

The Rhodomentum



Nanaimo Rhododendron Society Newsletter October 2017



President's Message

As I write this report, there is a light rain coming down outside. Now is **not** the time to stop watering. Until we get some heavy rain, these light showers will only wet the surface soil. This is especially true if you have a thick layer of mulch on the surface. September started our year off well with our 25th Anniversary cake and Paul Wurz giving us the history of his garden, Hidden Acres, in Campbell River. October's talk by Ian Efford about rhododendron gardens on the Island should be interesting. Art Lightburn is looking for volunteers to help complete the "Rhododendron Species Garden" at Milner Gardens. If you have some free time, contact him at 250-468-7516. Not all the jobs require strong backs. If anyone is willing to give rides to some of our members who do not like to drive at night, please contact Chris Southwick at 250-390-3415. Our newsletter next month will be put out by Craig Clarke. If you have anything to put in The Rhodomentum, please forward it to Craig at rhodomentum@nanaimorhodos.ca. If you know of any potential vendors for our "Spring Plant Sale", please contact me at allengaylle@shaw.ca. Enjoy the Fall colours, see you at the meeting on Oct.12th at 7:30pm.

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	John Deniseger & June Bouchard

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October meeting

Thursday, October 12th, 7:30 pm, Beban Park Social Center

Ian Efford

"The Public Rhododendron Gardens of Vancouver Island"

Our October Speaker: Ian Efford

Ian taught ecology at U.B.C. for 15 years before joining the federal government to direct its programs in energy conservation and renewable energy. After leaving government, he became a consultant on science policy and international development, particularly in Africa.

Now retired, Ian is an avid gardener with a keen interest in rhododendrons, irises and plant propagation. He is an active member and former president of the Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society. In 2015, Ian published "The Public Rhododendron Gardens of Vancouver Island" (with Susan Lightburn as photograph editor).

Fall Blooming Rhododendrons



While we all look forward to the spring blooming of our favourite rhododendrons, some insist on teasing us by blooming in the fall.

Your executive is conducting a survey on the phenomenon of second blooming in the fall. Please submit information on your fall bloomers:

1. Name of plant(s).
2. Does it bloom every fall or occasionally?
3. Are the blooms abundant or just a few?

Send your responses to rhodomentum@nanaimorhodos.ca or bring to our October meeting.



Twigs and Stems

GOODIES FOR OCTOBER

Ann Beamish

Brenda Lewis

Sandra Dorman

North Island Wildlife Recovery Center

Mushroom Festival October 15th, 11:00 to 4:00

Check out **Milner Gardens and Woodland** for fall colours – including the ongoing development of the Rhododendron Species Garden – check website for hours.

<https://www2.viu.ca/milnergardens/>

Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association

– **Fall Education Session:** "Garden Layers" on Sunday, November 5th at the Departure Bay Activity Centre in Nanaimo. 11:00 am – 2:45pm. The headliner will be Kem Luther speaking specifically about Mushrooms found in the Boundary Layer, which is the title of his new book. Check him out at: www.stegnon.com/

Membership Renewal

It's time to renew your NRS (and ARS) membership – see Krystyna at our next meeting so you don't miss an issue of the ARS Journal.

The N.R.S. is celebrating its 25th anniversary!

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!



Some of our charter members from 1992 were at last month's meeting: left to right – Liz Murray, Dick Beamish, Glenda Barr, Alan Murray, Ann Beamish, Joyce and Craig Clarke. Note that Liz and Alan Murray were our first "Associate Members".



Excerpts from our Club's First Newsletter in September 1992 – our first newsletter editor was Craig Clarke

Inauguration of the society

An organizational meeting was held on August 13 to create the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society and elect an executive. Several officers of the American Rhododendron Society were present: Les Clay (Langley), Director for District 1 (British Columbia chapters); Everett Jefferson (Qualicum), alternate Director; JoAnn Foster (Comox), Chair of the ARS Membership and Public Relations Committee (as well as President of the North Island Chapter); and Harold Johnson (Surrey), Chairman of the ARS Long Range Planning Committee. Other distinguished guests included Louise Dwyer (Qualicum), President of the Mount Arrowsmith Chapter and Stan Groves (Duncan), President of the Cowichan Valley Chapter.

Harold Johnson gave a brief history of the American Rhododendron Society which now has a membership of 7,000 with chapters located throughout the United States, as well as in Canada, Denmark, Scotland and India. With the formation of the Nanaimo chapter, there are now a total of 5 chapters on Vancouver Island and 3 on the Lower Mainland. The Vancouver chapter was formed 30 years ago. Les Clay explained the rights of membership including subscription to the quarterly ARS Journal and access to seed exchange, pollen bank, slide library, speakers bureau, etc.

The purpose of the American Rhododendron Society is to encourage interest in and to disseminate knowledge about rhododendrons and azaleas. It provides a medium through which all persons interested in rhododendrons and azaleas may communicate and cooperate with others through education, meetings, publications, scientific studies, research and similar activities.

A total of 20 people attended the meeting and 11 full members were signed up that evening. Everett Jefferson chaired the election of an executive.

September Meeting

The first regular meeting of the society was held on September 10th, 1992 at the Beban Park Recreational Centre. A short talk was given by Steve Clark on lawn care. Steve explained the basics of watering and feeding during the summer. He also answered a number of questions about control of weeds and crane flies.

The feature speaker of the evening was Gwen Bell. An active member of the Seattle chapter, she is in demand as a speaker and a judge in ARS shows and received a Bronze medal from her chapter in 1983. She has travelled to all of the important rhododendron areas of the world, including China, Japan, Sikkim, United Kingdom, Europe and New Zealand. She gave a very interesting talk on the great hybridizer Halfdan Lem with anecdotes on his life and the many magnificent hybrids he produced. Prominent among them were Anna, Point Defiance, and Walloper as well as Lem's Cameo which received the exceptional "superior plant award". Lem named one of his Walloper clones "Gwen Bell". Gwen then went on to show many breathtaking slides of new hybrids being evaluated currently which have Lem's excellent plants in their parentage.

After the talk, Everett Jefferson presented a cheque for \$250 on behalf of the Mount Arrowsmith Chapter to assist with the development of our chapter. Very much appreciated!

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Useful Links

Victoria Rhododendron Society: <http://www.victoriarhodo.ca/index.html>

Cowichan Rhododendron Society: <http://cowichanrhodos.ca/>

Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society: <http://marsrhodos.ca/>

North Island Rhododendron Society: <http://www.nirsrhodos.ca/ws/>

Linda Gilkeson's website: <http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/>

Lee Valley's Gardening Newsletter:
<http://www.leevalley.com/en/newsletters/Gardening/2567/Article1.htm>

October Raffle Rhodos

Shrimp Girl

- 3 feet, -17 C (Waterer, Sons & Crisp)

One of the best of the yak x 'Fabia' crosses. It's a plant of low, spreading stature with small gray/green leaves. The flowers are mostly pink with a sherbet orange cast. It buds young and consistently, blooming in the middle of May. (R. yakushmanum X Fabia Tangerine)



Blaney's Blue – 4 to 5 feet, -21 C, 4/4/4, EM

Blue-green to bronze, sun or part shade
(R. augustinii "tower court" x "blue diamond")
Ticknor



Seen in Passing in the Milner Rhododendron Species Garden



NRS and MARS members mulching the beds with "arborist's mulch"

If you'd like to join the crew, we'll be meeting every Thursday morning from 9 am to noon through the fall to mulch, plant, put up fencing, and more....

My Favourite Dwarf Rhododendrons: part 2 - species

By Chris Southwick

Our newsletter editors limited the choice of plants to speak about to only three and since I couldn't do that, I chose to write two articles, the first on dwarf hybrid rhododendrons and this article on dwarf species rhododendrons. Choosing three dwarf hybrids was a challenge, but choosing three dwarf species is going to be even more difficult since I've become a species "nut".

The topic of hybrid versus species rhodos could be a topic in itself. Species rhododendrons in general are fascinating in their size, texture, shape, hardiness, adaptability, as well as colour of their leaves, stems and flowers. They have been classified by some as "collectors" plants. Their very distinctive gestalt or overall look enables a more experienced gardener to know which species a certain plant is. This is generally not the case for the many thousands of hybrids.

Once again, I am also limiting my selection to plants which are available and to those that I currently grow. Most species, however, cannot be purchased at local nurseries or garden centres with one or two exceptions. Fortunately, for those of us who live in northwestern North America, we have access to a number of nurseries and botanical gardens which sell species plants. If you're interested in purchasing collector plants, some species can be found in the spring at our local American Rhododendron Society's annual plant sales.



R. campylogynum is easily one of my favourite dwarf species due to its compact and mounding form, consistently healthy and glossy green leaves and interesting long flower stalks that hold nodding bell-shaped pale rose purple, salmon-pink, carmine, or deep purple flowers. According to the experts, this species has a number of forms including a very tiny-leaved form called *R. campylogynum* *Myrtilloides* Group. In the last few years, this species has been more available in the nursery trade likely

because it is easy to propagate. The Cox family has used it in their hybridizing to create the exquisite pure white hybrid "Egret" which I wish was more readily available in our local nurseries. The Bodnant form (Windsor) won an AM (Award of Merit) in 1971.

I love blue-green leaves. Near the top of my list of dwarf species is a beautiful dwarf named *R. lepidostylum*. It has luscious foliage which cups raindrops in the leaf axils (as the leaf petioles are so short) and has very prominent hairs along the leaf margins. It is both compact and wider than tall and, according to the ARS website, grows to become two feet tall in ten years. It



is cold hardy and has noticeable scales on the underside of the leaves - hence the name. Mine has not yet flowered but the flowers are yellow and sometimes spotted orange. The geographical origin is southwest Yunnan in China. This photo of *R. lepidostylum* was found on the Chimacum Woods website and shows the distinct habit of collecting water on the leaves - just think of *Alchemilla mollis* after a rain. Thank you, Bob Zimmerman for permission to use the photo. I believe *R. lepidostylum* challenges the much larger *R. campanulatum* ssp. *aeruginosum* for the glaucous cast of its new growth. It won an award of merit (AM) in 1969. Beautiful!

Saving the best for last, is an exquisite plant named *R. forrestii*. It has several named forms, the Repens Group and the Tumescens Group (mound-forming).*



creeping or ground-hugging plant which was a favourite of my paternal grandfather, Ted Greig. He used to grow it in a stone trough perched on top of a stone wall at the Royston Nursery years ago. This photo by Jens Birck from the Hirsutum website is very reminiscent of the Royston garden.

Rhododendron forrestii can be very shy flowering and needs very specific siting and planting conditions. In its native habitat high in the mountains of Tibet, Burma and China, you can imagine that it

could withstand a blanket of ice and snow, high winds or driving rain. It has been slow to flower in my garden where I have it planted in two very different spots to try and get it right. It is a little fussy requiring excellent drainage, an open aspect, yet decent water. Alleyne Cook recommends planting on clay covered with gravel.** Since it is such an early bloomer, the flowers can get nipped by frost. Protection with a cloche or Reemay cloth is recommended to protect the flower buds.

R. forrestii has been a prolific parent over the years. Many famous and worthy hybrids such as "Carmen", "Elizabeth", "Riplet", "Scarlet Wonder", "Little Ben", "Ethel", "Lori Eischelser", "Kimbeth" and "Royston Red" all have some of its exceptional qualities.

If you're interested in more historical and scholarly information about *Rhododendron forrestii*, read an article written by Alleyne Cook in 1983 for the ARS Journal which aptly illustrates the culture of this very interesting rhododendron. Follow the link below.

Dwarf rhododendrons are perfect for gardens these days. Most of my gardening friends have chosen a property that is appropriate for smaller plants. Some of these friends have only a deck for outdoor growing space in their home. That makes truly dwarf plants an excellent choice whether they're species or hybrid rhododendrons.

*J.F.J. Mcquire and M.L.A. Robinson **Pocket Guide to Rhododendron Species** pg. 210.

** <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/v37n3/v37n3-cook.htm>

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Crucial facts about gardeners

(from a very creative and imaginative artist friend of ours: Ina-Griet Raatz-von Hirschhausen)

In severe winter weather, some gardeners will experience a **flower outage**.

After a nice visit with friends, a gardener usually says: "Sorry but I **have to grow now**".

On their properties, gardeners have to **obey the seed-limit**.

If a gardener is uncertain about something, **he rakes it till he makes it**.

For a successful game, gardeners **have to tree off** as early as 8 am.

In the evening, most gardeners enjoy **weeding a good book**.

For his birthday, every gardener likes to be **soiled rotten!**

Happy gardening!

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