



# NEWSLETTER

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Editor: Ian E. Efford

January-February 2008

## Change of Editor

As you know, Leslie Drew retired from her long service as Editor and, at the end of September, Siggie Kemmler offered to fill the role temporarily. In December, the position became vacant again and we have not distributed a newsletter since that time. As I believe that the newsletter is an important service to members, at the last Executive meeting, I offered to withdraw my candidacy as Vice-President for 2008 and take up the Editor's role. This was accepted with unusual unanimity by the Executive!

This edition is my first attempt as editor and it has been produced in a hurry because of a flood of grandchildren in the house until yesterday. I am sure that the design will improve as will the number of articles - at the moment, I only have one of the submitted articles and that was prepared by myself!

**I welcome articles and information for future newsletters**

For some time, there has been a reluctance of members to volunteer. None of the Directors or Conveners positions are onerous and some last only a month or so during the year yet members are not stepping forward to play their part in helping the Society run smoothly. All horticultural societies are run by volunteers and a commitment from members to play their part is essential. We cannot leave these tasks to the few.

Ian E. Efford

## What's Coming Up

February Meeting: Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> at 7.30pm.  
Bill McMillan, President of the Victoria Society will be speaking of

***"The Rhododendron and Hosta Garden at Glendale Woodlands Gardens, Victoria: Bloom Through the Seasons".***

March: the speaker will be Paul Wurz on  
"Getting back to basics"

May: the speaker will be Ingeborg Woodsworth

We are seeking a speaker for April

## Plant Sale

Friends of Government House will hold their annual plant sale on Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup> between 9.30-noon. Funds raised at the sale will go towards maintenance of the garden. 3000 plants will be sold including roses, shrubs, perennials, grasses, ferns, herbs, and alpine plants. Prices will be reasonable!

## Ann Springford

The Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society lost one of its most faithful members with the death of Ann Springford on December 21, 2007. For years, she had been the club's "sunshine lady", sending cards to those ill and bereaved, and she extended her social role to helping arrange Christmas parties and similar events. When last year's annual picnic was threatened by rain, she offered space and facilities indoors at her home at almost the last moment and so saved the day. This was typical of willingness to step in and help when needed.

A keen gardener and flower arranger who lived in the Cowichan Valley from childhood, she knew a generation of nursery people and gardeners now long gone. But her work for the CVRS and the Garden Club was only part of her volunteer support of a large number of community organizations.

Her husband Ormonde audited the CVRS financial statements for many years.

She will be missed by us all.

## Des Kennedy visits the Valley

The Mill Bay Garden Club will present the well-know gardening personality Des Kennedy on Thursday March 27<sup>th</sup> at Cobble Hill Hall. The talk will be on "Artistry in the Garden". Ticket are \$5.00 for members and \$10.00 for non-members and are available from Brenda Dumont at 743-1638 or [me@brendadumont.com](mailto:me@brendadumont.com). The presentation is at 7pm and includes refreshments.

## The Executive Meeting - 23 January 2008

### Decisions<sup>1</sup>

1. The formal election will take place at the next meeting.
  - Ian E. Efford will stand as editor;
  - The position of Vice-President is vacant;
  - Peter Lewis will stand as Sunshine Boy!
  - Peter Lewis will also stand for the new role of "ways and Means Coordinator" to seek support from local businesses.
  - All other candidates remain unchanged from the earlier announcement.
2. Bill Dumont continues to prepare for the bus tour to the Tofino area.
3. The Executive would like to see all members were name tags at the meetings as this would increase personal interaction among the membership.
4. Our web site will be updated when computer compatability problems have been resolved

## Year Change

The Executive also proposed a change in the by-laws and, at the next meeting, a vote of approval will be required from the membership. The proposed changes is:

**"The date for nomination and installation of new officers will commence in April and be completed at the June picnic. "**

This change will align us with the administrative year of the ARS and alleviate problems meeting the deadlines for information to be published in the ARS Journal.

## Greetings fellow Rhodoholics

Brrr, it is cold. Even in my snug home. Snow, hoar frost everywhere. This is turning into a long cold winter. And with that in mind good basic garden design pays off. The dominant thought in planting should be warmth -an abiding sense of snugness and shelter and protection; of being "tucked in".

Valuable winter characteristics of deciduous trees and shrubs lie in the green, golden, or bright red bark of some; persistent fruits or berries of others; and in the density of growth and interesting sweep of branches after leaves have fallen. To look out my windows and see birds flitting in and out of these sheltering masses is one of my happiest winter joys, taking my mind off frozen rhododendron foliage

As you are reading this you become aware that our chapter has again a newsletter. My heartfelt gratitude goes out to Ian Efford for having taken on this important position.

Our February speaker Bill McMillan will dazzle us with "Rhododendrons and Hostas of Glendale Woodland Gardens,

Victoria: Bloom through the Season". Just the thing to get us into the mood of gardening.

Cheers, keep warm and dream of this year's garden joys,

Ingeborg

## Rhododendron macrophyllum in the Skagit: A historical note

Ian E. Efford

Between 1919 and 1924 the city of Seattle built the Ross Dam on the Skagit River in Washington State. It was raised in the early 1940s at which time it flooded back into Canada's Skagit Valley. There were no objections to the intrusion into Canada as there was a behind-the-scenes deal

between the governments that the electricity would be used to produce war planes at Boeing.

In 1967, the Provincial Government agreed to permit the dam to be raised again and, this time, to flood much of the Skagit Valley. Far more controversy was created by this decision and eventually the matter went before the International Joint Commission that regulated boundary issues between the two countries. Seattle's case was well-funded and included extensive environmental studies by F.F. Slaney & Company Limited, a Canadian consulting company which prepared documentation that suggested that the impact would be minimal with little environmental damage and considerable recreational benefits.

To counteract Seattle's case, a group of eight undergraduate and graduate students at UBC obtained an "Opportunities for Youth Grant" and, in two months, they prepared a 180 page environmental report under my supervision. This report [The Future of the Skagit Valley, Adams, et al, 1971] was presented in 1971 both orally and in writing to an I.J.C. public hearing in Vancouver and contributed to the eventual decision by the Commission to ban the raising of the Ross Dam.

In undertaking the preparation of this report, the students studied the rhododendron population in the valley. Below, is the text of that section of the report. I have modified it by eliminating references to other sections of the report.

### "The Rhododendrons

The lower Skagit Valley is noted for its population of the California rhododendron (*Rhododendron macrophyllum*) which is a mass of pink flowers in early summer. The map shows the approximate distribution of these plants in the valley. [The marks on the map represent locations and not necessarily individual trees and are largely based on a proposal for an ecological reserve. The map is not exhaustive since some of the areas, particularly to the east of the river, remains un-examined.] This rhododendron is quite rare in this part of the province, occurring in only a few locations in the Skagit Valley/Manning Park area.

The rhododendrons are sited largely on flat areas of coarse gravelly soil on the valley floor, they are scattered throughout Douglas fir/bearberry associations, but western red cedar and lodgepole pine are also usually present. Most of the rhododendrons appear to be many years old and regeneration is noticeably lacking. [It may be that the plants reproduce by layering since seeding is rare in this part of the distribution.]

The scientific importance of the rhododendrons was sufficient to entail the proposal of an ecological reserve, covering one of the poorer examples of the association, but above the proposed flood level. This 250 acre reserve was established in 1970 with the objective "..... to enclose a further population of *Rhododendron macrophyllum* in an area where it will not be committed to the effects of any future park development and may be kept, hopefully, undisturbed from now on for the research into the ecology of this rhododendron'.

This objective may not be fulfilled for three reasons: (i) The reserve stands between the recently created Skagit Valley Provincial Park, and the proposed reservoir and is one of the few places capable of becoming a beach at the proposed reservoir; (ii) Relocation of the new road after flooding has been proposed through the reserve. A plan for the "Recreational Development - High Ross Reservoir" (Slaney 1971) shows 1.2 miles of road passing through the site. The alternative to this appears to be to bring the road at least a mile further east and thus away from the reservoir site; (iii) The reserve is approximately the same height as the proposed reservoir and as discussed elsewhere, it may be subject to periodic flooding at full pool. Disturbance would appear to be inevitable and elimination of the plants may result.

In order to preserve the rhododendrons growing

*January - February 2008*

above the floodline, a proposal has been made to "move most of the better specimens to strategic locations" (Slaney et al 1970).

This suggestion appears to be "ridiculous and impractical"(Dr V.C. Brink, personal communication 1971) in view of the extensive nature of the rooting system, and the extremely high costs which would be involved in this transplanting.

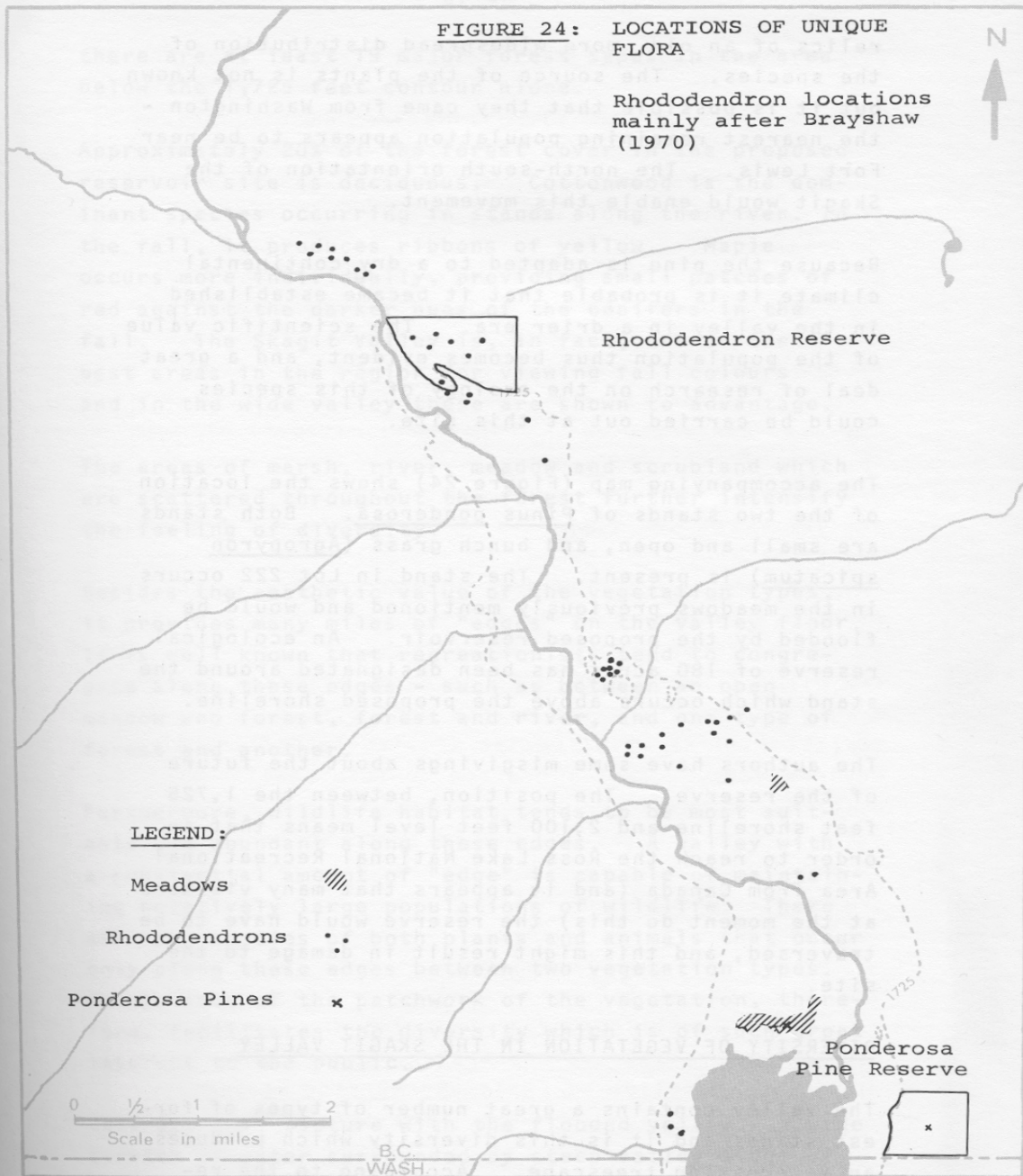
Flooding of the valley will eliminate a significant proportion of the rhododendron population and may result in damage of many of the remaining plants."

#### REFERENCES

- T.C. Brayshaw. Application for Ecological Reserve Report Nos. 53 and 54. Provincial Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, 1970.
- Dr. V.C. Brink (Department of Plant Science, University of British Columbia). Personal Communication, 1971.
- F.F. Slaney & Company Limited. Skagit Valley and Ross Lake Reservoir in Canada. City of Seattle, Department of Lighting, 1970.
- F.F. Slaney & Company Limited. Memorandum to the International Joint Commission: Environmental Investigations Skagit Valley in Canada and Indication of Consequences from Raising the Level of Ross Lake. City of Seattle Department of Lighting, 1971.

#### **Tulsa Convention**

Anyone attending the Tulsa Convention in April will be able to purchase plants and receive a phytosanitation certificate at the same time. This will speed importation of the plants into Canada.



**Hakone Japanese Garden**



**San Francisco Gardens**

If you visit San Francisco, you should know that there are over 40 botanic gardens within about an hours drive of the centre of the city - assuming traffic is cooperating. In Saratoga,, about an hour due south, has two within walking distance of each other. Hakone Japanese Garden is spectacular, free, and contains many rhododendrons. \$1 get you a list of all the plants in the garden.