

The

Rhodoholic



Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

Volume 27:4 May 2016

President's Message

Hello everyone!

Well, wouldn't it be great to harness and store the frenetic energy created around the Garden Fair and divvy out that energy during the rest of the year? Special thanks go out to the volunteers who came out Friday and Saturday to help with the set-up, clean up, raffle, membership, truss show, and refreshment tasks. You not only made the Fair a success, but a lot of fun as well. Well done!

Thanks to our members who opened up their gardens on April 23rd and 24th, each garden so different from the others and a reflection of the owner's creativity. There is one more member tour on May 7th at the Blackmore's. Please check



Height: 3 ft. R. keiskei x R. dauricum 'Artic Pearl'

CVRS Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, May 4 7:30pm St. John's Church Gordon Murray Trilliums: Past, Present & Future

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the April newsletter for time and directions, and perhaps a venue for "car pool" arrangements.

The 2016 CVRS general program wraps up on May 4th with a presentation by Gordon Murray: Trilliums; Past, Present, and Future. On April 4th we will also have a short business meeting to present a slate of board members for elections at the AGM and picnic on June 18th.

The propagation table project is nearing completion. We are just waiting for the special lights needed for the research component. The project is well within budget thanks to the donation of the wood by Elaine Kitchen and Dallas Vaux, and the carpentry work by Elaine, Dallas, Ian Efford, and Richard Nelson. As you may recall, one-half of the cost was to be paid from matching funds from the Legacy Funds, established after the 2015 Convention in Sydney. The requirement to match funds was dropped when District 1 presidents voted to divide the gains evenly with all chapters, which ended up being approximately \$2600! After we allocate some of this money to the propagator, the Board will entertain ideas on using the funds

based on the criteria set by District 1 as follows:

Use of funds must reflect the guidelines of the ARS: that is, to educate and promote the genus rhododendron within each chapter's community or area.

Non-eligible expenditures include a chapter's normal operating costs such as ARS dues, room rentals, speaker's fees, audio-visual equipment, parties, picnics, field trips, etc.

It is expected that funds will be spent or at least firmly committed to a project (or projects) within a year of this date (April 20th).

Chapter residents will account for expenditures by way of a report at future semi-annual District 1 meetings until such time as its Legacy Fund allotment has been exhausted.

See you all May 4th!

Carrie Nelson, President



R. 'Ivan D. Wood'
Coker, 1979 Elepidote Height: 3 ft.
R. 'King of Shrubs x R. 'Dido Group'



R. impeditum
Origin: N. Yunnan, S.W. Sichuan
2700-4900 m Height: 3 ft.
Habit: terrestrial Early H4

Lake Cowichan Memorial Rhododendron Garden

Recently, the CVRS sent a letter to the Town of Lake Cowichan requesting an update on the progress of the development of the Memorial Rhododendron Garden. The Town of Lake Cowichan referred the inquiry to the Cowichan Lake Communities in Bloom committee, to which Patricia Foster, Chair, responded with an update.



The following is a synopsis of the response:

- The Memorial Rhododendron Garden is a volunteer initiative maintained by the Communities in Bloom.
- Clearing the boulevard of Point Ideal Road will be done with money that the Town of Lake Cowichan allocates to Communities in Bloom; a machine will be hired to clear the brush later this spring.
- The project was temporarily stalled because the original location of the garden at the end of Cowichan Avenue was determined to be private land. A large number of donated rhododendrons, which had been planted there, had to be moved. All of the rhododendrons were replanted in the adjacent Town property.
- Ingeborg Woodsworth volunteered to care for some other donated rhododendrons, in her greenhouses, until they were ready to be planted. Arrangements will be made with Ingeborg to plant these this year if they are ready for planting.
- Johel Bros. have donated large concrete blocks as supports for a bridge to cross the wetlands, thus connecting the two phases of the park. Once a bridge has been located and permission has been granted by a Fisheries Biologist, a machine will be brought in to relocate the blocks to the right location, and a bridge will be installed on top. The Cowichan Lake Educational Center has a bridge that may be of suitable length. This will be determined as soon as the lake water level goes down.

- Members of the Community in Bloom spend two hours every week during the spring and fall months working in the garden. They are proud of the garden and as they work in it, they enjoy the wonderful ambiance of the garden.
- Several rhododendrons have been planted, and plaques installed, by residents in memory of their loved ones

The committee extends sincere thanks for the donations and assistance over the past few years, and welcomes any inquiries.



Ingeborg Woodsworth, of Mayo Creek Gardens, proudly stands behind her early flowering Rhododendron 'PJM'. She has been dedicating many hours to promoting the development of the Memorial Gardens. Recently, she purchased the materials required for creating more permanent memorial plaques.

Letter from the Editor



Friends.

April has been a very busy month for all of you, hasn't it?

I am quite certain that most of you have nearly completed the final drafts of the articles that you had intended to submit for this month's newsletter, but forming those final paragraphs is truly difficult and time consuming. You want to leave readers with that inspirational enthusiasm to dart out with the right tools to personally experiment using that sharp new knowledge that you have so freely offered. Yes, those closing paragraph issues require more time than any gardener has at this time of the year. Until next month, then. . .

. . .this issue of the CVRS Newsletter will pose more questions than provide answers, and it will offer some opportunities to experience the rewards of passionate gardeners. After all, why do gardeners do what they do? The backbreaking process is inexpressibly satisfying, of course, but there may be more.

Sharing the results of the nurturing Nature's spectacular wonders with others, who understand that drive, is readily sensed in small or large gatherings of humans. Have you heard anyone saying that they have a *Davidia involucrata*, waving most unroyally, which you just should not see? No. More commonly what happens at this time of the year, is that where someone's face is lit up, a small crowd is gathering, mouths are dropping open, or drooping and faces are liming, and then everyone bursts out with descriptive language simultaneously. "You should just sniff my amazing 'Perfume'. . . well, mine is even more fragrant be-

cause mine is 'Heavenly Scent'...oh, you have a *Magnolia wilsonii*, so cool... I killed mine and I cried until my Itoh Peony 'Raggedy Ann' bloomed."

In this issue, we will stroll, or lounge fully, in those spaces of gardens and minds, where the efforts and frustrations of how these wonders all came to be, simply seem irrelevant. We all know, of course, that we can hardly negotiate such field trips without absorbing just a little more knowledge ---perhaps even more than we really wanted, because of the action it suggests.

There is a boon to the drought of your wisdoms; that is, that the space in the newsletter allotted to **Profiles** is greater. It is always difficult to cut and compress these stories, and so this month I am taking a few word-length liberties.

Would all the questions in this newsletter be more tolerable if they lead to A WINNER OF A CONTEST? There will be a box at the Summer Picnic in June, where you can enter the number of questions that you found in the May Newsletter. WARNING: There may be one editing error trick, if Mary-Lynn doesn't fix it before she sends it out. Of course there will be a prize!!

So, thank you for sharing in this newsletter experience, and please, write those closing paragraphs and submit those brain matter articles for the June issue! Why not stimulate and challenge our minds in preparation for some June Summer Picnic debates?

Verna, Editor

Biodiversity

While we garden this month, recalling several of Douglas Justice's "Rules of Biodiversity" could perhaps save us some work today, and more over time, by allowing "aging" in our gardens.

Basic Principles:

Biodiversity will save us.

Increasing diversity of organisms changes microclimates of gardens.

Increasing complexity improves resilience in any system.

Applications of Rules of Biodiversity:

Provide different kinds of habitats:

- Offer layering and spacing in all three dimensions
- Allow aging: old surfaces and decay invite varieties of organisms;
- Leave coarse woody debris or a dead tree/ snag for cavity dwellers such as chickadees and woodpeckers

Encourage generalist insects:

- Provide food diversity through plant diversity. Every plant is food for more than one organism
- Non-invasion varieties of Buddleia attract butterflies; Liatris attract pollinators

Cover the ground:

- Moderate temperatures, prevent splash erosion, suppress weed growth, create habitats
- Mulch and plant

Encourage soil micro-organisms

- Fertilizers may create imbalances/Active composts can restore soil health
- Leave natural debris such as nurse logs, leaves; chip materials on site

Understand a plant's ecology

- Plant what grows best where it grows best
- To deter lacebug, move Pieris into the shade and add more water

Provide water

 Birdbaths, ponds, streams will invite blackbirds, swallows, frogs, dragonfly and heron (for your koi)

Monitor environmental health

- Practice organic alternatives to pesticide use
- Enjoy nature around you. Listen to tree frogs and know they are devouring scale insects



Gailann's Garden

Thank you so much, Gailann, for sharing this breath-seizing view with us on Saturday afternoon.



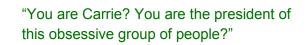


Are these CVRS members wondering about biodiversity and what Douglas Justice would have to say if he wondered through the mature plantings at Gailann's garden? Has the ground been fully covered and are all the spaces utilized? Are plants situated where they grow best? Are anemones, ferns, and hostas not the most ideal plants for moist shady areas of the garden? Furthermore, could Gailann's *Matteuccia struthiopteris*, ostrich fern, be grown for spring treats--- fiddleheads steamed with herbs or sautéed with bacon?





Are these two spying on each other, being playful, whispering "tres interesting", looking for labels, or checking for fragrances because they recognize the 'Loderi'?



"Obsessive? Oh, you're George? Verna's husband? Can we use you and your truck to haul rhodos on Saturday?"

Whatever could prompt an elderly gentleman to dangerously clamber down a rugged rock wall and come up smiling like this? Ian is really that happy when he discovers that a unique plant has a label? So he really lives up to the fervor of his presentations?



Isn't it an eye treat to spot a rare treasure such as **R.** 'Schubert' in the midst of a mature rhodo garden?

Rob and Susan's Garden

Thank you Rob and Susan, for opening your beautiful garden for this fun loving group of club members on Saturday. Everyone appeared to be having a delightful time.



Is this beautiful combination made up of *Acer shirasawanum* 'Aureum', *Acer palmatum dissectum*, *R*. 'Conroy', *R*. 'Nancy Evans', and *R*. 'Bambino'?



Did Sandy ever find the Hebe label?

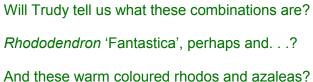


R. 'Starbright Champagne' and A. 'Arneson's Gem'?

Trudy's Garden

Welcome to my garden, friends!!







"You gurus really haven't agreed on the name of this rhodo? This might be one of Anne's. Has anyone checked the label? Sure, I could do that."

Trudy, thank you for sharing the stunning possibilities for a small space garden! And for all the fun!



Don and Louise's Garden

Does anyone know how long it took to train the gate greeter, "Charlie", to select a chair that would artistically enhance his richly coloured coat?

Inspirational artistry might be an overall descriptor for this beautiful garden of healthy plants and stunning garden art. Whoever determined the "rule" for successful garden design of never planting just one plant of a kind, but always three or more, has never visited a garden like Louise and Don's! Are there not single specimens of about thirty different hostas in their hosta garden?

Joe was absolutely delighted with the 1000+ labels! Do Don and Louise share the labeling tasks?



Are the umbrellas being used for sun or rain? Those who visited this gorgeous garden know the answer.

The guests in this colourful garden probably haven't noticed any of the weather factors. . .

The labels were there, but the photographer did not record the names. So two of these may be *R*. 'Horizon Monarch' and *R*. 'Horizon Lakeside', and the others have labels right in front of them for guests to note at another time.





What would cause Liz, and Louise, and a gentleman to dance around a plant in the garden.

Raindrops falling on *Hosta* 'War Paint'

This hosta is truly unusual in that it presents all of these leaves at the same time. The solid coloured leaf will change its paint at some time during the season.

Thank you, Don and Louise for opening your garden to the CVRS members for a delightful afternoon!

2016 Open Garden Tours

Each spring, several members of the Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society generously open their private gardens for tours of regular and associate members of the CVRS. These gardens are not open to the public for viewing, but instead are special events for members only. We kindly thank these hosts and hostesses for sharing their inspirational gardens with fellow club members this spring.



Date: May 7, 2016

Lois and Roy Blackmore

758 Walfred Road, Victoria B. C.

The Blackmore Garden is situated on a mountainside overlooking the Sooke foothills. It is built amongst fir trees and rock outcroppings, taking advantage of the natural landscape. There is a large cedar deck overlooking a steep hillside at the back of the home and is filled with a large collection of Jim Barlup hybrids.

Directions: When coming from up island, take the Veterans' Memorial cutoff, keeping right to Sooke Road. Turn right onto Sooke Road to Jacklin (1/4 mile) Turn left on Jacklin to Walfred. Do not veer off Walfred. 758 is on the left side of the road, near the hill. Parking in driveway and on the road.

TO CARPOOL MEET AT THE SUPERSTORE PARKING LOT IN DUNCAN AT 12:45 PM.



R. impositum

Vireya

In cultivation since: 1969

First described: 1932, (J.J.Sm.)

Habit: terrestrial Hardiness:

tropical

Winter: evergreen

Al and Liz Murray of Misty View Farm

A gentle instructional voice drifts through masses of mature rhododendrons in bloom from somewhere above along the winding path, from just around the *R*. 'Haida Gold', or perhaps from around blue *R*. 'Sue', or from behind *R*. 'Lem's Cameo'.



Finally, there he is, Al Murray, with a ladder and an attentive young man, who nods hesitantly, as Al points to a ten-foot high, R. 'Etta Burrows' its thousands of red blossoms drooping heavily. "Oh, hello there! This here is Brad, our head dead-header." Al's introduction draws a smile from the young man's serious face, and then in response to Al's raised brows, he nods and turns to set up the ladder. Al's greeting continues, "Come, let's go find Liz." Liz has just stepped through the door, a welcoming smile on her face, and, posed beside her in the sun is a brilliant table dressed in colourful Lewesia. "There are more *Lewesia* on the back



deck, because they just keep spreading. Come! Come see!" Both Liz and Al have mastered the art of instantaneously welcoming visitors to their spectacular Misty View Farm.

Their Doran Road, 13-acre property, was once a sloping hillside of rock and forests and to low swamp land.



When, in 1972, they first determined that this would be their home, they cleared trees for fields and pastures, creating an eight-acre farm area where they could raise a young family, along with animals, an orchard including espaliered trees, abundant vegetables and cut flowers. It required tireless determination. To prevent insensitive thieves from loading flat decks with the building materials they had worked so hard to purchase, they actually spent considerable time living in a rustic one-room shack on the property while they built their home. "Here the kids slept on a lower bunk and our food supplies were shelved on the upper one," Liz laughs.

A tour of their property reflects these earlier attentions to a functioning farm and of utilization of space in practical terms. A tall retaining wall led "naturally" to designing an underground cold storage area. Now graced with Cedrus atlantica glaucas pendulata above the hand crafted stone-wall with its old wooden door, and the three foot diameter birdbath posted on the cold vent

above, this practical area has becomes an art feature.

Continuing along this wall leads to Liz's frost-free green house, shelved from floor to high ceiling, and densely stocked with over-wintering plants, cuttings, and all the necessities to occupy a full team of winter gardeners. "They make it through the winter without heating in here," Liz explains.

"It never drops below 35 degrees in here," Al adds, using the nostalgia-inducing measurement of temperature.

A tour of their home and gardens leads through their first rhododendron plantings, installed in 1988 along one side of the drive. This garden, resulting from a decision they made to adjust their lifestyle a bit after their children pursed their own directions, now represents only a small portion of what followed. They couldn't help but visualize how more rhododendrons planted a level higher, behind these prize specimens, would be even more stunning. That was just the beginning, because they cleared more and more of the slope. Exposing one large natural rock outcropping begged for them to pressure-wash more natural rock formations and to plant in the hollows and crevices that nature offered. They had found something they both loved.

Rhododendrons naturally called for magnolias and soon a collection of very special magnolias formed a tall canopy above the colourful blooms.

At the kitchen table, spread generously with a healthy lunch, Liz continued, "No, we didn't have rhododendrons in mind in those early years. We were very busy raising our kids, Rod and Vicki, growing our food, and volunteering with all sorts of



4H activities." Al smiled as he commented on how often Liz's creative talents were challenged to help young children showcase their meager wool-spun products. Persistent and undaunted, Liz understandably excelled, as more than once her fledglings' projects went on to show at the provincial levels. "I had





Al and Liz point out Magnolia wilsonii, and its unique blossoms.

to come up with something, because I really wanted those kids to feel proud of their efforts." The caring spirit demonstrated by AI and Liz during that period of their lives, has left them both with meaningful memories, apparent from the guiet nods and smiles that accompanied these fond reflections on the past.

The back-home species of humbly opening their home and garden, and the practice of sharing meals with guests seated around their table has become a treasured tradition. "We have always believed in doing that, I think," admitted AI, and, with a wry smile at Liz, added, "I would invite people and then Liz would do the hard work, running around cleaning and preparing for the guests." Liz muttered in agreement, but then confirmed that they had been blessed with so many incredibly knowledgeable and fascinating guests over the years that they felt privileged. "Apart from the great friends who visit, the internationally outstanding personalities that have appreciated our efforts have been. . .well, I guess we don't really have the words for what that means." Some of those guests have left them with cherished accolades that they accept both with surprise and humility.



Last spring, when Rothschild, grandson of the Edmund Leopold Rothschild, the hybridizer of *Rhododendron* 'Crest', visited their garden and saw Al and Liz's 'Crest', he described it as "the most beautiful and outstanding 'Crest' that [he had] ever seen." He minced no deprecating language comparing the versions he regularly saw in his own country, the UK, to this treat for his eyes.

Other internationally noted horticulturists stood together around a mystery magnolia blooming in their back yard, combining their vast knowledge of plants in an attempt to identify it, but arrived at a conclusion that this magnolia was unlike any of the magnolias they had ever seen. Al and Liz were left with wonder and excitement.

A number of times, they expressed that they were fortunate to have begun their journey of rhododendrons passion at a time when truly dominating pioneers were within their immediate circle of friends and acquaintances. Al and Liz were there with the founders of the Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society, seated on stored coffins in the back room of First Memorial Funeral Home. From this odd setting sprang to life a very special chapter of companionship, shared passions, and mutual appreciation of each other's rhododendrons and gardens.



Al assumed the role of president of the CVRS for 1993 – 1994, the third president of the CVRS, following Stan Groves and Kathy Millar. He noted that he holds to the belief that people are happiest when they participate. "I always tried to involve people," Al stated, and Liz added that when everyone does a bit, productivity is high and the results are unique. For years, Al and Liz have been responsible for organizing the truss shows at the CVRS Garden Fairs. The very next day might find them at another club's garden show, serving as judges of a truss show, or in other areas requiring their expertise.





Acceptance of

change seems to be a family trait, because where a magnificent magnolia and *R*. oreotrephes Greigs Form now thrive, a pond once bubbled. Recently, Rod was visiting and commented how he had loved the old pond, but acknowledged that "now it sure is pretty."

With such major accomplishments to date, do thoughts of the future include time for quiet relaxation in their paradise? "Well, we certainly do think about the future, and because we really want to stay right here, we have to think about setting things up so that we can manage." Recently, Al installed a water system that can do some of the work that he always did.

"There comes a time when acquiring more plants means having to dig some up," they claim. However, those were young plants in a rather new rhododendron garden around their unique magnolia in the backyard. Could that area, just north of the driveway, the growing arboretum of spreading deciduous trees become a new rhodo-

dendron garden? The corner of Al's mouth whispers a tiny smile, and Liz protests immediately with an explanation that those are potentially huge trees that would create far too much shade. Well then, could Al Camp-

bell's wish come true, that AI and Liz would create some Vancouver Island pollinated hybrids? With these two and their unlimited visions, teamwork, and hard work ethics, much is possible. One thing they will think about is what to name the magnolia that is now theirs to register.

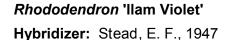
Naturally, it would seem fair to step back and let Al and Liz, just back from their daily "Timmy's Break", recline in the shade of magnificent magnolias, inhaling fragrances of "Perfume" and "Heavenly Scent". It would be kind to picture Liz turned slightly toward her favourite vista of *R*. 'Ilam Violet' above her rolling rock garden of blooming blues. Her eyes might stray to the very first blooms of a white peony with a dark burgundy-violet eye.







Al might be positioned to capture two of his favourites, complimentary in colour, *R*. 'Schubert' and *R*. 'Conroy'. But, who would be surprised if a hint of restlessness might become evident?



Height: 4 Ft.

Hardiness: thrives in the temperatures at Al

and Liz Murray's

Bloom time: April (at Al and Liz Murray's) **Flowers:** deep violet, smothering the entire plant for about 3 weeks (at Al and Liz Murray's)

Parentage: R. 'Electra Group' x r. russatum

Al and Liz admit that their favourites do change, sometimes as quickly as it takes to spot what is blooming that day.



Yes, they may have been gifted with their connections, the first-hand knowledge and the unique plants from these experts. But Al and Liz Murray fully own how they have translated this at Misty View Farm. They own the beauty that they have created together; they own how freely and generously they share. How they have given, and continue to give back, one hundred fold to the community in which they live, is entirely theirs, because it has risen from their warm hearts, determination and passion.

It's Happening in CVRS Member Gardens



R. sutchuenense in Siggi and Maria Kemmler's Garden



Brilliant rhododendrons in Al and Liz Murray's garden



Magnolia 'Eric Saville' in Al and Liz Murray's Garden



R. 'Loderi King George' with Cornus rubra



Davidia involucrata in Peter Lewis's Garden

"Every year in my garden, a tree or shrub really tries to outdo itself. This year, it was the Dove Tree---all the branches waving white handkerchiefs. . .so delightful."

Peter Lewis

Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society 2016 Donation to Providence Farm



CVRS President, Carrie Nelson, presents the rhododendron plants to the appreciative recipients at Providence Farm, April 2016.



R. 'Ink Spot'

Hybridiser: No official registration

Height: 5 ft.

Location: Hidden Acres, Campbell River, B.C.

Early Midseason H5

R. irroratum ssp irroratum 'Spatter Paint' x

R. 'Purple Splendour'



Azalea 'Ilam Melford Lemon'

Hybridiser: Yeates, 1986

Deciduous Height: 5 ft.

Early Midseason

2015-16 Coming Events

May 4, 2016 7:30 pm CVRS Monthly Meeting Gordon Murray – Trilliums: Past,

Present, and Future

St. John's Church, 163 First St. Duncan www.cowichanrhodos.ca

May 7, 2016

Open Gardens Tour **LOIS and ROY BLACKMORE**758 Walfred Road, Victoria B. C

May 7, 2016 10 am - 1 pm Cairnsmore Place Volunteer Gardeners' Plant Sale 250 Cairnsmore St.

May 9 - 10, 2016

Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society Vancouver Island Spring Bus Tour 2016

May 14, 2016 1 - 4 pm

Cowichan Valley Garden Club

Spring Flower Show & Tea

St. Peter's Church Hall

www.cowichanvalleygardenclub.com

May 28, 2016 9 am - 2 pm
Mill Bay Garden Club
69th Annual Community Flower and
Garden Show
Cobble Hill Hall
www.mbgardenshow@gmail.com

June 18, 2016 11:30 am - 2:30 pm CVRS Summer Picnic and Awards/Wrap Up

September 30 - Oct. 2, 2016 ARS Western Regional Conference



R. 'Ivory Spice'

Hybridiser: Barlup, 2003 Elepidote Height: 3 ft. Late Midseason H4

R. 'Winter Spice' x R. 'Muffy'



R. insigne

Origin: Wa Shan in Central Sichuan (maybe extinct) 2100-3000 m Habit: terrestrial Height: 10 ft.

Late midseason H5

2015-16 Executive

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Joe Hudak, Siggi Kemmler, Alan Campbell

Convenors

Sunshine: Mary Gale

Tea: Judeen Hendricksen

Raffle: Hilda Gerrits

Club Liaison: Alan Campbell

Library: Joyce Rodger

Membership Recruitment: Peter Lewis

Program Co-ordinator: Sandra Stevenson, Alan Campbell

History: Ian Efford

Garden Tours: Peter Lewis CV Garden Fair: The Team Facility Liaison: Roy Elvins Christmas Party: The Team

Bus Tours: Vacant

Species Garden Reps: Siggi Kemmler, Alan Campbell

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Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

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