



NEWSLETTER

Volume 23:3 Editor: Ian Efford March 2012

President's Message

One of the activities of the Society is the propagation group which is a place to learn how to reproduce rhododendrons from seeds, cuttings, etc. as well as a forum for the discussion of all aspects of the cultivation of these plants. We also get to see how each other grow the new plants. In my view, this is the most interesting activity of the society but, unfortunately, very few individuals come to these gatherings. The lack of interest affects the society as the source of the plants for the raffle and for plants for each new member come from the very few of our members that do their own propagation. They are generous enough to give these plants to the society. Growing rhododendrons from seeds or cuttings is not time consuming and any gardener with a small shaded area should be able to produce 20 plants a year with a little practice. Peter Hearn, one of our earliest members, successfully raised his cuttings in a few square feet of covered area alongside the house and with very little equipment.

Will people attend if we re-convene the propagation meetings? Alternatively, should we re-convene and invite interested members from the CV Garden Club? Let me know your thoughts.

Another important activity is the library. It contains considerable a number of specialized books on rhododendrons but also more general interest books on gardening. Anyone who found Bill Terry's talk on the plants in the Himalayas interesting should read the copy of Frank Kingdon Ward's book "The Mystery of the Tsangpo Gorges". The edition in the library is the modern one with excellent photos of the plants found in 1924 and now grown as garden plants throughout the temperate world. I consider this the best gardening book ever! I have also found a small book that was prepared for the large ARS conference in Victoria in 1989. Entitled "Rhododendrons on a Western Shore" it contains chapters by ARS members from the island about the plants and history of the genus on the island. It is very interesting and well worth reading!

Coming Events

March 7
Geoff Ball: "Milner Gardens and It's Rhododendrons"

March 20
District 1 Executive Meeting

April 4
Bill Bischoff: "A Prize Winning Garden in the Making"

May 2
Dennis Bottemiller: "Variables in Propagation of Rhododendron Cuttings"

May 5
2012 Cowichan Valley Garden Fair and Rhodo Sale – Cowex

Volunteers run the Society and we are always looking for individuals that will take on small tasks. We still need someone who will coordinate the garden tour this year. It is an easy, short-term job and the local garden tour is one of our most interesting activities as it allows us to see some of our members' gardens and, because we exchange visits with the garden club, we see a number of other gardens each year.

I am also looking for someone with writing experience who can abstract 20 articles that need summarizing in 350 words for a publication for the September conference - can anyone help? Finally, for the same publication, we need someone who can design the general lay-out. For someone with experience this is a very small job.

Ian E. Efford

From the Editor

This issue contains descriptions of two more public rhododendron gardens on the island that you must visit. One you already know, Milner Gardens, and our speaker next week will be the Geoff Ball, its director. The other, Smithhill, some of us visited on a bus tour but it is not well known. It is a beautiful garden and many of the rhododendrons there are also available in pots at a very reasonable price. I understand that all the income from the sale of these plants goes to charity.

I have identified 21 public rhododendron gardens on the island and the newsletter now contains an article on all but five. Of those, two are being prepared. I intend to bring all these articles together in a brochure and as a website.

Please remember that articles, suggestions, comments, criticism, are all welcomed by the editor.

Ian E. Efford

Milner Gardens a 'Top Ten' Public Garden in Canada

Milner Gardens and Woodland is Vancouver Island's own 'secret garden', a magical 28-hectare (70 acre) site of unspoiled natural beauty perched on the edge of an oceanside bluff overlooking the Strait of Georgia.

Tucked away off the main Island highway in Qualicum Beach on the east coast of Vancouver Island, Milner Gardens and Woodland was named one of the ten best public gardens in Canada by the Canadian Geographic Travel magazine and is listed as one of the seven wonders of Oceanside/Parksville Qualicum Beach. The setting is like no other. Visited by Queen Elizabeth, Prince Phillip, Prince Charles and Princess Diana, the 60 acres of woodland and ten acres of garden surrounding a heritage house was the dream of one woman, Veronica Milner.

The woodland garden features an ancient coastal Douglas fir forest with exotic tree species growing amongst native old growth, sheltering the rhododendron collection and understory of shrubs, perennials and bulbs.

The wild garden blends into formal areas surrounding the historic Milner House with manicured lawns, perennial borders and ponds, with a stunning ocean view backdrop. A small orchard, berry garden, rose garden and cutting garden are also part of the historical plantings.

"A stroll through the winding pathways and magical surroundings of an ancient coast Douglas fir forest will provide you plenty of opportunities to enjoy peace and tranquility," says Geoff Ball, Executive Director of Milner Gardens and Woodland.

The 70-year-old Milner Gardens and Woodland property in Qualicum Beach was acquired by Vancouver Island University (formerly Malaspina University-College) in May of 1996. It was named Milner Gardens and Woodland in recognition of Ray

and Veronica Milner's contribution to the development and preservation of the garden and forest. VIU's goal is to maintain the garden and woodland in perpetuity for education and the community's benefit in the Milners' memory.

The Rhododendron Collection

"The Rhododendron collection at Milner Gardens & Woodland is delight to wander through both a result of the design and layout of the collection, as well as the age and setting," says Ball. "Over the decades, the Rhododendrons have grown and settled into the natural material to give the woodland garden a magical feel."

According to Ball, the original property owner Veronica Milner was a painter with an artist's eye. She envisioned a wild, woodland garden amongst the forest, and her dream came true. To combat the monotony of the native evergreen trees, she planted rhododendrons – by the hundreds, as a reminder of her grandmother's estate in England.

In the 1950's, Veronica's husband, Ray Milner, became friends with nursery owners Ted and Mary Greig and began collecting the earliest rhododendrons planted in the garden.

The Greigs specialized in species and hybrid rhododendrons, importing seed and nursery stock from England to their nursery in Royston, BC. They were award winning rhododendron hybridizers and the Milners' garden became home to many of their new introductions.

"The Rhododendrons that were selected for the gardens are an interesting mix of species and hybrids," adds Ball. "There are 45 species represented in the Milner historic collection, and 70 named hybrids. Some of the most outstanding specimens remain a mystery; their identity lost over the years. Many of the hybrids created by Ted and Mary Greig were unnamed, and therefore are simply labelled 'Greig Hybrid'. This collection is a cousin of the well

known Rhododendrons in Stanley Park."

Today, the historical rhododendron collection numbers over 400 specimens, spread over 10 acres of garden. A combination of unique species and rare Greig hybrids make this collection worthy of preservation. Small shrubs that were planted over 40 years ago have grown to tree-sized proportions, creating a forest of colour.

The collection is being propagated to replace aging specimens in the garden, as well as for sale to the general public. These efforts ensure that this extraordinary collection can be enjoyed for years to come.

Today, Milner Gardens and Woodland is open to the visiting public seven months of the year. Afternoon Tea is served with assorted baked goods and freshly baked scones, served with jam (made with fruit from the garden) every day from 1 to 4 p.m. when the Gardens are open. The Camellia Tea Room is located in the drawing room of the historic Milner House. No reservations are required, except for large groups.

Large or small group luncheons may be booked by prior arrangement only by calling 250-752-8573 extension 224 or by email: carol.milnergardens@shaw.ca.

Many special events are held throughout the year at Milner Gardens and Woodland, including the popular Christmas Magic, Murder Mystery Teas and spring and fall plant sale fundraisers. Plants have been propagated by a dedicated group of volunteers and all proceeds raised help support the operation of the garden. Volunteers are happy to assist you in picking out the perfect plant for you to take home to your garden. Members receive 10 per cent discount on all plant purchases.

The Pool House Gift Shop is open from 10 am to 5 pm each day during the season. You may browse through a good selection of garden-related ornaments, books, cards, stationary and souvenirs. Refreshments and light snacks are available. There

is outdoor seating capacity for 45 people on the deck and by the pool.

Directions: Milner Gardens and Woodland is located at 2179 West Island Highway in Qualicum Beach. It is a 2 1/2 hour drive north of Victoria, or 40 minutes north of Nanaimo. Take Highway 19 north to the Qualicum Beach exit, drive straight through Qualicum Beach on Memorial Avenue to the water, turn right on West Island Highway. Milner Gardens and Woodland is about 2 km (1.2 mi) on your left. There is parking at the entrance. Cost of entry is \$10 per person during peak season.

For tea house reservations and information, please call 250-752-6153 or visit milnergardens@shaw.ca
Administration: 250-752-8573; Volunteer Services: 250-752-7514 Fax: 250-752-3826

“Article compiled by Marilyn Assaf and Geoff Ball, with photos by Geoff Ball”

Milner Gardens



*Pulmonaria
Angustiflora*

Milner Gardens



R. augustinii



Ruth Lyons

Smithhill Garden and Nursery

Roberts Smith



Smithhill Garden and Nursery occupies the majority of a 4-acre hillside property located at 1717 Glen Urquhart Drive, Courtenay, B.C. V9N 6Z8. It is bordered on two sides by Hurford Hill Nature Park and is reached by driving from the end of Glen Urquhart Drive through the park.

While the garden is principally devoted to rhododendrons and is at its best in April, May and June, it also has over 100 varieties of trees, some of which are native conifers as well as many other varieties. There are many trails dividing the whole garden into regions and separate gardens, which allows for categorization and labeling all of the over 1600 plants of the rhododendron family.



It contains 960 varieties of rhododendrons, including over 250 species. Although the garden was started less than twenty years ago, it contains many mature plants and provides a splendour of blossoms from March through June, with May and early June as its best months. Many of the species tend to bloom earlier and although the garden is less than twenty years old it contains many mature plants and has the feel of a well established endeavour.



We welcome visitors to enjoy the garden, by arrangement. We can be reached by e-mail (robertss@ucla.edu) or by telephone (res. (250) 338 4571, or cell (310) 351 4567). Walking shoes are advised and a walking stick is handy to help with the hills.



Ken Gibson's Garden on the 25th of February

Photos by David Annis



Lysol on Weevils

Mary Parker's response to the articles on weevil control in the last two issues of the newsletter is that she 'exterminates weevils with 2/3 cup of liquid Lysol [4.26L Fresh Orange Scent Lysol disinfectant 4 in 1] in one green watering can of water. I have already given those little larva their 1st bath and I do it every two weeks, say 4 times. You can douse the whole plant and the ground around and under the plant. If your plant touches any evergreen tree ie: Alberta Spruce, which I have, look out!!!'

Welcome New Members

We have welcomed number of new members during the last few months.

*Diane Allen
Tricia Guiguet
Rhoda Taylor
Betty & Donald Morton
Irene & Joe Hudak
Dixie Mueller
Ali Morris
Susan Scott*

All are entitled to a free rhododendron. If you have not received one, please let our Ian know at the next meeting.

Every member should be receiving the Journal though the post. If you have not received the latest copy - V. 66 Winter 2012, please let me know.

Marie Jacques, Membership Secretary
randamjax@shaw.ca

Vancouver Gardens Bus Tour

If you wish to join our bus tour on the 11-12 May, please confirm at our next meeting by giving a cheque to Bill Dumont for \$150 each person. Details of the tour were provided to you in an earlier e-mail.

Native Plant Sale The Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary

Free admission

Saturday and Sunday April 21 and 22, 2012
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Sale: 5,000 native plants - 140 species
Master Gardeners on hand to answer those tough gardening questions

Complete plant list available at
<http://www.swanlake.bc.ca/plant-list.php>

Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary,
3873 Swan Lake Road, Victoria, BC
[250-479-0211](tel:250-479-0211)

Plants for Sale

The club is holding a number of healthy rhododendron plants raised by Norman Todd in 2 gallon pots. These will be on sale on Wednesday at our meeting for \$20 each.

Kalmia Pink Charm

This is one of Linda Derkach's photos from last month's articles on Kalmia. Again, it illustrates the beauty of this close relative of the rhododendrons.



Olive

Olive is a cross between *moupenense* and *dauricum*. It grows to 4 feet in ten years, but mine is smaller. Cold hardy to -15F. Mine is pink with a hint of mauve in the colour.

Greer says orchid pink. Greer also suggests that it is a vigorous grower. Mine is not. This is the earliest rhodo that I have in my garden.

David Annis



2011-2012

Executive

Past President: David Annis

President: Ian Efford

(efford@shaw.ca 250597-4470)

Vice President: Sandra Stevenson

(pinchofherbs@shaw.ca 250-748-557)

Secretary: Leslie Bundon

Treasurer: Bill Dumont

Membership: Marie Jacques

Members at Large

Bernie Dinter, Joe Hudak, Elaine Kitchen,
Christopher Justice

Convenors

Sunshine: Mary Gale

Tea: not filled

Raffle: Hilda Gerrits

Club Liason: Alan Campbell

Library: Dixie Mueller

Programme Co-ordinator: Alan Campbell

Website and Newsletter Desktop Publisher:

Contractor-Mary-Lynn Boxem

Newsletter Editor: Ian Efford

History: Mona Kaiser (pending) and Liz Murray

Garden Tours: not filled

Plant Sale: the team

Facility Liason: Roy Elvins

Christmas Party: The team

ARS 2012 Nanaimo Rhodo Society Photo Contest Fall Conference

September 21st - 23rd, 2012

Categories :

1. Macro/closeup of plant parts
2. Individual or groups of plants in the wild or public/botanical garden Not private gardens.
3. Individual or group of plants in a private garden.
4. Truss species or hybrid
5. Foliage – species or hybrid

No entry fee.

All 6 winning photos will receive a great prize.

Any questions may be directed to Mary Parker

1- 250-754-1981. maryjparker99@shaw.ca

[Click here for rules and more details...](#)

COWICHAN VALLEY RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

Programme for 2011-2012

7:30 pm at St John's Anglican Church

163 First St, Duncan, BC V9L 1R1

(1st and Jubilee)

September 7	Siggi Kemmler and Ken Webb "Rhododendron Nurseries in North Germany"
October 5	Bill McMillan "Selected English Gardens and Birds"
November 2	Gerry Gibbens "The Rhododendrons at VanDusen Gardens"
December 7	Christmas Party
February 1	Bill Terry "The Perfect Garden: Plant Hunting in Tibet" Co-Sponsored with the Cowichan Valley Garden Club
March 7	Geoff Ball "Milner Garden and its Rhododendrons"
March 20	District 1 Executive Meeting
April 4	Bill Bischoff "A Prize Winning Garden in the Making"
May 2	Dennis Bottemiller, Rhododendron Species Botanic Garden "Variables in Propagation of Rhododendron Cuttings"
May 5	Garden Fair and Rhododendron Sale
June 16	Summer Picnic