up as a co-chair. "Many hands make light work!"

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8. Conference 2012 – update:

- Last meeting was on June 25th; next meeting is on September 11th with focus on budgeting.
- Warm thanks to everyone who helped with our garden tour – it has been a tremendous boost to our budget.
- Our treasurer Gerry has a draft budget in place.
- Our program is also in place with a variety of very exciting speakers including Garth Wedemire as keynote speaker on Friday evening and Steve Hootman as keynote speaker on the Saturday.
- We're now one year away from the event and it will be a very busy year for the organizing committee – stay tuned for further details.

9. Cowichan River fall colour walk:

- Tentative date for Saturday, October 15th.
- Check next newsletter for details.

10. Norm Todd from Firwood Nursery in Victoria:

- Norm is selling all his stock. Norm has been a strong supporter of our club over the years. Contact Norm directly if interested – details in September newsletter.
- The Victoria Rhododendron society is putting together a compendium of 73 of Norm's article – *The Wit and Wisdom of Norm Todd* – it should be available later this fall.

11. Harry Wright from Haida Gold Nursery in Courtenay:

- Another great supporter of our club over the years.
- Harry is updating his list of “rhododendrons grown on Vancouver Island”.
- You can contribute to his list by sending him a list of the rhodos that you have in your garden – details are in the September newsletter.

12. Rhododendron Species Foundation plant order:

- Gerry and Reinhold are coordinating the order.
- Deadline to submit your list to Gerry is September 13th.

13. Raffle:

- Thank you Val and Ann for volunteering to continue with raffle this coming year.
- Great plants on raffle table – Val and Ann remind us that donations to the raffle are always welcome.

14. Short presentation:

- President John Deniseger presents: “Looking back at 2010-2011” - a compilation of photos from the great variety of activities organized by the NRS over the past year. Once again, “It's all about people!”

15. Program for tonight:

- Beautiful photography by Susan Lightburn highlighting the gardens that were open during our May 22nd garden tour.
- This presentation may be part of our 2012 conference.
- Susan is also working on another photo collection which will be showcased at our upcoming conference – Fall colour in our gardens.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45.

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Deadheading by Norm Todd

You need a dead head to deadhead. There is no doubt I can be totally dead in the head quite often on any given day on a wide variety of topics but after about five minutes of deadheading, I start to estimate how many more five minuteses will be needed to remove all of the pesky capsules. Even with our contemporary appreciation of astronomical numbers – those with strings of zeros on their tails – the task becomes incomprehensible. Paradoxically, I have an appreciation of the meaning of infinity.

Why do rhododendrons not have good fruit? If they had nice brightly coloured berries we would gladly leave them on the branch. If they were edible...oh, what a pleasant thought. I even try to convince myself that all this spent biomass that is being strewn at the base of the plants must be the best mulch in the world for rhododendrons. But that only makes the plants more luxuriant, which compounds the problem next year.

There is a school of thought that says, “Why deadhead? It only makes the critters bloom better next year”. I recommend you weigh this advice carefully. It has merit.

I think that there should be an extra number used in rating rhododendrons – one for ease of deadheading. One of my most favourite rhododendrons is *R. auriculatum*. The plant is at least twenty years old and I enjoy it every day, twelve months of the year. It has never flowered. *Auriculatum* would get a 5 in my rating scheme – so would most of the *R. talienses* – they never flower either. For plants that do flower, I would rate things like ‘Loder’s White’ quite highly. I’d give it a 4.5 (5 is reserved for plants that never flower and for plants where the darn things fall off by themselves). The spent rachis on ‘Loder’s White’ has the attribute of breaking off at the right point on the plant, assuming one is reasonably careful. Frequently on other varieties I end up with a whole whorl of leaves in my hand and more often than I like to admit, whole branches.

R. augustinii I would give a 1. By the time the flowers are faded, the new growth buds are elongated to just the right length to make them easier to knock off than the immature seed container. Actually, on some *augustiniis* the old flower pedicels are not attached all that well and a lateral blow will detach them quite easily. Try placing a curved index finger on the pad of the thumb and flicking quickly while taking careful aim at the object to be beheaded. With practice, you will soon knock them flying. My neighbour returning from his daily ten mile jog saw me executing this method. Reflexively, running on the spot, he half-raised his arm in greeting – paused – then hurried up the road shaking his head. I am now careful to use this method only when I am sure no one is watching.

Incidentally, I don’t know why *augustinii* is classed as Triflora. I swear all of our plants have at least four flowers in the inflorescence. All of the *lapponicum*s get a Zero, a big fat goose egg. The fungus-like excrescences on *impeditum* just have to be ignored. There is no way they can be removed.

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But the worst rating goes to *racemosum*. I would rate it right out there in negative numbers. I furtively pick a few of the cursed blobs and give up quickly. I always have a ready supply of seed of *racemosum*. When some ingénue asks, “Are all rhododendrons hard to grow from seed?” I put on a benign smirk and reply with feigned generosity, “Here, let me see if I can find you some seed of *racemosum*; it’s a good one to start with”. The seed capsules on *racemosum* are more persistent than the leaves. The deer occasionally browse on the leaves – never on the seed. Come to think of it, have you ever seen a weevil notch on a seed capsule?

In this deadheading business we also have to take account of the stickiness factor. I wonder if the manufacturers of “Crazy Glue” know about ‘Ruby Bowman’? Maybe I’m onto something and can make a million. I know now why Lem (or was it Elliot?) called ‘Jingle Bells’ ‘Jingle Bells’. You deadhead the plant and you’ll be hearing Jingle Bells on the radio every day before you get the gunk off your fingers.

It’s no use using gloves. They do more damage than enough and the cloth fingers are soon irreparably forever fused. Scissors are needed to get the intended protection off.

Talking of scissors, they are quite an effective tool for deadheading the long sturdy pedicels of the *R. campylogynums* and *R. glaucophyllums*. I used to think that using scissors was an affectation, like using sugar tongs to pick up slugs, as the ladies in Oak Bay do. But it really is a good method for these particular species of rhododendrons and for this reason I would give them a 2.5. If you try to pull off three or four of the old flowers at one time on a *campylogynum* you risk pulling the plant out by the root. The stalks have remarkable tensile strength.

The deciduous azaleas have very high stickability indices. It’s strange how the leaves fall off regularly as clockwork every year but the seeds seem to know another Ice Age is on the way. They are going to hang on until it’s over.

I occasionally find a dead bee inside a wilted flower – stuck to its supposed feeding source. It is a good thing that we are quite a bit bigger than bees or every rhododendron grower would be trapped in early efforts to deadhead and all of this would be academic, which, on reflection, is what it is supposed to be.

There has been a huge increase in the number of hybridizers of late. I know why this is so. It is much easier to pull off the petals and the anthers before, or just as the flower opens, than it is to pull off the entire flower when it has wilted. The excuse they use is that the seed capsules may contain the next wonder of the world.

These are, however, superficial thoughts. Sooner or later, even if you are only a five minute spurter like I am, you have to ask yourself the fundamental questions, “What am I doing? What are the consequences of this act? When does the life of a rhododendron begin?” I hesitate to say it but perhaps we need a free vote on the subject.

October 1989