



The Rhodomentum

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society Newsletter



March 2023



President's Message

Dear NRS members,

As I write this, it is lightly snowing and -2°C. The spring-like temperatures we have been experiencing evaporated overnight. Some of us have flowers in bloom, I know we do here in Fanny Bay. Yesterday afternoon, I was scrambling to bring in tender potted plants into the garage. Hopefully, this spring will be warmer than the one we had last year.

Those members who attended the last meeting enjoyed a great presentation by Allison McCabe on BC invasive plants, and information about the Japanese beetle. My wife and I had to contend with this beetle in Ontario and are delighted that it isn't here.....yet.

Our next speaker for the March 9th meeting will be Scott Wiskerke on pruning rhododendrons.

Our Seedy Sunday plans are all set, and we are actively planning for the May plant sale, and a possible bus tour.

On a sad note, one of our members, John Ayers, died earlier this week. His grieving wife, Eliane LeClerc, has our sympathy.

Best regards,
Ron Sutton,
NRS President & Treasurer

OUR EXECUTIVE

President	Ron Sutton	416-951-1373
Vice President	Chris Southwick	390-3415
Past President	Rosina Schmidt	758-7589
Secretary	Deborah Francis	
Treasurer	Ron Sutton	416-951-1373

Directors:

Margaret Cadwaladr	585-6046
Dorothee Kieser	390-4136
Paul Lawry	816-2370
Arthur Lightburn	468-7516
Gaylle McRae	758-7589

COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

Advertising	Margaret Cadwaladr
Library	Ann Beamish / Gaylle McRae
Newsletter	June Bouchard / John Deniseger
Membership	Jan Moles
Program	by Committee
Raffle	Val Harvey
Social	Deborah Francis
Bargain Table	Reinhold Gorgosilich
Website	Deborah Francis/Rosina Schmidt
Bus Tour	David & Joyce Mitchell
Sunshine	Wanda Brenton
Propagation	Rosina Schmidt
Hailey Grove	Deborah Francis
Show and Sale	Jan Moles and Rosina Schmidt

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society
Box 241, #101-5170 Dunster Road
Nanaimo, BC V9T 6M4
Website: nanaimorhodos.ca

Our next meeting - Thursday, March 9th, at 7:30

Pruning Rhododendrons

with Scott Wiskerke at Beban Park Social Center

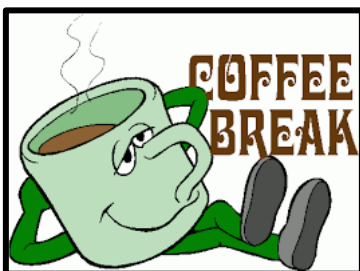
Our Program for March: Pruning Rhododendrons with Scott Wiskerke

I took the Horticulture course at VIU in 1993 and have been pruning trees and shrubs ever since. First, I leased several local apple orchards, growing and selling apples at several Farmers Markets. Next, I purchased an acreage south of Nanaimo and started my own apple orchard for which I grafted 1400 trees. By 2004, I got out of the apple growing game and started *Roots and Shoots Horticulture* as a residential pruning service which I am still operating today. Through my years of pruning, I have developed a broad knowledge of pruning many of the trees, shrubs, and plants common to our local gardens and landscapes.



Scott pruning “world famous” R. ‘Cynthia’ in Ladysmith in late fall/winter of 2018. (Photos by Chris Southwick) See p. 4 -5 for Cynthia’s story.

***** Don’t miss the follow-up pruning demonstration with Scott at Hailey Grove in Bowen Park on Saturday, March 18th at 10:00. Location: 500 Bowen Road at Hailey Grove. The meeting place and parking is behind the Community Centre beside the tennis courts.**



PLEASE NOTE:

Many thanks if you have signed up to bring Goodies for our upcoming March meeting!

NRS UPCOMING PROGRAM

Our club’s program committee (Chris Southwick, Dorothee Kieser, and John Deniseger) have been busy. Working together, they have continued to fill in our calendar with great speakers on interesting topics.

Make sure to mark those dates on your calendar!



Date	Speaker	Topic
March 9, 2023	Scott Wiskerke	Pruning Rhododendrons
March 18, 2023	Scott Wiskerke – at Hailey Grove in Bowen Park – 10:00am	Pruning Demonstration – see details above (p.2)
April 13, 2023	John Deniseger	Why I Grow Rhodos
May 11, 2023	Garth Wedemire	Finnerty Gardens Gems Over the Last Decade

Twigs and Stems: Calendar of Other Upcoming Events:

Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society: *“Plant Culture Roundtable”* with Sue Klapwijk, John Deniseger, Glen Jamieson and Linda Derkach; Qualicum Beach Civic Center, Wednesday, March 8th, 7:30pm

North Island Rhododendron Society: *“My Vancouver Island Propagations”* with Lloyd Gilmore; Comox United Church Hall, Tuesday, March 14th, 7:30 pm.

Victoria Rhododendron Society: *“Dahlias”* with Ryan Barry; Glendale Gardens, Thursday March 2nd, 7:30pm

Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society: St. John’s Anglican Church Hall 486 Jubilee Street, Duncan. Wednesday, March 1st, 7:30 pm

Milner Gardens and Woodland: open Fridays and Saturdays 11:00 to 3:30. Check the Milner website for details: [Milner Garden Events](#)



We now are on Facebook as the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society. Upcoming events will be posted there and members will be able to add photographs or items of interest to members. (Thank you, Margaret, for setting that up!)

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

Rhododendron “Cynthia” in Ladysmith - the aftermath of the December storm (from our February 2019 newsletter) By John Deniseger

Editor’s note: *A Look Back at Rhododendron “Cynthia” in Ladysmith. A pruning challenge taken on by our March speaker, Scott Wiskerke. At our meeting, he’ll be showing us how to prune our rhododendrons (don’t worry, they’ll be smaller than “Cynthia”), with a follow-up demo at Hailey Grove at Bowen Park.*

In 2017, Ladysmith’s iconic rhododendron was listed as one of “the world’s great trees” by the Bored Panda website. Rhododendron “Cynthia” is thought to have been planted by George Fraser in 1878 and stood 9 meters high and 8 meters wide.

As we all know, we had a huge windstorm blow through the southern BC coast on December 20th. BC Hydro called it “the most damaging windstorm in their history”.

Unfortunately, *Cynthia* (or “*Lady Cynthia*” as it has become known locally) was severely damaged by the windstorm.

Two of its three stems or trunks were broken at the base. It didn’t take long before word of the damage spread. A CBC article soon followed:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/ladysmith-lady-cynthia-rhododendron-damage-1.4967587>.

In early January, members from various ARS Vancouver Island chapters met with the owner, Peter Richmond, to offer advice and to take cuttings – just in case... A second follow up visit was made on January 11th. The big question was how to save what was left, as the damage was pretty significant. The general consensus seems to be that severe pruning of the remaining stem will be necessary in order to take the strain off of the weakened plant. Otherwise, the next windstorm or heavy snow load could be fatal.

Susan Lightburn’s photos below give us a sense of the damage:



Here’s a good photo of the remaining stem or trunk. *Cynthia* still has a “good side” for photos.



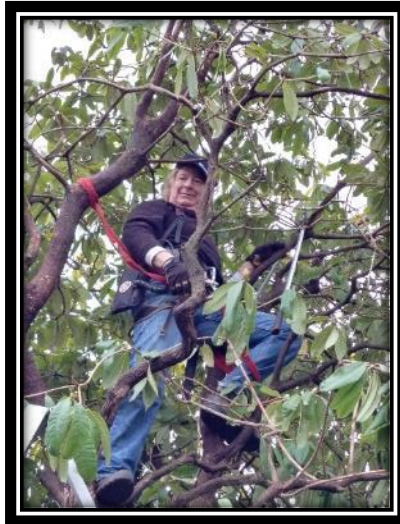
You can see the two stems broken off at the base.



Chris Southwick inspecting the damage. It looks like root rot....

Pruning Rhododendron "Cynthia" in Ladysmith - from our March 2019 newsletter

Our January 2019 speaker, Scott Wiskerke has been busy. About a week after our meeting, he spent a day pruning "Cynthia". Here are a few photos from Chris Southwick.



Don't Miss this!!!

Nanaimo's "Seedy Sunday 2023" will be on March 5th from 10am-3pm at the Beban Park Centennial Building.

The NRS has booked a table to promote interest in our club - please email Rosina at rosinatschmidt@gmail.com if interested in volunteering on that day. Or drop by just to say hello! Click [here](#) to know more.



Nanaimo Seedy Sunday

trade.buy.grow.local 2023

Sunday, March 5th
10 am - 3 pm
Beban Centennial Building
(2300 Bowen Road)

Admission \$3

Nanaimo Foodshare
"Local Food Matters"

nanaimo community gardens
grow share learn

The Shadehouse and Nursery at Milner – an exciting update by John Deniseger

The shadehouse and nursery project at Milner is a partnership between Milner, the NRS and MARS, largely funded by a generous, anonymous donor. The intent is to create a shared space for “growing on” the hundreds of rooted cuttings created by our propagation team. Once they are well rooted, they will need to be “grown on” to saleable size for 2 to 3 years. By partnering, we’ll be able to access a wider range of plants for our cuttings, resulting in a wider range of rhodos for both club members and the public. Last summer, the 45’ x 30’ shadehouse was erected, the shadecloth netting was put into place and the compacted gravel base was added.

Over the winter, a compacted gravel road bed (about 150’) was added for all season access to the area. The roughly 2500 ft² nursery area was also levelled and prepared with a compacted gravel base. The entire facility has now been surrounded with a 7-foot-high deer fence. The gates are under construction and will be added soon. Next steps will include the addition of a covered potting table/work area and automated irrigation system! **We’re almost there!**



Attendees at the August 23rd District 1 Presidents meeting standing inside the shadehouse – Rosina Schmidt photo



Photo of shadehouse taken on February 16th



Photo taken from back of main nursery on February 16th

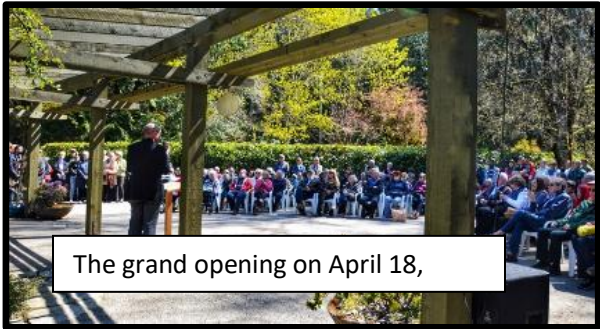
NRS Propagation Committee report – by Rosina Schmidt

Our 2022 cuttings are doing well, thanks to all that TLC by the Propagation Committee. The following liquid fertilizer concentration has been used recently: 20-8-20 mixed to a 150 ppm at an injection rate of 1 to 100. (3 kg per 40L tank). Another high calcium mixture will be spread later in the season: 15.5-0-0 mixed to a 150ppm at an injection rate of 1 to 100. (3.8 Kg per 40L tank).



Greig Rhododendron Species Garden at Milner by John Deniseger

The creation of the species garden at Milner is a partnership between the 5 Vancouver Island chapters of the ARS, Milner and Vancouver Island University. Believe it or not, we're coming up to the 5 year anniversary of the grand opening on April 18th, 2018. Since that time, we've continued to work on the garden by adding more rhododendrons and companion plants. We've also had work bees where we've added arborist mulch and done some light weeding. After 5 years, the garden has really matured and is looking great!



The grand opening on April 18,



Happy ARS members at the grand opening

Over the winter, substantial work has been done on the creation of interpretative panels for the species gardens. Several members from both the NRS and MARS have worked with Milner staff to create something both creative and informative. The signage should be in place later this spring. Be sure to check it out! Looking ahead, we're planning a work bee for sometime in March as well as an exclusive open house for Island chapter members to celebrate our collective achievement in the creation of this very special garden.

Planning for phase 2 of the species garden is underway, thanks to a significant donation and the collective efforts of many volunteers and Milner staff. Phase 2 will be in the area near and below the viewing platform. It will feature big leaf species and those that will grow into large specimens. Due to the slope of much of the area, substantial advance work needs to be completed before we can physically work on the site. In the meantime, we've begun the process of plant selection and acquisition. Stay tuned for more details in upcoming newsletters and at our meetings....



Phase 2 will be near and below the viewing platform

March Gardening Calendar by Rosina T. Schmidt

- Do you remember?**
- When Forsythia is blooming – plant radishes.
 - When the apple trees and lilacs are blooming, plant squash, cucumber, and beans.
 - Wait for planting the tomatoes until the Spireas are blooming.

Rhododendron: still time to fertilize your young Rhodos, using 10-6-4, or 10-6-8.
Orchard Bees: set the cocoon outside for release when blooms are a week away.
General Gardening: Aerate and top-dress lawns; apply lawn fertilizer. Plant trees and shrubs. Start begonia tubers inside. Prune back roses and fertilize with a granular slow-release fertilizer.

Hailey Rhododendron Grove Work Bee ~ Bowen Park

By Deborah Francis, coordinator

Holly and Ivy in the Hailey Rhododendron Garden, sounds idyllic but it is not. **We need your help to assist in removing invasive species from Hailey Grove at Bowen Park. Come and be part of the fun!** 😊

The next monthly work bee will be held on **Tuesday, March 14th from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.** If you can spare a little (or a lot) of time, all are welcome to spend some time in the rhododendron garden. Weather permitting.

A look back at the February Work Bee

It was a magnificent day to work at Hailey Grove on this Valentine's Day. A truckload of invasive species was delivered to the curb for the city to pick up.



Hard at work were: Deborah Francis, Kevin Francis, Elaine Hutchison, and Rosina Schmidt.



Each of them deserves a Hailey Grove Gold Medal!



Plant of the Month by Ron Sutton

Rhododendron 'Canby' (name changed to 'Starbursts'?)

Here is a wonderful rhododendron from the Frank Fujioka hybridization program. There is very little information available for it, but it does have R. Starbright Champagne as part of its genetics. The flowers are quite distinctive, with shell pink elongated petals, resting on dark green leaves.

In early to mid-May, it produces trusses of 9-10 flowers. Classed as a dwarf rhododendron, it will grow to approximately five feet high by 5 feet wide in 10 years. It likes full sun and is hardy to -18°C, USDA zone 7.

I purchased my plant in 2019 from Whitney gardens in Washington.

My plant, seen in the photo taken May 13, 2022, gets a great deal of full sun and grows well. Regarding the name, it was sold to me as R. 'Canby' but I have since learned the name is being changed to R. 'Starbursts'.

To my knowledge, it hasn't been registered yet. Definitely recommended if you can find one, whatever the name.



*Spring is in the
air....*

A male Anna's hummingbird in our president's garden – photo taken by Ron Sutton on February 13th.

(See the following two pages for more on "early spring" ...)

**"If we had no winter, the
spring would not be so
pleasant."**

Anne Bradstreet

Sometimes they bloom, sometimes they don't - the challenge of the early bloomers! By John Deniseger

From early January through to February 22nd, we'd had a fairly mild stretch of weather, with only the occasional light frost. Our tender rhododendrons, which we keep in pots were on the verandah, looking great. Our early bloomers, such as R. 'Cilpinense', R. 'Snow Lady', *R. sutchuenense*, and R. 'Lee's Scarlett' were thriving, with buds that were beginning to open. R. 'Lee's Scarlett' had a number of trusses that were fully open, a real treat in mid-February. It looked like we were going to make it through February without a deep freeze. And then, it all changed...

With forecasts of snow and overnight temperatures potentially as low as -8, we decided to take some action. As a general rule, rhodo flowers and buds that are well advanced can only take a light frost, without turning into brown mush. First, we moved our tender rhodos to the garage. Here are some photos from the late afternoon of February 22nd.... Will it work? Probably not, but we felt like we had to at least try! Don't worry, the neighbours are used to it 😊



R. 'Cilpinense' is under there



R. 'Lee's Scarlett' with lots of open trusses



I'm sure that you recognize R. 'Lucy Lou'



All is not lost, winter aconites are early harbingers of spring – when the snow melts, they'll continue to bloom beautifully



Here's R. 'Lucy Lou' on February 24th – under 3 to 4 inches of snow

The following are from Rosina's garden, R. 'Cilpinense' on the left and Bergenia on the right – both photos taken on February 23rd, 2023:



Volunteers (badly) needed!!!!

It may seem a little early to start thinking about our upcoming plant sale but your executive is hard at work already with the preliminary organisation of this annual event. As part of this early start, we're in the midst of replacing the old cash registers with something both simpler and more reliable. **We are looking for volunteers who would be available to help out with the cashier role at the May 13th plant sale.**

Although not a requirement, experience using a "square" for credit card payment would be a great asset! There will be a "training session" to use the new equipment in late March/early April. **Please let us know if you're interested in helping in that way – it's a great way to meet a whole lot of excited and friendly gardeners 😊! Send us an email at juneandjohn@shaw.ca – we'd love to hear from you!!!**



"I'll never forget the look on the cashier's face, when she scanned the packet of bird seed, and I asked her if she knew how long it took for the birds to grow once the seeds have been planted."

(Author Unknown)

Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association “Spring Education Day” Vegetable Gardening, the Good, the Bad and the Ugly Saturday, March 11th at Nanoose Place

- The day will include a panel of VIMGA Master Gardeners from their four districts who will discuss vegetable gardening (with a Q & A to follow).
- There will also be a presentation from Bonnie Zand. Many of you will remember Bonnie from our “Fall into Gardening” event in October, where she gave an excellent presentation! Bonnie is the owner of Bonnie’s Bugs IPM, a private consulting company working with farmers to manage insect pests on Vancouver Island. She is currently running the Vancouver Island Pests, Pollinators and Beneficials Project.
- Bonnie holds a BSc in biology from UVic, is a board member of the Native Bee Society of BC and is part of the recovery implementation group for the endangered Taylor’s checkerspot butterfly. Bonnie is also the BC instructor for the Master Melittologist program. In her spare time, she likes to look for interesting native bees and other insects, raise mason bees, garden with native plants, and instill a love of plants in her five-year-old daughter.



*** For more details: [click here](#)

Nurseries in the Comox Valley

We got the following message from Naomi Chester, Vice-President of the North Island Rhododendron Society, with an update on valley nurseries.



- **GardenWorks** has had most of their rhodo delivery in now and it is much more exciting than it was the last few years at Art Knapps (there are a couple of Barlups, Lem's, species and many others that are not routinely seen around here). One-gallon rhodos are \$23 (azaleas \$17.99) and 3 gallon rhodos are \$62. Do say hello to Aleia, the nursery manager there, who is a dear friend of ours and relatively new member of our club.
- **Paradise Plants** on Hardy Road is now open for the season and are awaiting their rhodo delivery but have some beautiful large sized specimens currently in stock.
- **Outback Nursery** on Headquarters Road is opening March 1st and will be having a 25% off all last year’s stock sale until the 7th. They have lots of rhodos available and there will be 6 varieties of Japanese maple included in the sale too (fertilizers, natural stone, new stock and soil amendments not included).
- **Anderton Nursery** is having construction done so is aiming to open sometime in the first 2 weeks of March.

~Naomi added the following: “If you have a wish list of rhodos that you'd like, do let me know as Aleia will be doing the ordering this year and she'll be asking us for input as to what to order/try to order.” You can email Naomi at naomichester@yahoo.com

From the BC Council of Garden Clubs – A new Zoom presentation on March 8th!

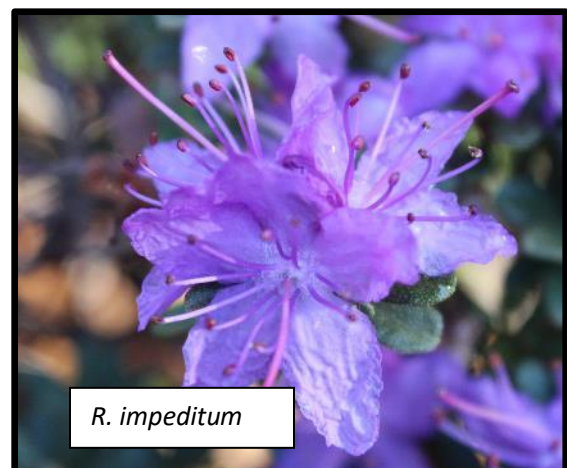
Mark March 8th, 7:00 pm, on your calendars for another Zoom presentation – “Gardening in Iceland” presented by Betty Girard, South Burnaby Garden Club. To register, email 1vicepresident@bcgardenclubs.com

The BC Garden Council website and newsletter is full of useful information. Our club, like all garden clubs in BC, are members of the BCGC, as we get our insurance coverage through them. If you haven't already explored their website, you may wish to do some browsing [here](#)

The Colour Purple

The Canadian Garden Council will be continuing to celebrate gardening across Canada in 2023 by promoting purple flowers and plants. They have asked their members throughout BC to submit photos of purple plants in their garden. You can view the photos or see a recording of their presentation if you [click here](#).

There are many purple rhododendrons. Here are a few examples!



(Photos by June and/or John)

Sad news...

Long time NRS member John Ayers passed away on February 20th. John and his wife Eliane attended many meetings together and have supported many club events over the years. Our heartfelt condolences go to Eliane and family.



*Looking forward to seeing you all at
our March 9th meeting - bring your
pruning questions! ☺*