



The Rhodomentum

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society Newsletter



October 2023



President's Message

Hello All,

Well, the fall is here with cooler temperatures and thankfully, with a little bit of rain. We had to harvest our apples a little early this year to discourage a resident black bear from attacking our trees. We were fortunate to have no nuisance black bears the last couple of years.

Many of our rhododendrons are going through senescence, where the older leaves are yellowing and then dropping. Fall, like spring, is a busy time for all of us gardeners. The cooler temperatures and fewer mosquitoes make it comfortable to get work done. It's a good time to get your potted plants in the ground.

Our club's support committee has been decided for this season, with all positions filled. The only significant change sees Dorothee Kieser take over the vice-president position from Chris Southwick.

Our first meeting in September saw a good turnout of members who enjoyed an interesting presentation from David McIntosh on George Fraser. The NRS welcomes a new member, Jennifer McKee, who signed up at our last meeting. One other guest at the meeting expressed interest in joining.

We are all looking forward to the next meeting on October 12, where our very own Margaret Cadwaladr will give a talk on "Paths to a Garden".

Interesting fact: As of the last count, Vancouver Island has a total of 360 members spread over 5 ARS chapters, and 410 total in the province, including the two mainland clubs.

The club will hold its spring plant sale on May 11, 2024, at Beban Park's Centennial Hall, so mark your calendars.

As you know, I have been producing a piece for our newsletter called "Plant of the Month" – it is something I enjoy doing. However, I don't have exclusivity for this, so I encourage all interested members to submit something to share for our newsletter. If you have a favourite plant that you would like to share with us, rhododendron or other, we would welcome it. Just submit a photo of it with some information, and your experience with it. It can even be an informative piece you found and thought worthy of sharing. It can even be a photo of your garden.

In closing, I would like all members to know that attendance at executive meetings is open to anyone interested – you can even host a meeting – you don't have to be a committee member. It's part social and part business – the meeting host always provides a snack for it. We would welcome your input. Meetings are held in the early afternoon of the 3rd Thursday of the month. So, if you are curious how your club is managed, come join us. If interested, contact me at rondsutton58@gmail.com

Regards,
Ron

OUR EXECUTIVE

President	Ron Sutton	416-951-1373
Vice President	Dorothee Kieser	390-4136
Past President	Rosina Schmidt	758-7589
Secretary	Deborah Francis	
Treasurer	Ron Sutton	416-951-1373

Directors:

Wanda Brenton	754-1039
Margaret Cadwaladr	585-6046
Paul Lawry	816-2370
Arthur Lightburn	468-7516
Krystyna Sosulski	729-0948
Chris Southwick	616-2742

COMMITTEE CHAIRS:

Advertising	Margaret Cadwaladr
Library	Ann Beamish / Gaylle McRae
Newsletter	June Bouchard / John Deniseger
Membership	Jan Moles
Program	by Committee
Raffle	Val Harvey
Sunshine/Coffee	Wanda Brenton
Bargain Table	Reinhold Gorgosilich
Website	Deborah Francis/Rosina Schmidt
Bus Tour	David & Joyce Mitchell
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, October 12th, at 7:30
"Paths to a Garden" with Margaret Cadwaladr
At Beban Park Social Centre

Our Program for October ~ "Paths to a Garden"

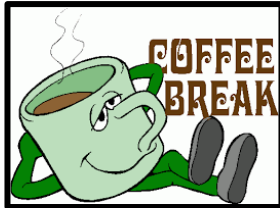
with Margaret Cadwaladr



Margaret Cadwaladr explores the influences of Irish garden writer William Robinson and his associates on Veronica Milner, a British aristocrat who developed gardens in Ireland and in Qualicum Beach. Her Canadian garden continues to thrive as Milner Gardens & Woodland.

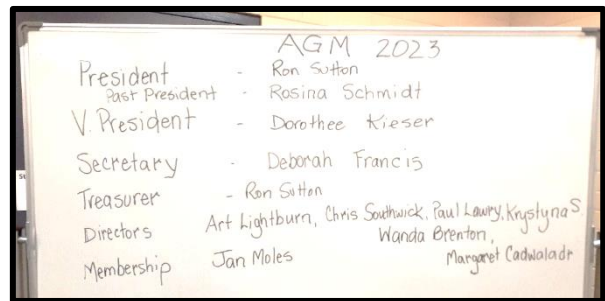
Robinson, known as the "father of the English flower garden," promoted natural-looking plantings, the use of native and Alpine plants and rhododendrons established in woodland settings. His ideas are commonplace today but were revolutionary in his time. Two of his books "*The Wild Garden*" and "*The English Flower Garden*", are still in print after more than one hundred and fifty years.

A graduate of UBC, Margaret is author of "*In Veronica's Garden: the Social History of the Milner Gardens and Woodland*", "*A Secret Garden: the Story of Darts Hill Garden Park*" and "*Food Floor: My Woodward's Days*". Margaret was born in Vancouver and currently lives in Nanaimo where she is a member of the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society board of directors.



Many thanks to Eliane Leclerc and April Johnston for bringing goodies to our October meeting! 😊

September was AGM month - please welcome our new executive!!! Thanks everyone for stepping up to be part of "the team"!



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Hailey Rhododendron Grove Work Bee ~ Bowen Park

By Deborah Francis, coordinator

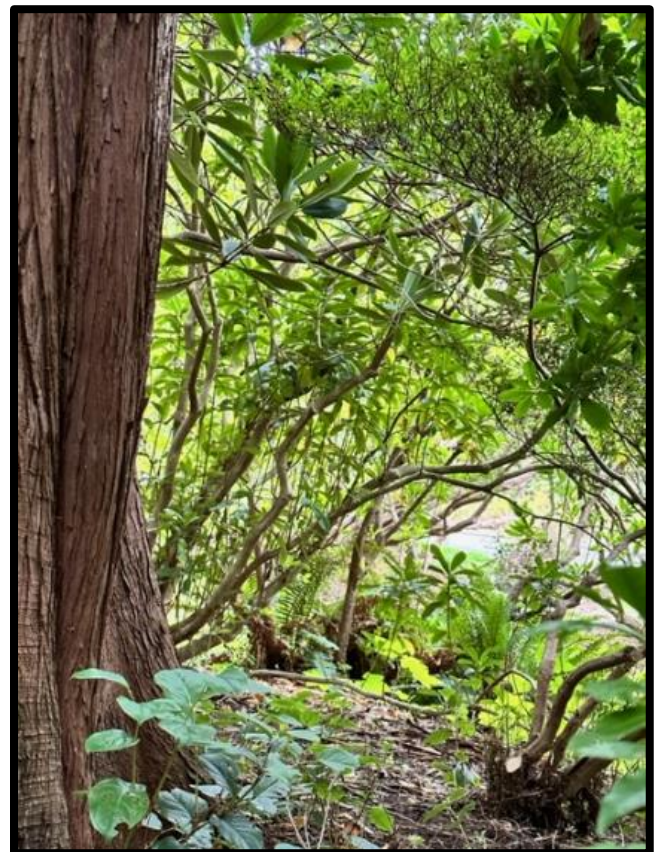
We need your help to assist in removing invasive species from Hailey Grove at Bowen Park. Come and be part of the fun! 😊

Next work bee will be on Tuesday, October 10th, 2023 – 9:00 am to noon at Bowen Park in Nanaimo – parking at the tennis courts. Bring good cheer, your gardening gloves, and a snack. The City will provide gardening tools.

Hope to see you there!



September 12th clean-up at Hailey Grove was a successful day of trimming and cleaning out the underbrush. Thank you to Elaine Hutchison, Deborah and Kevin Francis for all their hard work.



**"Teamwork
Coming together is a beginning.
Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success."
--Henry Ford**



Dear All,

Subscription renewal time is here again and we hope to be welcoming you all back for the new 2023/2024 year. **November meeting at latest is the target.**

Full membership: Single \$40, Family \$45

Associate Membership: Single \$10, Family \$15

Student Membership: \$10

Subscriptions can be paid at a meeting with cash or cheque.

Or they can be e-transferred to our treasurer Ron Sutton at this email address: rondsutton@shaw.ca

Or sent by post to our treasurer at this address:

Ron Sutton, 7310 Cougar Smith Rd., Fanny Bay BC V0R 1W0

Jan Moles
Membership Secretary

*****Please Note: if you were a new member in 2023 AND paid after 1st April 2023, there is no need to pay again.**

Questions? ~An idea from our president...

Have you ever had a plant/gardening-related question and wondered how to get it answered... well, you have come to the right place.

The NRS has many knowledgeable members, including Master Gardeners, that can help you.

One of the many reasons we join a rhodo club is to learn more. A wide variety of questions can be asked such as: How much sun a certain plant can take? What fertilizer to use? Where to find a particular plant? What's wrong with my plant? The plant in question doesn't even have to be a rhododendron.



You can send your question to our newsletter editors at juneandjohn@shaw.ca with any pertinent details and/or photo. Using the knowledge base in our club, we'll do our best to provide answers in the next newsletter.

Collectively, we might all learn something from the answers. 😊

Twigs and Stems: Calendar of Other Upcoming Events:

Milner Gardens and Woodland: Open Fridays & Saturdays, 11:00am to 3:30pm, starting on the Thanksgiving Weekend. For details, check the [Milner Website](#)

North Island Rhododendron Society: “No Dig Gardening” with Kerry Ann Griffiths; Comox United Church Hall, Tuesday, October 10th, 7:30 pm.

Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society: “Fire Smarting Your Property” with Kel Roberts, and “Plant Propagation” with Rose Pruffer, Qualicum Beach Civic Center, Wednesday, October 11th, 7:30pm

Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society: “Small Ferns for Gardens and Rockeries” with Margot Moser. St. John’s Anglican Church Hall 486 Jubilee Street, Duncan. Wednesday, October 4th, 7:00 pm

Victoria Rhododendron Society: “Propagation Practices”, Couvelier Pavilion, Glendale Gardens, 505 Quayle Rd, Saanich, Thursday, October 6th, 7:30pm

ARS Fall Western Regional Conference: Oct 19-21 in Florence Oregon. For more information: [click here](#)



If you’re interested in going, please let us know as you may be able to carpool with someone local. Email us at juneandjohn@shaw.ca



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/>

More on George Fraser....

We had a very interesting presentation from Dave McIntosh at our September meeting, providing us with some insight on George Fraser, as well as Ucluelet and Vancouver Island history. Dave talked about a number of George Fraser's hybrids, including several that are difficult to find. If you know of a garden or nursery where any of these hybrids are found, Dave would love to hear from you. Here are some examples, with photos and descriptions, where available:

R. 'Albert Close' (*R. maximum* X *R. 'Jamie Fraser'*)



Flower/Truss Description: Flower broadly funnel-shaped, bright rose-pink with chocolate-red spotting in throat. Held in conical trusses of 23. Foliage Description / Plant Habit: Leaves bluish-green, held 3 years.

R. 'Camich' (*R. 'catawbiense'* X *R. Michael Waterer'*) - no photo or information available

R. Maxie (*R. maximum* X *R. macrophyllum*) – no photo of information available

R. 'Fiona Christie' (parentage unknown) – may actually be R. 'Anna Rose Whitney'

From an article by Bill Dale in the "*Journal of the American Rhododendron Society*" v 61, no. 4: "The rhododendron 'Fiona Christie' bloomed for its namesake, the person Fiona Christie, at Christie's Nursery in Scotland this spring. When Fiona traveled to Ucluelet, B.C. in 2002, I gave her a rooted cutting of the hybrid, a cross by George Fraser that was found as a seedling in his garden at Ucluelet. Fiona, a grand-daughter of the Christies who employed Fraser at their nursery in Scotland before he moved to British Columbia, came to Victoria, B.C., in 2002 as a high school student with a group of fiddlers to pay tribute to Fraser at a ceremony in Beacon Hill Park. Fiona was the featured dancer.

As a young man, George Fraser worked for Christies Nursery in Scotland before he came to Canada in 1890. He worked as a foreman at Beacon Hill Park and in 1892 moved to Ucluelet where he remained until his death in 1944."



Fiona Christie with George Fraser's hybrid named 'Fiona Christie' by Bill Dale. Photo courtesy of Fiona Christie

R. 'Mrs. Jamie Fraser' (*R. arborescens* X *R. macrophyllum*)

From the ARS website (photo by Harold Greer): Flower openly funnel-shaped, wavy edges, 2½" across, dark red with heavy black spotting on dorsal lobe. Truss has 10 flowers. **Bloom Time:** Midseason **Foliage Description / Plant Habit:** Leaves elliptic, convex, mucronate apex, cuneate base, 5" long, dull olive green, yellow-green below, retained 2 years. Upright growth habit. **Height:** 6 feet in 10 years. **Cold Hardiness Temp:** -15°F (-26°C)



Fraseri Group (*R. canadense* X *R. molle* ssp. *japonicum*)



R. 'George Fraser' (*R. macrophyllum* x *R. maximum*)



R. 'John Blair' (*R. occidentale* X *R. arborescens*)



(An excerpt from JARS V 50, no. 3): "John Blair was born and trained in Perthshire, Scotland, where he took his first lessons in garden and park design from the natural beauty of the land of which Walter Scott wrote so eloquently in his "Lady of the Lake." In 1851 at age 31, he emigrated to North America, first to St. Catherines, Ontario, and three years later, in 1854, to Rockford, Illinois. This was seven years before the start of the American Civil War, and Illinois was still considered the Western frontier. Blair's reputation as a landscape designer grew rapidly, and in 1865 he moved to the Chicago area where he laid out several of that city's new parks, utilizing the natural environment rather than copying the more formal design of sweeping lawns and trimmed hedges popular in Europe at that time. By 1871, when he left Chicago, he was superintendent of that

city's public parks, but very few records of his work there are available, as Mrs. O'Reilly's cow kicked over a lantern and started the great Chicago fire of 1871.

Blair went west that year and settled in Colorado Springs, which was just starting to be developed. He was employed to lay out sections of the new city and several of its parks, especially in the area of the Garden of the Gods and Manitou Springs. These areas were ideal for using his concept of including the natural environment in his designs. Of a roving nature, he made one final move to Vancouver Island, where he built a home in the virgin forest, five miles west of the present city of Duncan, B.C. In 1888, he entered a competition for the design of a large park in Victoria, B.C. He won handily and was given the job of building that city's present beautiful Beacon Hill Park. The first thing that he did was hire the aforementioned George Fraser as his foreman. They became good friends, and Fraser, many years after Blair's death in 1906, often spoke and wrote of his admiration for John Blair and his outstanding ability as a landscape designer. Fraser produced many hybrid rhododendrons and azaleas, and his favorite was the one he not surprisingly called 'John Blair'."

The Secret World of Rhododendrons – a plant more ancient than the Himalayas that inspired fables and stories around the world.

Chris Southwick shared an interesting article, full of rhododendron stories and myths. It also includes a spectacular video footage of the Baili area in China. You won't believe your eyes....

Here's the link – you'll want to check this out! [the-secret-world-of-rhododendrons](#)

In Memoriam...

It is with sadness that we report that NRS member Judy Daneluk passed away on September 9th after a long and courageous struggle with Multiple Sclerosis. Judy was a very special person who, together with her husband Earl, attended many meetings and ARS conferences, often coming home with many new rhododendron treasures for their beautiful Lantzville garden. Our most sincere sympathies to Earl and the Daneluk family.



From the North Island Rhododendron Society:

"It is with great sadness that we inform you that our cherished member Bernie Guyader passed on Friday. Bernie joined the NIRS in its first year, 1985, and was an active member receiving a Bronze medal in 2000. He was happy to share his knowledge and inspired many in our club, and other chapters, with his passion for rhodos, alpines and his magnificent bonsai collection. I'm sure there are many of us at the club who have a Daphne tangutica, hepatica etc in their gardens from Bernie's many donations. Our hearts go out to his wife, Gloria, and all of his family. Bernie will be dearly missed."
(Editors Note: Many of you will remember Bernie from days gone by – we toured his garden in Courtenay as part of our bus tours; Bernie spoke at our club several times, often on his beloved alpines and dwarf rhododendrons.)

An Update on our Activities at Milner

Greig Rhododendron Species Garden

Phase 2 of the species garden will focus on big leaf and tree-like species. The project continues to move forward as we do the due diligence required. Jim Cadwaladr has put in a lot of work in completing an arborist's report, including a site survey, tree inventory, and long-term recommendations. The Geotech report has also been completed. There is still a lot of work to be done as a significant portion of the site is on a fairly steep slope. We are taking the time to pay attention to details, realizing that this is a long-term project which will create a very special and unique rhododendron garden. Stay tuned for further details!

Shadehouse at Milner

Our partnership with MARS and Milner has paid dividends as the shadehouse is now home to hundreds of plants, largely potted-up rhododendron cuttings. The irrigation system is working well and the plants are thriving. We've set up a weekly maintenance schedule with MARS members – we alternate weeks. **We could use a few more volunteers as we look ahead – if you'd like to help out, please see John or Chris.**

In the fall, we'll be building end walls and access doors before covering the shadehouse with plastic. The intention is to provide a little more shelter over the winter as the newer cuttings remain more susceptible to the winter winds and cold.

Propagation News by Rosina Schmidt

NRS Propagators began their work of planting this year's 300 rhododendron cuttings. Once again, the NRS is having the gracious opportunity to use VIU's Paine Centre greenhouse. Wanda, Iona, Moira, Deborah, Gaylle, Elaine, Allen and Rosina started the work on the 22nd of September, with a second session to complete the planting a week later. The 2019 and 2020 cuttings were largely sold at our Show and Sale last May. The 2021 and 2022 cuttings are now at Milner Gardens' shade house, and doing well.



*Our great thank-you
to the hardworking
propagation crew!*

Plant of the Month by Ron Sutton

Rhododendron gongshanense

Here is a desirable and rare rhododendron that died on me, but I would like to try growing again.

I purchased my plant from the RSBG back in 2019, but it only lasted two winters.

The RSBG says that this plant is a fairly recent discovery. It is found growing wild in Gaoligang Mountains of NW Yunnan, China, and is threatened by habitat destruction. It is somewhat tender, as I discovered, listed hardy to only 10°F/-12°C

The growth rate will be approximately 5 feet in 10 years. The long narrow, up to 10" leaves, have veins embossed on the surface, and the new growth is light bronze in colour. The red flowers, which arrive in early spring, form tight trusses.

The photo on the right is my plant when it was recently planted. The second photo is *R. gongshanense* in flower, which I took inside the RSBG greenhouse in March 25 of this year.

The RSBG isn't the only source for this rhododendron, it can also be purchased from Chimacum Woods, a nursery in Washington.



This is what they wrote about it regarding hardiness...



"Because the flowers and new growth come very early – January or so – this plant is best suited for the milder areas. One of our seedlings growing in the garden, has shown good hardiness, coming through some nasty winters unharmed over its 20 years. It also seems to do well in a container."

Some trees grow very fast! Empress Tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*)

The Empress tree is one of the fastest growing trees in the world. It's a broadleaf deciduous tree that can reach 60 feet, with leaves up to 10 inches across. It produces pale purple foxglove- like flowers in mid-spring in our climate. We planted one 8 or 9 years ago and decided to grow it as a large leaved shrub as it was shading our solar panels. In late summer to early fall, we cut it back annually to about 5 feet, knowing that it will burst forth again the following spring. The photo shows the main leader that was cut back a couple of weeks ago – it's about 14 feet high – yes, it really does grow fast!!!

By the way, we planted a second one last fall to replace a large big-leaf maple which died and was taken down. We plan on letting that one grow into a large tree which will provide some much-needed shade to a section of the back yard. We've all heard of "SLEEP, CREEP, LEAP" for new plantings. During its "sleep" year, it grew 5 feet!



Rhododendron Glossary...



We're building our very own collection of terms related to rhododendrons, one word at a time. Each month, we'll add a new word or term to the glossary. If you have suggestions that you'd like us to add, please let us know.



This month's (two for one 😊) words are: Elepidote and Lepidote – two main groups into which rhododendrons are classified. (From *Cox's Guide to Choosing Rhododendrons* by Peter and Kenneth Cox, 1990)

For **Elepidote**, the chief characteristic is *the lack of scales on the leaf*. This group includes most of the larger-growing species. The other group, **Lepidote**, the main characteristic is the *scales on the leaves*. This group contains most of the smaller species. Rhododendrons from one group cannot be hybridized with those of the other group.

Refer to previous issues for

September 2023's word: **tomentum**

June 2023's word: **indumentum**

May 2023's word: **truss**

Visitors from back east: Laura Grant & Robert Ramik by Ron Sutton

In late August I had a visit from two friends from Ontario, they are Laura Grant and Robert Ramik. The reason I chose to write about them is because they are such avid "Plant Collectors", plus are known by many in the rhododendron community – some of you may already know them.

Rob and Laura spend their retirement time travelling to plant-related conventions, as well as visiting public and private gardens in other countries. They are members of a number of garden organizations, and are always looking to add new plants to their zone 7, one acre property in Niagara Falls, Ontario. They do have some rhododendrons in their garden, including some acquired from me before I moved to the island. They are members of the Niagara Rhododendron Society, the club I was once a member of.

Laura used to be the Executive Director of the ARS, and Robert Ramik is currently the ARS endowment fund chair. He recently approved some ARS money for the Milner Gardens shade house project.

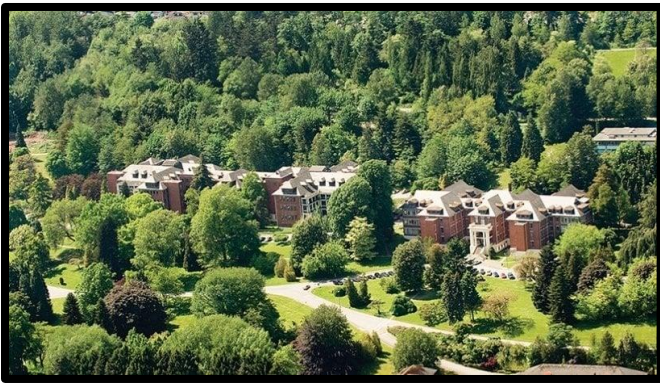
Robert and I use to import rhododendrons from Greer Gardens, although we didn't know each other when we did that. When they visit us on the island, we plant shop together.

After visiting us, they went to South Africa to look for native African bulbs, mainly gladiolus bulbs.



An interesting opportunity for a tour at Riverview Hospital in Vancouver:

(Shared by Chris Southwick)



Egan Davis will be leading what may be the last tree tour of the Riverview Hospital grounds on **Sunday October 22, 2023**. These tours have been regular events over the last 30 years but are now imperiled as BC Housing will be charging the Riverview Horticultural Centre Society \$825.00 per tour, a cost that the volunteer organization cannot afford. BC Housing justifies these fees as fair because that is the amount that movies and wedding parties are charged to use the grounds.

You may not be aware that the Riverview hosts the largest arboretum in western Canada, with close to 2000 trees, including at least 163 species and 113 varieties, some over 100 years old. It merits a visit, especially as it may well soon be under threat of development.

The tour begins at **1:00 until 3:00PM**. Children and leashed dogs are welcome. There are helpful signs as soon as you reach Riverview to direct you to the appropriate parking lot. See you there, rain or shine!

Please consult the <http://rhcs.org> website for more information.

'Echoes of Nature'
Rhododendron and Plant Sale
Next 3 Weekends – Beginning September 30th!

Plant Now for Healthy Plants
Warm, Moist Soil and Humid Air are Perfect Conditions for Planting

75 Varieties of 2-Gallon Rhododendrons
30 Varieties of 1-Gallon Rhododendrons
Companion Shade Plants
Perennial Plants

3908 Cowichan Lake Road
Duncan, BC
(1 km off Tansor Connector)

For a Plant List Contact:
echoesofnaturevb@gmail.com

10am–3pm Saturdays
1–4pm Sundays



*Looking
Forward to
seeing you all at
our next
meeting on
Thursday,
October 12th! 😊*

(Coral Bark Maple from our garden)