

GENERAL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 12 - 7:30 P.M. - BEBAN PARK



SEPTEMBER
2002



Volume 11

Issue 1

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome everyone to a new season. Ann Williamson, one of your new Director's, was omitted from the last newsletter, sorry Ann. Paulette Galloway has volunteered to be our Program chairperson, good for you. A big THANKS to Mary Kool for hosting our wind up BBQ, a perfect location.

The fall of the year is time to build, re-build and organize our gardens for the following year. In this regard our first two meetings will concentrate on the aspect of what and how to grow good plants in your garden.

On your behalf I attended the District 1 Presidents Meeting held at the Milner Gardens on August 18, 2002. A couple of items which may be of interest: The Rhododendron Species Study Program, held last year at the Species Foundation in Federal Way, Washington, is going to be offered again next spring, see page 6 for details

The idea of a District 1 endowment fund was discussed, with a per capita assessment from each chapter providing the base income.

District 1 has an all chapter web site which will host all local sites for a fee.

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EXECUTIVE

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[www.rhododendron.org/adminsector/
chapterinfo.htm#Nanaimo](http://www.rhododendron.org/adminsector/chapterinfo.htm#Nanaimo)

ARS WEBSITE

www.rhododendron.org

RHODODENDRON & AZALEA NEWS WEBSITE

<http://members.aol.com/RandANews/news.html>

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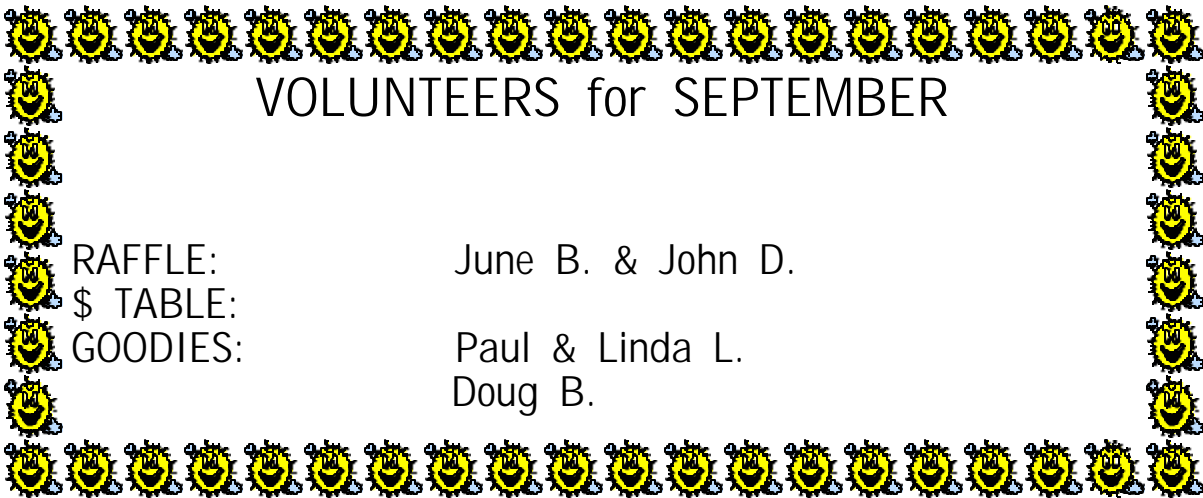
President's Message continued

The ARS National Convention for 2005 is being held at the Victoria Convention Centre and the Royal BC Museum April 27 to May 1. This falls Western Regional Conference is in Bellingham September 20 to 22. Check your ARS journal for details. More to come at the meeting, Sept 12, see you then.

Richard.

HELP

Looking for '**R. Senator Henry Jackson**'. Anyone out there in Rhodo Land know where this plant can be obtained? If so, please contact Al Campbell at: stonefold@shaw.ca.



VOLUNTEERS for SEPTEMBER

RAFFLE:	June B. & John D.
\$ TABLE:	
GOODIES:	Paul & Linda L. Doug B.



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September's Presenter

Jamie Wallace

What makes a good garden?

This theme will be developed throughout the year so that the members, in the process of building their gardens, will have a much better idea of the structure as well as content of an excellent garden while the rest of us start looking around to improve our existing ones!

Carey's Garden Designs Ltd.

Carey's Garden Designs Ltd. has been designing and building gardens in the Nanaimo area for 6.5 years. Based out of Lantzville, Jamie and Angela Wallace have been designing a wide variety of spaces from small city lots to large acreage estates.

Jamie Wallace started his career in Vancouver with the Vancouver Park Board where he received an apprenticeship in Landscape Horticulture. He then traveled to England to work in The Royal Gardens of Windsor Great Park for 18 months. During this time he also spent 4 weeks trekking in the mountains of Bhutan.

Upon returning to Vancouver he secured a position with the Vancouver Parks where he extensively renovated sections of False Creek and was awarded "Gardener of the Year" by the Vancouver Sun. Not being completely satisfied with the parks system, Jamie and Angela moved to Lantzville and started their own business, designing gardens with an emphasis on using unusual plant material without herbicides or any synthetic fertilizers.

Last year, both Angela and Jamie received an Honorable mention by the BC Landscape and Nursery Ass. for their work at the Sow's Ear Medical Clinic in Lantzville.

Carey's Garden Designs Ltd. is a member of the BC Landscape and Nursery Association, Canadian Nursery and Landscape Association, Perennial Plant Association, and the Association of Professional Landscape Designers.

Paulette Galloway



The question and answer column

Why won't my Rhododendrons bloom? When we moved in to our home in 1996, they were about 45 years old, tall, scraggly, and bloomed. I clipped them all the way back and got a wonderful amount of new growth. I kept them watered and fertilized with Rhodo fertilizer and we haven't had a bloom since 1996! I stopped fertilizing two - three years ago and stopped trimming them last year. Still no blooms. What's happened?

Failure to set flower buds may be a sign of too much health and vigor in a plant. One solution maybe to prune the roots by cutting around the plant with a spade or moving the plant. This will check foliage growth and encourage production of flower buds. Application of nitrogen rich fertilizers are the main cause of vigor which suppresses flower bud production. Dead-heading flowers as soon as they wilt can promote flower bud production. Too much shade, a cool wet summer, or inadequate phosphorus or potassium in the soil may suppress flower bud production. There are a number of other reasons for a lack of flowers. The effect of each variable depends upon the variety of the plant. The effects include: **PRUNING**. The buds are formed in late summer and early fall so pruning then or later is not advisable since it will remove flower buds. New leaf buds will form in the spring, but new flower buds won't form until the next year. **VARIETY**. Some plants will never bloom. Some rhododendrons that come from the seed of a hybrid plant will look good, but will never produce flowers or will produce very poor flowers. To come true to the parent plant, a hybrid may be propagated by cuttings or tissue culture, but not from seed. A good hybrid seedling only comes about once in a while. For that reason it is important to know that you are getting a good named variety or a good species. **FERTILIZING**. Nitrogen promotes leaf and branch growth and discourages flower bud production. It can also force late season growth that gets killed or stunted by frost damage. Phosphorus promotes flower bud production and hardiness. Potassium is necessary for well being. **WEATHER**. Cold weather can kill flower buds. Usually you see the brown buds in the spring. Cold spells in the fall or spring can damage buds that are not hardened off. Bud blast (blooming in fall or winter) uses up good buds which are then not available at the normal blooming time. **AGE**. Most rhododendron take 2 to 3 years to bloom from a rooted cutting unless forced. Some take longer and some bloom sooner. From seeds the plant may take 1 or 2 additional years. **EXPOSURE**. Some rhododendron need full sun to bloom and others can take fairly dense shade. In general, the more sun the more flower buds, but also the greater exposure to damage from desiccation in summer or winter. More shade produces more foli-

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age and less flowers. You can usually tell if the plant has ever bloomed. A rhododendron that has bloomed will have the seed pods on it unless it has been dead-headed. If dead-headed too late after blooming, new flower buds can be damaged. There are many other cultural variables that influence the plant's health and hence, its ability to produce flowers. Failure of flower buds to open could be due to a number of reasons. On a mature plant if they ever bloomed they will have a few of the seed pods still here and there. If you can't find any old seed pods, then they may have never bloomed. In any case, here are a few suggestions that may help: BUD SET. The buds could be foliage buds rather than flower buds. In this case check the previous section about flower buds not setting. BUD BLAST. Plants which are not sufficiently hardened off or are exposed to unseasonable warm spells can start bloom prematurely. These blooms are seldom satisfactory and many times get frozen before opening fully. In any case, the seasonal bloom is lost. Also, disease may attack the buds before they open. LOW TEMPERATURES. The buds could be flower buds that froze during the winter. Cold climates are too cold for many rhododendrons. Most rhododendrons have a low temperature at which the flower buds are damaged and will not produce flowers. It varies greatly from variety to variety. NUTRIENTS. Improper nutrients may be a problem that affects cold hardiness and flower bud set. A few things you can do are to fertilize with phosphorus (super-phosphate) per directions to increase hardiness and flower bud set. This can be done any time. *Do not use nitrogen rich fertilizers as they may inhibit flower bud production and also reduce cold hardiness.* Lawn fertilizers are notoriously high in nitrogen and should be kept away from flowering plants. ACIDITY. Measure the pH and acidify if necessary. Flowers of sulfur (powdered sulfur) is the best chemical to use to increase the acidity [lower the pH]. Do not use aluminum sulfate since aluminum salts build up in the soil and eventually becomes toxic to many plants including rhododendron and azaleas. PROTECTION. If the plants are wrapped in burlap during the winter, they may gain a few more degrees in hardiness. DROUGHT. When soil moisture is too low, the buds will not open. Watering will usually resolve this condition if detected soon enough. Good luck,

Send email to shenning@fast.net Visit my Rhododendron and Azalea web pages at: <http://www.users.fast.net/~shenning/rhody.html> Also visit the Rhododendron and Azalea Bookstore at: <http://members.aol.com/rhodyman/rhodybooks.html>

Cheers, Steve Henning in Reading, PA USA
<http://www.users.fast.net/~shenning>

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SPECIES STUDY DAYS

My understanding is that because of the success of last year's Species Study Days, Steve intends to introduce a similar teaching model at the Species Foundation next year for enthusiasts in the US. It is not clear, at this time, what the format will be. Steve has also advised me that he is willing to repeat a similar study program next year for our group if there is sufficient interest. To do this it is essential that we have sufficient lead time in order to set aside the appropriate days as it is quite certain that Steve's schedule for next year is already filling up.

At the present time there has already been considerable interest from many of last year's participants to repeat the program next year. If there are other individuals from any of the District 1 Chapters who are interested in the program, please contact me as soon as possible.

It would be most helpful if a cheque in the amount of \$50.00 dated 15th of January 2003 could be forwarded to me as a gesture of commitment. When there is enough support, we can finalize details with Steve and review the program and hopefully arrange for some new material for those repeating the program. The format would likely be similar to last year which proved to be quite successful.

The sessions would be held from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on a weekend either Saturday or Sunday, one day each month from February through to May. The anticipated costs will also be the same as last year \$140.00 for the entire program or \$35.00 for individual sessions if this can be accommodated.

We will probably arrange car pooling which worked well last year, but if there is sufficient interest and lead time, transportation by mini bus could also be considered.

We are hoping that there will be interest from members on Vancouver Island and in order to assist them with the costs of attending the study days, it is hoped that members from the mainland will be able to host the islanders overnight on the Friday evening. Again, this worked well last year and I am fairly confident that we would be able to host Vancouver Island members again this year.

Time is of the essence for formalizing the arrangements. The maximum number of participants that the RSF can accommodate is 30. At the present time, the program is almost 50% committed.

Please advise as soon as possible,

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SOJOURN VICTORIA DAY WEEKEND

(May 17, 18, 19, 2003)

In previous years a group of rhododendron enthusiasts and friends from the lower mainland have visited spectacular gardens in Victoria and Nanaimo(2002), Whidby Island and the Olympic Peninsula (2001) and Parksville and Tofino (2000). Next year we are looking at organizing a trip to the magnificent gardens in Portland which is surely the garden capital of North America. There are many extraordinarily fine gardens in Portland and the surrounding district, including an exceptional internationally renowned Japanese garden and also an exceptional Chinese garden. In addition, there are the well known Crystal Springs garden, Cecil Smith Rhododendron Garden and the Oregon horticultural growers garden on 157 acres.

It is anticipated that the group will leave Vancouver early Saturday a.m. and travel leisurely to Portland visiting interesting gardens on the way in order to break up the drive. The group will overnight in Portland for two nights and return on Monday, again visiting gardens en route to Vancouver. We would expect to arrive back in Vancouver in the early evening.

The anticipated expected cost would be about \$325.00 Canadian bearing in mind that the hotel accommodation will have to be paid for in US dollars. Details remain to be worked out and finalized. We would anticipate that members from the Portland ARS Chapter would assist with the planning arrangements.

If there are any interested from Vancouver Island they would be more than welcome to join us. **Mike Bale, (604) 853-8839, empty@shaw.ca**

Starting this fall, Milner Gardens and Woodland is opening up it's education program to the community. Come and learn in the beautiful setting at Milner Gardens and Woodland. Registration begins on September 3rd. For information on how to register or to become a garden member please phone 752-8573.

Fall 2002 Course Schedule:

1) Flower Arranging

Learn how to collect and display your garden flowers.

Date: Sept 14th

Time: 12:30-3:00

Non member: \$35

Members/Volunteer: \$25

Location: Gardener's Cottage

3) Seed Collecting

Learn how to collect, preserve, and later sow seeds from your garden

Date: Sept 28th

Time: 1:00-3:00

Non member: \$25

Members/Volunteer: \$15

Location: Gardener's Cottage

2) Fall Flowers For Your Garden

Learn about great fall flowering perennials that you can grow in your garden.

Date: Sept 21st

Time: 1:00-3:00

Non member: \$25

Members/Volunteer: \$15

4) Hydrangea Wreaths

Learn how to build your own Hydrangea wreaths.

Date: Oct.5th

Time: 12:30-3:00

Non member: \$35

Members/Volunteer: \$25



CAN I PRUNE MY RHODODENDRONS ?

Rhododendrons can be pruned as much or as little as you like. The how and when are more important than how much, when it comes to pruning this species. Most pruning of large flowered Rhodys should be done in the early spring at blooming time. You lose some of the flower buds, but the plant will put its energy into producing the new growth buds, which will in turn provide the food and energy for the following years flower show.

Personally, I prune to attain the shape of the plant I want. If it is necessary to cut the plant *way* back, it is best to do it in two stages. Cut half of the branches, half-way back, and then the following spring, you can cut the other half. Doing the cut back using this method, you will force new growth from the cut branches, utilizing energy from the established branches. (*I hope that makes sense!*) This will also cause far less shock to the plant. That is only a general rule to follow, you CAN cut more than half when it's necessary. I have a beautiful Rhody which was no more than an empty stump when I brought it home, and its now 12 feet tall.

- Prune as early in spring as possible, to give the cuts the best chance to heal
- Use sharp, *clean* tools, and make smooth cuts
- Always cut back to a growing point, preferably an outward growing bud or branch
- Removing branches from the middle of the plant will allow more air flow and light into plant
- Always make the cuts at a slight angle so that moisture will readily run off
- If the cut branch is larger than an inch, I would paint the cut with a pruning seal or grafting wax
- With Rhodys, the most important pruning you can do is deadheading the old buds before they go to seed
- Always remove dead wood regardless of the time of year

The Garden Helper

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