



# NEWSLETTER

Volume 20: 8

Editor: Ian E. Efford

December 2009

## President's Message

It is hard to believe that a few short months ago we were really concerned about the weather. Concerned that it was too dry!!!! That certainly hasn't been the case in the past few weeks. To see those people on Beverly and Heather streets, here in Duncan, that are piling up all their water-soaked drywall, insulation, carpets, and furniture on their front lawns is a very heart-breaking sight. Our thoughts go out to them as they try to get their lives back on track.

Hopefully your rhododendrons are fairing well in the wet. They do love water, but not when they have to sit in it. Perhaps you need to do some drainage to keep them happy.

As we approach the Christmas season, there are many needs in our community from those that are less fortunate. This is the season of giving. Please consider donating to the various causes. At our Christmas party, you are being asked to bring some non-perishables that we can give to the Basket Society. They would be grateful for whatever we give. As we normally do each year, the proceeds of the gift 'raffle' will be donated to the Salvation Army for their community programs.

I trust that you will have a happy, peaceful, and healthy Christmas and New Year. See you at the party on December 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30 pm

David Annis

## The Christmas Party

**2<sup>nd</sup> December 2009**

**St John's Anglican Church Hall,**

**486 Jubilee Street**

**Duncan**

**6.30pm**

**Set-up helpers to be there 5.30pm**

**Bring!**

- **Yourselves and friends;**
- **a plate of savory or desert finger food;**  
**an unwrapped present for the silent auction valued about \$10;**
- **a donation for the food bank: either \$ or canned or dried food or both;**

**Wine, punch, coffee and tea will be provided**

**Let's Have a Good Time!**

**The Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society**

**A Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society**

PO Box 904, Duncan, British Columbia V9L 3Y3 <http://cowichan.rhodos.ca>

## A Visit to La Conner Washington and the Tulip Festival

**Bill Dumont**

Brenda and I have often talked about visiting La Conner Washington for the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival during April. So when some friends in Vancouver suggested we do it this spring the quick trip was on! Four of us plus three dogs headed south from Lotusland sixty miles to LaConner. Our trust in the main highway sign just north of the border in White Rock providing info on the border crossing times into the USA at Blaine was shattered when we went to the Truck Crossing on 176<sup>th</sup> Ave to avoid a longer line-up at Peace Arch.

The info sign said a 35 minute border wait early on Saturday morning at the Truck Crossing. After a painful 1 hour and 45 minute wait we finally got to the US Homeland Security agent who grilled us about many aspects of tulip culture to ensure we really were heading to La Connor and not delivering some nasty contraband to the great USA.

It's been some time since we crossed a US land border and it's now rather intimidating. You first enter a lane bristling with electronic gadgets, sensors and cameras. You are welcomed in to the USA following the passport check by a team of black uniformed handlers with ferocious looking drug sniffing dogs. Quite a change from even a few years ago. Fortunately our mutts didn't react to the drug dogs! However, when you get a first look at the very cheap US gas prices definitely know you're somewhere else than high-taxed Canada.

As we neared Bellingham we decided to take the scenic Chuckanut Drive- Highway 11 along the coast to LaConner. This is a pleasant, windy, narrow road that led us to the Rhododendron Café at Bow, Washington for a great lunch. The selection of Rhodos at this culinary delight was limited and flowering about two to three weeks behind on this cool last weekend of April.

LaConner is a small Washington town of 850 people situated on the banks of the Swinomish Channel in the midst of a large farming area. Besides tulip farming the town is famous for its Wild Turkeys which are the official town bird. This formal designation didn't occur until 2005 but by 2006 there were calls to make them the feature of local Thanksgiving Dinners due to their gobbling, pooing everywhere, harassing visitors and eating everyone's vegetable gardens. Presumably the wild birds were quite tasty as we saw none on our recent visit!

Of course, the main reason for visiting LaConner is the tulip farms and there are two basic operations- *Tuliptown* and *Roozengaarde*. Both are located just off Mclean Rd, and are only about ½ a kilometre from each other and both are must sees if you are visiting the area

*Tuliptown* is owned by the DeGoede family and has many acres of vast colourful tulip fields with over 70 varieties of dazzling colours, shapes and varieties. After the \$5 entry fee the first thing that strikes a visitor is how silty and heavy the soils are where the tulips are planted and growing. The spectacle attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year and it must take a jackhammer in the fall to break up the compacted soils along the public walkways in the tulip fields.

In spite of this seemingly challenging soil situation the bulbs and the flowers thrive. *Tuliptown* has more of a carnival atmosphere with a large pavilion showing off the various varieties inside to complement the vast open fields of colour. Children's face painting, every imaginable tulip trinket, food, bulbs, tulip clothing etc are offered to visitors. Due to lack of phytosanitary inspection facilities Canadians cannot purchase and bring bulbs home but cut flowers are no problem. You'll want a couple of hours at *Tuliptown*.

We then returned for the evening to our motel in downtown LaConner before visiting *Roozengarde* the next day. There are lots of choices for accommodation but few are willing to take dogs. So we settled on the LaConner Country Inn on South Second Street near the waterfront when our four legged family members were welcomed for a stunning extra \$50 per night! The rooms are large and comfortable and the fare includes an excellent breakfast buffet the next morning.

Downtown LaConner has many funky and varied shops and points of interest along with lots of restaurant options. South First Street is the most interesting with one side of the street with shops abutting the Swinomish Channel. Beaver aircraft are constantly taking off with tourists for viewing the vast tulip fields from the air. After a couple of hours of buying in the shops that has extended our date of retirement we settled in for a delicious Thai meal at the LaConner Thai restaurant followed by a piggy piggy home made ice cream cone from the stand next to Nasty Jack's antique store.

After breakfast the next day we headed to *RoozenGaarde* owned by the Roozen family. This is a division of Washington Bulb Co, the largest bulb grower in the US with more than 2000 acres under cultivation. They have established a beautiful 3 acre display garden planted with over 300,000 bulbs of 88 varieties of tulips and 135 more varieties of daffodils, hyacinths, crocus and iris. Entry is \$4 per person and includes parking and entry to the larger open tulip fields near by. Don't miss this site!









**Brenda Dumont**

The garden is enhanced by hundreds of rhododendrons that complement the well labelled flower beds and authentic Dutch windmill. The rhodos were just starting flowering and at least two to three weeks late due to the cool spring weather. There is a vast array of cut flowers for sale here that we purchased. The fresh cut tulips lasted more than 10 days at home. The garden was expecting 15,000 people that day so it was timely that we finished our visit early.

From *Roozengaarde* we headed east to highway I 5 and a quick trip back to Canada and ferry back to the Island. The border delay getting across at Blaine was less than 15 minutes at midday on the Sunday.

You can easily get lots of information about the Tulip festival and LaConner on the web:

[www.LaConnerChamber.com](http://www.LaConnerChamber.com)   [www.TulipFestival.org](http://www.TulipFestival.org)

[www.tulips.com](http://www.tulips.com)   [www.TulipTown.com](http://www.TulipTown.com)

[www.LaConnerLodging.com](http://www.LaConnerLodging.com)

**All pictures by the Dumonts**

**Remember: No meeting in January.  
Next meeting is the first Wednesday  
in February.**

## **Garden Tours Spring 2009**

Sharon Tillie

CVRS Garden Tour Coordinator

A record number of Members of the Cowichan Valley Garden Club were very generous this year in opening their gardens to their fellow members and members of the Cowichan Valley Garden Club. In addition Kathy and Denny Beaveridge, who characterize themselves as the stewards of Pat and Peter Stone Garden, graciously made their garden available to all for enjoying their twenty-five hundred magnificent Rhododendrons.

### 2009 Garden Tours

April 20,2009 Liz and Alan Murray Garden, Cobble Hill

May 4, 2009 Kathy and Denny Beaveridge Garden, Maple Bay

May 14th 2009 Al and Sandy Campbell Garden, Shawnigan Lake

May 17,2009 Lake Cowichan Memorial Garden, Lake Cowichan

Ingeborg Woodsworth Garden, Lake Cowichan

May 28,2009 Doris Anderson Garden, Maple Bay

Janet and David Gardner Garden, Maple Bay

June 20th,2009 Carrie Nelson Garden

Bill and Brenda Dumont, Shawnigan Lake

**The following pictures were taken on the garden tours this year by Sharon Tillie**





Liz and Allan Murray



Ingeborg Woodwoth and friends



Liz Murray



**Rhododendrons in the rain**



**Sandy and Al Campbell**



**Joyce Gammie and Ian Efford**



The Society thanks all of the garden owners for their hospitality and appreciates the hard work that went into the garden in preparation for visits. The Society is also very grateful to the Cowichan Valley Garden Club for sharing their garden tour with us. The visits were enjoyed by quite a few of our members. We enjoyed visiting their gardens and having them as guests in ours.

We are looking for gardens to visit for next year, please e-mail Sharon Tillie if you are interested or know of a garden.

We are also introducing: Work in Progress Garden-Request for a Garden Consultation. This is for Members to help Members have success with their gardens and here is how it goes.

1. Decide on what area of your Rhododendron ( and their companions) Garden you would like some consultation help with; it could be a request for suggestions for a a bed that does not grow; or how to manage a difficult hilly area; or ideas for a planned new bed, or what to do about sluggish Rhodos etc.

2. Pick a date and time and contact the Garden Tour coordinator with your request. should be noted that you are not obligated to act on every suggestion, it is more of a brainstorm

3. The coordinator will announce the request at the meeting and members will be invited to your garden. Members will attend your garden with the idea of problem solving or advice giving. It and an opportunity to benefit from the wealth of knowledge available in the club.



**Marie Therese Evans**



**The house and garden of Kathy and Denny Beaveridge, previously the Stones' garden**



**David Annis**



## Success With Rooted Cuttings

(The following article first appeared in the Vancouver Chapter newsletter, Nov. 1990.)

Frank Dorsey  
North Vancouver, British Columbia  
Canada

These written instructions are directed primarily toward those members who have not tried their hand at rooting cuttings and who have only limited facilities. If you have a heated greenhouse or a propagating frame but have never attempted to root rhododendron cuttings, you would be well advised to refer to one of the many books on rhododendrons where precise instructions are given.

What materials do you need? You will need a clean plastic pot. A round 6-inch pot will hold half a dozen small cuttings. The shallow azalea pots are probably the more suitable, but the taller ones will do. The mix: a 50/50 (by dry volume) mixture of peat moss (the ordinary sphagnum peat) and perlite. You will need a rooting hormone formulated for hardwood cuttings—the dry powder form is most often used, or there are others, including the liquid forms, such as Dip 'n Grow. You will need a clean plastic bag big enough to hold the pot filled with cuttings, a rubber band, and plant markers for each variety of cutting.

Tools? Just a sharp cutting implement. Sharp is the key word. A very, very sharp knife (the ones with the snap-off blades are good) or a razor blade.

Now we turn to selecting the cuttings. Choose easy to root kinds, either species or hybrids. As a general rule, small leafed ones are easier than ones like 'Anna Rose Whitney' or 'Trude Webster'. *Rhododendron williamsianum* crosses are usually cooperative—'Bow Bells', Dormouse Group and 'Cow-slip'—and those with *R. forrestii* Repens Group blood in them—'Elizabeth', Carmen Group, and 'Ruby Hart'. There are, of course, scores of other such hybrids. *Rhododendron impeditum* is probably the easiest among the species.

Not only are the smaller varieties easier to root, but they take up less space. You can try five or six different ones in a single pot.

It is important that cuttings be taken when they are turgid—filled with moisture. That's not usually a problem, but if there has been a dry spell, water the plants well the day before you take the cuttings. The cuttings should be of the current year's growth, and they should be pliable enough that you can bend them to a 90-degree angle. If they are so stiff that they cannot bend without breaking, they are probably too "ripe" and will not root. Another indicator (but not an infallible one) is the color of the stem. As the wood ripens it becomes darker, usually brown. The wood of the cutting should be pale, usually white or light green.

Try to take the cuttings from an upright growing branch. Ones from the side won't stand upright in the pot, and the foliage may touch the surface of the medium, creating disease problems. Cuttings from young plants are likely to root more readily than those from old plants. If you don't plan on potting the cuttings immediately, put them in a plastic bag and pop them in the fridge, or simply put them in a container of water as you would a bunch of flowers. Don't forget to identify them, either by writing the name on a lower leaf or by attaching a plastic pot marker.

To prepare the medium, simply mix the dry ingredients and add water, preferably warm, until you have a moist but somewhat crumbly mixture. Put the mix in the plastic pot and firm it (but not too firmly) so that its surface is flat and within an inch or so of the rim.

To prepare the cuttings, make a right angled cut immediately below the leaf node. (That's where a leaf has grown out from the stem, or where there is a little protrusion.) Then use your sharp knife to remove a narrow strip of bark from about half an inch above the cut running down the cut. The purpose is to expose a large area of the cambium layer where rooting occurs. Remove all but the top four leaves. If the leaves are damaged or large or are likely to touch the medium, cut them back by up to a third of their area. If your cutting has flower buds, remove them. If the cutting is dirty, clean it off in water.

Now put some of your rooting hormone into the cap of the container and dip the cut area of the cutting into the hormone. (It's better not to dip the cutting into the hormone container; you may bring the dirt into the powder.) Shake off any loose powder. Dibble a hole in the medium and push in the cutting. (If you don't make a hole, you probably will brush off the hormone powder.) Firm the mix around the cutting. Put in as many cuttings as the pot will hold, bearing in mind that you must leave room for roots to form.

Water well. The inexpensive spray bottles are good for this and for many other gardening jobs. Now put the pot in a clean plastic bag and fasten the bag above the cuttings with a twist tie. Put a rubber band around the rim of the pot to keep the moisture from running down the side.

Where are you going to put your pot of cuttings? Ideally, they should be in a good light but not direct sun, and the soil should be about 70°F. An east or west facing window sill in a heated room would, at first blush, appear ideal. Unfortunately, most window sills are much colder than room temperature. Heat outlets are often under windows; perhaps you can place the pot above an outlet so that the top of the pot is about at window level. It would be better still to place the pot under a fluorescent light, ideally leaving about a foot between the light and the top of the foliage.

The cuttings need virtually no care until they have rooted. This may take three or four months. Look occasionally to see if any mold is forming or if any of the cuttings are dying. Remove any dead cuttings, and if there is mold, act quickly by spraying with benomyl or a similar fungicide.

Don't be too excited if you see new green shoots—it doesn't necessarily mean that roots are forming. Wait at least two months before checking for root growth. You can do this by gently tugging at the cutting, or you can poke around the stem to look for roots. In either case be careful not to cause damage. If you have been successful, cover up the pot again (it may need watering) and leave it until about the end of February. You can then put the rooted cuttings in individual pots using the same 50/50 mix. Water with quarter strength liquid fertilizer, cover with plastic bags (but leave the pots a little open) and wait until



### From the Editor

Apart from the last article, all the content of this issue was generated by our members! Despite this success, the main editorial problem is obtaining new articles. If there are no new articles, then the only alternative is to publish articles that appear in other publications. If one does this each month, one wonders why we need to publish a newsletter except to carry the local society announcements and administrative matters to our members. This can be handled easily by e-mail. On the other hand, I like reading the articles!

There is an alternative, which would be in two parts to split the newsletter into the local announcements and administrative matters and the articles about rhododendrons and their cultivation, etc. If all five societies on the island split their newsletters in a similar way and, at the same time, combined the articles into one publication, we would be able to create a Vancouver Island Rhododendron Journal which would be distributed to all ARS members on the island and which would be accompanied by a different, locally generated, announcement and administrative segment produced by each Society for its members.

Such a change would result in an excellent Journal with very interesting articles that could be edited by one individual and then distributed through the local Societies to their members. There would be no shortage of articles because, between the five societies, we already produce enough for one publication.

I present this idea for discussion within the society and between the societies on the island.

Have a great holiday season. See you all at the party.

Ian E. Efford

[efford@shaw.ca](mailto:efford@shaw.ca); 250597-4470

### 2009-10 Directors

President:	David Annis
Vice President:	Alan Campbell
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice-President	vacant
Treasurer:	Judeen Henrickson
Secretary:	
at Executive Meetings	Billl Dumont
at General Meetings	vacant
Members at Large:	Sharon Tillie
	Jeremy Evans/
	Marie Therese Evans
	Bill Dumont

### 2009-10 Conveners

Librarian:	vacant
Garden Tours:	(vacant)
Spring Sale:	(vacant)
Club Liaison:	Ingeborg Woodsworth
Raffle:	Judeen Henrickson and Hilda Gerrits
Membership:	Sandra Stevenson
Speakers:	Alan Campbell
Tea Coordinator:	Marie Th��rese Evans
Ways and Mean:	(vacant)
Website:	(vacant)
Social:	(vacant)
Historian	Mona Kaiser
Propagation	Alan Campbell
Sunshine	Mary Gale
Editor	Ian E. Efford