

The Rhodomentum

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society Newsletter
September 2017



President's Message

Welcome back from a very hot and dry summer! We are going to have to keep watering for some time now as the soil is very dry.

Gaylle and I have just finished hosting the summer meetings of the ARS District 1 presidents as well as our local executive. The species garden at Milner Gardens and Woodlands is moving along smoothly and should be well on the way to being opened to the public by the spring of 2018.

Our executive is working on the programs we will have this year. Remember to bring "finger food" to our "Welcome Back Pot Luck", September meeting on Thursday, Sept. 14th at 6:30 pm at Beban.

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 | Gaylle 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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Come celebrate our 25th Anniversary!

**Our speaker will be Paul Wurz on "Creating a
Rhododendron Garden"**

Thursday, September 14, 6:30 pm

Our September Speaker

Paul Wurz is a retired school teacher who developed a serious interest in rhododendrons 25-30 years ago. Paul and his wife Lynn live on 8.6 acres just north of Campbell River. They have a small specialty rhododendron nursery and a large display garden called Hidden Acres Rhododendrons. Most of the plants they sell are propagated on site. Paul is also very active in the North Island Rhododendron Society and has been president several times as well as a Bronze Medal recipient. Lynn is an avid collector of many plant cultivars including: dahlias, ferns, begonias and many other shade plants. Many of you will know Paul and Lynn's garden through our annual bus tours. Most of our gardens have plants from Hidden Acres purchased at our plant sale or during a visit to their garden. Check their website for further information: www.hiddenacresrhodo.com

Paul's topic for our September meeting: "The Joys of Building our Garden!"

"The presentation explores the changes that have taken place on our property over the past 45 years. Although we have few pictures of the early years, we have documented many of the changes that have taken place in the last 15-20 years. Hopefully, the talk will encourage the audience to monitor the growth and changes in their own gardens."

Reminder

NRS September Finger-food Meeting

Just a quick reminder that our NRS Potluck Finger-food Meeting is coming soon.....

Thursday September 14th

6:30 pm Beban Social Center Rm 1

Don't forget to bring cutlery, plates, cup or glass
A potluck finger-food dish that you love to make and share

Coffee, tea and sparkling punch will be provided.

See you on the 14th!!



Twigs and Stems

NRS September Meeting – Thursday, September 14th – 6:30 Finger Food Potluck.

North Island Wildlife Recovery Center Mushroom Festival – October 15th, 11:00 to 4:00 pm

Check out Milner Gardens and Woodland through the fall including the ongoing development of the Rhododendron Species Garden and the upcoming fall plant sale on September 23rd and 24th, 10:00-4:00.

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

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



Here's our first executive way back in September 1992. From left to right: Bill Buckingham, Craig Clarke, Richard White, Donna Porter, Ward Porter, Betty Deighton, Mary Taylor, Karen Charlton, Alan Watson.

My Favourite Dwarf Rhododendrons: part 1 - hybrids

By Chris Southwick

When asked to write an article about my three favourite dwarf rhododendrons, I thought that it would be a relatively easy task. Now that I'm actually putting fingers to the keyboard to produce the article, it has become a much more difficult assignment. There are so many interesting ones, particularly the dwarf species, and then there are those that are easy to grow and those which are more challenging. Another consideration is regarding those which are easy to find in the local nurseries and those which are only available from specialty nurseries. I've decided to write two articles, one on dwarf hybrid rhododendrons and one on dwarf species rhododendrons. This first article is about dwarf hybrids.

First of all, what is a dwarf? Technically, they are supposed to be below 1.5m (5 feet) in height on average according to my source, Peter Cox's book "*The Smaller Rhododendrons*" (1985). He separates them into three categories: **low** = 1 - 1.5m (3-5ft), **semi-dwarf** = 50cm - 1m (1.5-3ft.) and **dwarf** = below 50cm (1.5ft).

As with personal favourites of anything, my choices are strictly subjective. They are favourites because they are easy care, are truly compact nicely shaped plants, and with their small leaves, can be grown in the sunnier parts of my garden. They don't require pruning, they are largely disease free and are floriferous. The plants that I have selected here are all very easy to find in our local nurseries.

Two of the top plants that come to mind are hybrids from a former Washington state hybridizer, Warren Berg. He travelled the globe seeking rhododendrons in the wild and was familiar with the amazing variety of dwarf species. He, along with the Cox family from Scotland, has been in my opinion, one of the most successful at hybridizing and promoting dwarf rhododendrons for small gardens. I have chosen two of his hybrids, first R. Ginny Gee and second R. Patty Bee.



R. Ginny Gee (*keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy' x *racemosum*) is described as white flushed pink and it was introduced in 1979. It is incredibly compact and free-flowering. On my mother's sunny and windy deck, it sometimes completely covers itself with flowers so that you cannot see any of the foliage. It is absolutely amazing to see how tough this little plant is despite the hot sun and westerly winds on that very open deck in the downtown Nanaimo harbour. In my more sheltered site, it has grown wider and a little taller in the same amount of time. Another excellent

quality is that it is not only drought tolerant, but is also cold tolerant and its foliage turns a bronze colour in the winter. It is considered a semi-dwarf.

The two rhododendron species parents of Ginny Gee are quite different in stature and colour. *R. kieskei* 'Yaku Fairy' is a pale yellow but very small with a ground-hugging, creeping habit. In my garden, it has very small light green pointed leaves. *R. racemosum* is a more upright plant, with interesting reddish stems and a pink flushed white flower in my garden. The leaves are dark green with a slightly rounded

shape. I'm sure that Warren admired both of these species and rightly guessed that he'd have a winner if he was successful in combining the two. It won a Superior Plant Award in 1985.

R. Patty Bee (*keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy' x *fletcherianum*) is another Warren Berg hybrid that I admire very much. It is also very easily obtained from most reputable nurseries. Patty Bee is a dependable soft yellow with very large flowers for the size of the plant and leaves. It is also easily grown, floriferous, and compact in shape and size and in my experience, a care free plant. Its parent R. *fletcherianum* is an interesting species as it has beautiful bristles on the margins of its leaves. R. *fletcherianum* flowers are large and open-faced and Patty Bee gets the wavy flower margins from that parent. Patty Bee takes after its *keiskei* parent in its small stature. Patty Bee won the Award of Excellence (1984 from the ARS), Award of Garden Merit (1989 from the Royal Horticultural Society), and the Superior Plant Award in 1985 (Northwest). It is considered a true dwarf.

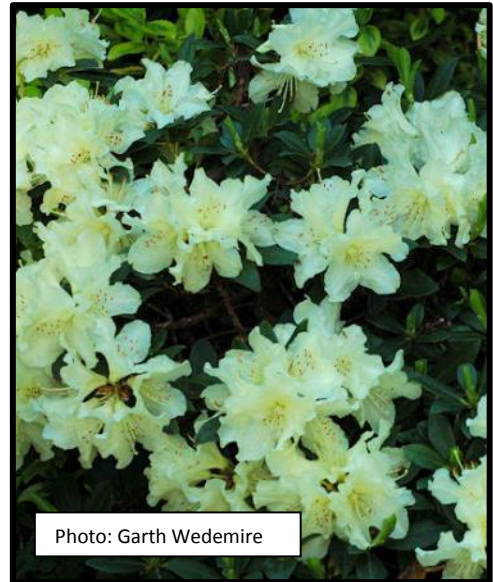


Photo: Garth Wedemire

As you can imagine, I have found it very difficult to choose just three plants. There are also many excellent white as well as lavender plants, including many hybridized by the Cox family in Scotland. In the northwest, some of my favourite Cox dwarf hybrids are not as commonly available to us.



Photo: Herman van Ree

I ended up choosing as my third favourite a lovely red named R. Scarlet Wonder ('Essex Scarlet' x *forrestii* ssp. *forrestii* Repens Group). Scarlet Wonder was hybridized in Germany by Dietrich Hobbie prior to 1960. One of Scarlet Wonder's parents, Essex Scarlet, was introduced

in 1899 and its parents are unknown. The other parent is one of my favourite dwarf species R. *forrestii* ssp. *forrestii* Repens Group. (There will be more on that species in my next article!) Both the leaves and flowers of Scarlet Wonder are consistently of high quality. I like the rounded, puckered dark green foliage and the clear bright red flowers. It takes its cue in stature from R. *forrestii* as it generally will only attain a height of two feet in ten years' time. Like the two previous plants, Scarlet Wonder is also a multiple award winner. It won the Award of Garden Merit (1960, Royal Hort. Society), Gold Medal (Boskoop, Netherlands 1961) and the Highest Commendation in England in 1970.

All three plants, R. Ginny Gee, R. Patty Bee, and R. Scarlet Wonder have been available in the Pacific Northwest for many years and in fact, could be found even in grocery stores in the spring. Although they are commonly found, they are still all exceptional plants and are worth growing in almost any size garden.



International Rhododendron
Conference
"North America Meets Europe"



Update! Registration for ARS-members only will begin on Sept. 1st and extend until Nov. 15th. The registration form will be made available on September 1st at 12:01 am at <http://ars2018.org/registration.php>. See the [registration page](#).

2017 Silver Medal Award: Ken Webb

For more than two decades you have been a leading force in District One, promoting the genus Rhododendron. You have spent countless hours propagating cuttings with your wife Madeleine in your home-based facility, and then freely distributing rooted plants to every chapter. As District Director, you are respected for carefully thought out constructive comments and for your ability to attain cooperation between chapters. With your affable nature and your generosity, you succeeded in increasing relationships between chapters. In revitalizing District One, you succeeded in making chapters more aware of their connection to the American Rhododendron Society. In recognition of your outstanding contributions, the American Rhododendron Society is pleased to award the Silver Medal to Ken Webb.



Sad News in the Rhododendron Community

Norm Todd, a longtime friend of the N.R.S., a pioneer and passionate member of the rhododendron community, will be sorely missed.



Norman A. TODD

Obituary

TODD, Norman A. October 11, 1930 - July 21, 2017 Norm finished making his long goodbye on July 21st in Victoria, B.C. A lover of rhododendrons, a devourer of books, and a grandfather of particular talent, Norm always had time for a chat and a laugh. As a young naval architect, Norm left his native Scotland for Quebec City. Fiancée Jean soon joined him and they married on a snowy Christmas Eve in 1953. In the 1960s, they began raising a family in Ottawa, where Norm worked for the federal government while earning a post-graduate degree from Carleton University. The family moved to Victoria in 1972 so Norm could oversee construction of the Institute of Ocean Sciences (Patricia Bay). He remained there as Chief of Management Services until his retirement in 1987. Victoria's rhododendrons inspired Norm. He helped establish the Victoria chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, an organization he propagated as carefully as any cutting in his greenhouse. He shared his passion without reservation: he published extensively, lectured and consulted, organized conventions, and charmed countless visitors over the years at Firwood Nursery. Norm was husband of 63 years to Jean, father to children Ian (Tobi) and Elizabeth (Aaron), and beloved "Grumpy" to cherished grandchildren Genevieve, Charles, and Tucker. Memorial gathering at the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific (505 Quayle Road) on Saturday, September 23, 2017 between 2:00pm and 4:00pm. No flowers (or trusses!) by request; messages to <mailto:normtoddmemorial@gmail.com>

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The Rhododendron Species Garden within Milner Gardens & Woodland

by Marilyn Dawson (MARS) and John Deniseger (NRS)

The rhododendron species garden at Milner Gardens and Woodland (MGW) is now a fact. During late May and early June, a small team of dedicated volunteers from MARS and NRS (Mount Arrowsmith and Nanaimo chapters) planted more than 120 species rhododendrons to launch the project physically after many, many meetings and some setbacks over several years.

Each of the five ARS Vancouver Island Chapters (District 1) have worked together to create a unique partnership with Milner and Vancouver Island University to build a rhododendron species garden within

MGW. The species advisory group, which includes representation from each Island chapter, has put considerable effort into selecting species appropriate for our climate and specimens of verified provenance to illustrate the tremendous variety and diversity within the genus Rhododendron, including unique and rare species that are threatened in the wild.

The 0.75-acre garden highlights 6 geographic areas representing the origin of the majority of temperate species rhododendrons: North America; Northeast Asia; Sichuan province China; Himalayas; Yunnan province China; and Europe.

On-site activity was limited last summer and fall due to an archaeological assessment of the site after the discovery of a midden, but work resumed this spring with conditional approval by the archeology team. Volunteers began by putting up a temporary deer fence. An entry arbour was designed, built and installed and the pathway through the arbour was completed. Stonework was completed in the area of the entry arbour. Milner volunteers weeded the entire area. Irrigation trenches were dug and an automatic irrigation system was designed and built. Pathways were installed and truckloads of a special soil mix was brought onto the site in stages in preparation for planting.

Just like the proverbial postman working in all conditions, volunteers braved chill and rain to get the tender plants in the ground in four sessions that included erecting shade barriers to protect the plants from wind and hot summer sun. Once completed, a roster of volunteers has been checking the plants 3 times a week for sun and wind damage and ensuring adequate watering. Initially designed for 250 rhododendrons, we have planted more than 120 species thus far. While planting is on hold for now, plans are underway to plant many of the remaining rhododendrons this coming fall, as well as feature trees and hundreds of companion plants. Other upcoming plans include the completion of walkways, replacing the temporary deer fence with permanent fencing, and the installation of benches and interpretative signage. A grant application has been submitted to assist with the plant accessioning and interpretative signage. The official opening of the species garden is planned for the spring of 2018.



Entry Arbour into Species Garden



Part of the planting crew....



Shade cloth protecting some of the rhodos Planting crew at work

Looking back at the summer in photos:

NRS Year end BBQ at Susan and Art's garden on Saturday, June 10th:



Jamie and Brian's Lantzville Open Garden on Tuesday, July 4th:



Kailey and Natalie's Open Garden in Comox on Saturday, July 22nd:



Garden of the Year!!

Last May, our guest speaker Bill McMillan, talked about 5 special Victoria gardens. One of those gardens, the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, was named Garden of the Year at the Canadian Garden Council's recent annual general meeting. And for good reason! Fourteen distinct garden environments, from Native to Mediterranean to the Winter Garden, delight visitors at any time of year. HCP attracts and engages visitors through an annual Arts & Music in the Garden summer festival; plant and seed sales; youth, student and master gardener programs; regular community workshops and the Pacific Horticulture College. Take a virtual tour at <http://hcp.ca/>. Plan to visit when you're next in the Victoria area.