



Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

Newsletter

Volume 32:7 October 2021

Message from the President

Hi Friends,

Most certainly some of you have Rhododendrons blooming in your gardens at this point in the year. Many of those will be repeat bloomers; their minor displays a reminder of last Spring's performance and a trailer for the shows that will be released in several months' time.

Some are true late season bloomers. Several species that bloom late are *R. auriculatum*, and *R. faithiae*. Hybrids from these late blooming species may inherit the late-blooming characteristics of their parents. *Rhododendron auriculatum* is one parent of *Rhododendron* 'Polar Bear', which is identified as a late to very-late blooming hybrid.

In our diversified gardens, however, this is the season when other trees and plants slip onto centre stage to deliver their renditions of beauty.



Hibiscus 'Kopper King'
Named for its deep
copper-coloured foliage



CVRS Meeting
Zoom Format

Wednesday
October 6, 2021
7pm

Guest Speaker:

Ron Long

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Banner Photo above: Rich fall
shades of *Hydrangea panniculata*
'Vanilla Strawberry'

President's Message (continued)

This honeysuckle, that has been blooming since spring, now vibrates with scarlet berries interspersing the blends of pinks, coral, red, and amber of the flowers, alongside rich burgundy-red flower buds.



Autumn is an evocative season for the senses – a time to slow down, cozy into flannels, and take deep breaths of brisk, moist air. It is a mosaic of warm hues in slanted light; of wafts of sunburnt caramel of Katsura leaves; of crisp apples, crisp breezes, crisp leaves rustling on pathways through our gardens.

Writers and poets, wordsmiths, such as Diana Gabaldon

"It was a beautiful, bright autumn day, with air like cider and a sky so blue you could drown in it."

Books? Yes, books! The CVRS Library has many wonderful books. Drop in one day.

See you soon,

Verna Buhler

Ron Long

presents

'DEATH VALLEY SUPERBLOOM'

A visually stunning experience

If you aren't impressed with deserts, this is for you!



Wednesday, October 6, 2021

7:15 pm

Geographically, Death Valley is a fascinating place. It is the hottest and driest place in the Western Hemisphere - not a place you would expect to find a floral spectacle. But, with exactly the right amount of rain, at exactly the right time (a rare occurrence), the desert is transformed.

However, to properly appreciate the plants, it helps to know something about the environment. As a lead-in to a discussion of the plants, this talk will include some of the unique geological features of Death Valley, such as Sailing Stones and Sand Dunes where there is no sand.

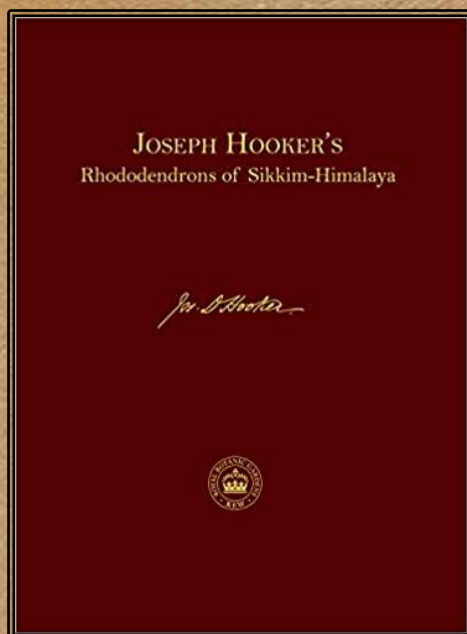
Ron Long was the sciences photographer at Simon Fraser university for thirty-six years. Now retired, Ron travels extensively to botanic hotspots around the world and enjoys sharing his experiences and photographs with interested groups.

BOOKS - BOOKS - BOOKS

THE CVRS LIBRARY HAS BOOKS FOR YOUR READING PLEASURE

THIS ONE IS EXCEPTIONALLY BEAUTIFUL AND INFORMATIVE

It is worth every minute of your time spent



All 30 plates beautifully reproduced alongside Hooker's original descriptions. The plates are all based on J.D. Hooker's original drawings.

Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker
(1817-1911)

... is perhaps the greatest of the lauded Directors of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and 2017 marks both the bicentenary of his birth and 170 years since his trip to India where he sought botanical treasures in the Himalaya.



This facsimile edition of Hooker's *Rhododendrons of Sikkim-Himalaya* has been reproduced from an original held in the Library, Art & Archives of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Its publication in three volumes between 1849 and 1851 was an unparalleled commercial success for Hooker. The lavish illustrations produced by Walter Hood Fitch which accompanied the rhododendron descriptions were, and still are, considered to be some of the finest examples of botanical illustration ever produced. The book introduced to the Victorian public new species of rhododendrons that were to become hugely popular and also to play a role in the evolution of British horticultural style and landscape design.

Propagation of Rhododendrons

by Verna Buhler

Information for this simplified guide to propagation of rhododendrons has been drawn from numerous sources: hands-on workshops of our experienced CVRS members such as Alan Campbell, Al Murray, Carrie Nelson, and Sandra Stevenson; presentations by Dennis Bottemiller of the Rhododendron Species Foundation; print sources such as an article written by Ian Efford in February 2016 while researching propagator construction, 'Rooting Rhododendron Cuttings' by Don Hyatt, and JARS Article Vol. 48: No. 4: Year 1994 'Tips for Beginners: Success with Rooted Cuttings' by Frank Dorsey

It is October and time to take cuttings of rhododendrons that you would like to see more of in the next few years.

There are individuals in our club who have become very good at producing beautiful plants from softwood sticks that are only 2 or 3 inches in length.



Al and Liz Murray willingly explained their approach to propagation and showed me the results of their efforts in their new hoop house. The photo above illustrates the size of the bits of green that grow to be the wonders in our gardens.

The dates that these cuttings were "stuck", has been meticulously recorded along with the names on each of the tiny cells.

Select Cuttings Carefully:

- Cuttings should be *turgid*: The parent *Rhododendrons* should have been well-watered for a period of time prior to being cut
- Stems should be the current year's growth and preferably not have flower buds
- Choose the smaller shoots from plants rather than big strong growths
- Select from branches on the back side of the plant or in shaded spots
- Stems should be flexible: if bent should bend to 90 degrees without snapping
- Stems should pale in colour, usually white or light green: if *lignification* has begun, they will probably not root

***Lignification* is the process where lignin is deposited in the cell walls creating a rigid or woody stem. As the wood ripens, it becomes darker, and therefore is easy to determine**

Prepare a Rooting Medium and Pots:

- Mix 60% perlite and 40% coir: Other inert materials such as peat moss and sieved bark mulch work as well; however, there is an international movement to reduce peat use, in order to protect peat bogs.
- Prepare pots, potting flats, or medium beds: Choices are based on the size of the propagation enterprise





Al and Liz Murray use three layers of trays to root their cuttings in a Lee Valley growing rack.

Ken Webb sticks cuttings directly into a large propagating frame filled with the rooting medium (This propagating bed design requires additional layers of material and construction)



The four Don Hyatt photos below, best illustrate the sequence of steps in processing the cuttings collected.

Preparation of cuttings:

- Make short cuttings about 1.5 to 2 inches in length: *Rhododendrons* are shallow rooted plants and therefore cuttings do not need to be very long
- Trim the leaves to make cuttings more manageable: Trim larger leaves by one to two-thirds, leaving only two or three shortened leaves
- Remove flower buds so that all energy is directed toward root formation



Wounding:

- Remove a thin piece of bark from both sides: As the cutting begins its healing process, new roots will develop from callus tissue that forms at the cambium layer of the cut stem.
- Cut away a thin sliver of bark from *both sides* of the bottom part of the cutting: Create a larger area for callus development. Use a sharp knife so as not damage to the remaining bark since that tissue needs to be healthy for the new callus tissue to grow.



Sterilization:

- Mix 1/2 cup of bleach with about 5 cups of water to make a sterilizing solution.
- Soak/submerge trimmed cuttings for 5 minutes in 10% bleach solution: kills most bugs and mold spores.
- Rinse the cuttings well and shake off excess water



Hormones:

- Dip cuttings in hormone powder or gel
- Propagators use a variety of hormone products: Availability of hormone products generally determine which a propagator will use
- The CVRS has used STIM-ROOT No. 3 powder, and a TECHNAFLORA product ROOTECH cloning gel.



Inserting cuttings:

- Punch a small pencil-sized hole into the medium: this prevents the hormone from being rubbed off the cutting during insertion
- Insert the cuttings into your prepared porous medium: the medium should be *damp but not too wet* since excess moisture can encourage rot
- Water in your cuttings to remove air pockets rather than tamping the medium

The Rooting Site Options:

- Place pots or flats of cuttings under closed plastic domes: clear plastic bags, mid-size mini-greenhouses, larger-scale propagating units
- Domes should seal to prevent moisture loss: Cuttings should require no water or care for months
- Place in an area with good light but not direct sun: In Ken Webb's view, the actual rooting of cuttings does not require high light levels but once the rooted cuttings are re-potted, then an artificial light source helps with growth
- Soil temperature should be about 20-21C or 70F



In general, the rooting sites chosen, largely depend on the size of the propagating venture.



Photo: Verna Buhler

Each year, Al and Liz Murray successfully root several hundred new rhododendrons for themselves and for the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society, in a well-lit Lee Valley greenhouse rack in their garage.

Al checks his cuttings daily and mists any of the cells that seem to become a bit drier than others, often depending on their positions on the bottom heat pads.

Ken Webb's uses sophisticated propagators, designed with lighting and intermittent mist sprays on timers, to root hundreds of cuttings each year

Photo right: Ken Webb explains the design of his propagator to Ian Efford (CVRS Newsletter, February 2016)



After several years of effort through trial, error, and persistence, the CVRS Propagating Club has produced an ever increasing inventory of plants that will be saleable in the near future.

Unfortunately, no, this is not what the CVRS Nursery looks like, but perhaps it could.

The Victoria Rhododendron Propagation club held a work bee and organized its nursery to look like this.



NTPC January 2020



NTPC August 2021



At Verna and George's where the CVRS plants are being grown-on, a new space in the yard is being opened up to, *ideally*, set up a nursery area that looks like the VRS Nursery.

Perhaps some of you, our members with construction skills or adventuresome spirits, could be called on one day to help staple this idea together and improve the plants' lives.

Although the CVRS plants are growing well at this point, pots are scattered throughout garden beds, and their lives are in jeopardy!

- When George tries to harvest his apples, he almost flops onto them. Crushing to imagine!
- Some of the pots are lining Verna's beds of special Rhododendron species, and she doesn't really like that garden edge design.

Improvements Coming Soon!



The shallow-frame boxes with the lattice strips help to keep potted plants upright.

Shade cloth arbours help to protect the young rhododendrons from scorching in the sun and heat.

These three photos were enviously drawn from the Victoria Rhododendron Society newsletter to create a contrast with the photos of the CVRS "nursery"



2021 Virtual ARS Fall Conference

"Fall into Gardening"

October 23 and 24, 2021



Hosted by Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society and Nanaimo Rhododendron Society in partnership with Vancouver Island Master Gardeners

This virtual conference is FREE and open to all interested gardeners - members and non-members – anywhere in the world!



ARS 2021 Fall Conference *Fall into Gardening* Schedule:

- **Saturday and Sunday, October 23 and 24, 2021 at NO COST!!**
- Four presentations each day starting at:
9 am Pacific - 12 noon Eastern – 1:00 pm Atlantic – 5 pm UK – 6 pm CET
- **All presentations will be recorded and available for our members in NZ, Australia & Asia to view at a convenient time.**

Saturday Speakers and Topics:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| • Hartwig Schepker, Germany | <i>Sichuan: A Plantsman's Paradise</i> |
| • Shannon Berch, BC Canada | <i>Living Soils</i> |
| • David Sellars, BC Canada | <i>From Rhododendrons to Rock Gardening</i> |
| • Don Hyatt, Virginia USA | <i>A Walk in the Woods</i> |

Sunday Speakers and Topics:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| • David Millais, UK | <i>Conservation of Heritage Rhododendrons</i> |
| • Linda Chalker-Scott, WA USA | <i>Landscape Mulches: The Good, the Bad, and the Just Plain Ugly</i> |
| • Richard Dionne, QC USA | <i>Growing Rhododendrons in Québec's Harsh Winters</i> |
| • Don Wallace, CA USA | <i>Fragrant Rhododendrons</i> |

To Join us please register using Mailchimp at

<https://mailchi.mp/9151e79e2a98/fall-conference-2021>

Please join us for this fall celebration of gardening!

HYDRANGEA

COMPANION PLANT OF THE MONTH

Text and photos by Ali Morris



Hydrangea macrophylla 'Paris'
early in the season Photo: Ali Morris

"These magnificent shrubs will dazzle us all summer and into autumn. Some of the best colour happens when the night temperatures begin to drop. Perhaps "best" is a stretch; I'm writing this in early fall, and I can admire the colour changes from my windows."

~ ALI MORRIS ~

All Hydrangeas need rich moist soil. Hydro is the Greek word for water, they thrive in dappled shade, will tolerate more sun if adequate water is supplied. Hydrangeas have the unique ability to absorb water through their petals, hosing down a plant when it's wilting will help it recuperate quickly.



***Hydrangea macrophylla** 'Winning Edge', also known as mop head hydrangea* Photo: Ali Morris

Here, on the West Coast, we have almost unlimited choices of hydrangea to grow.

These are some of the most common varieties:

Hydrangea macrophylla is also known as the mop head hydrangea. This one comes from Japan. My earliest recollection of seeing them was in Vancouver, one on each side of a set of front stairs.



Dwarf *H. macrophyllum*: Above left: *H.* 'Wee Bit Grumpy'
(Photo: Phoenix Perennials) Above right: *H.* 'Winning Edge'



***Hydrangea macrophylla* 'Paris'**
is one of the City Series hydrangeas. 'Paris' is compact at approximately three feet in height. It continues to dazzle throughout the season as it changes in blends of intense fuchsia and lime green

Hydrangea petiolaris,
Climbing Hydrangea

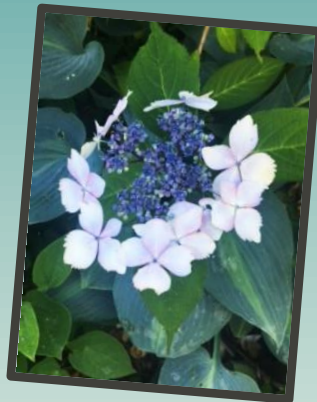
if grown well, is a sight to be seen.
I have seen it growing up a tree trunk.
In England, *Hydrangea petiolaris* is
commonly grown up a brick wall.



Hydrangea serrata,
or the lacecap hydrangea are
native to Japan and Korea.
Many cultivars are available.



***Hydrangea serrata* 'Tellers Blue'** grows 6 feet
tall in Ali's garden



Hydrangea aspera, native to the Himalayas, southern China, and Taiwan, is a tall shrub, up to 8 feet in height and looks best when given ample room. Deer don't care for its fuzzy foliage.



Hydrangea aspera ssp. sargentia, 8 feet tall in Ali's garden, blooms in a location where it has room to display its beauty. Above, the faded bloom in fall; the fuzzy leaves and stems are visible.



Hydrangea paniculata blooms on new growth and can be kept in check by pruning hard in spring. Many spectacular new cultivars have come onto the market in recent years.



Hydrangea paniculata
'Vanilla Strawberry'

Blooms open white and gradually turn pink through the season; in early fall, they develop rich shades of dusty rose and brick

Photos: Verna Buhler

Hydrangea quericifolia and *hydrangea arborescens* are two North American species:

Hydrangea quericifolia require more sunlight and produce outstanding fall colour.



Hydrangea quericifolia, 'Ruby Slippers'

Photo: White Flower Farm



Hydrangea arborescens 'Annabelle'

Photo: Phoenix Perennials

Hydrangea arborescens, or Smooth Hydrangeas, bloom on new growth and may sucker a little. The one I have, *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle' has flower heads that are nearly the size of a basketball. Mine is white, but there are pink forms available. Its stems are weak; a sudden summer storm may break them, so I plant them where there is some overhead protection. Apparently, a newer introduction, 'Incrediball' has even larger flower heads on considerably sturdy stems.

But this one, *Hydrangea* 'Double Wedding Gown'
... is one of my faves!

*It is semi-dwarf,
Will age to green,
And finishes red!*

Ali Morris



Propagation of hydrangeas is easy, at least in comparison to rhododendrons

- Best time: mid-August
- Select a cutting from a branch that has NOT bloomed
- Cut off the tip
- Leave 3 sets of leaves
- Make a clean cut just under the last/bottom leaf node
- Remove the 2 bottom sets of leaves
- Plant into a 4 inch pot
- Water well
- Slip the pot into a zip-lock bag
- Place in a warm but shady spot

In only 6 weeks, you will have a brand new plant!! Enjoy!

Rhododendron thomsonii



Hand coloured lithograph of *Rhododendron thomsonii* by W.H. Fitch, after watercolour by J.D. Hooker, from Hooker's, *The Rhododendrons of Sikkim-Himalaya* (1849)

Widely grown and very attractive with fine flowers, foliage and bark

Upright shrub or small tree to 7 metres
Bark is smooth and peeling, of mixed colours
Leaves are thick and leathery,
dark to medium green on upper surface
Flowers are deep blood-red to dark wine-red
Calyx may be of varying colours

Natural Habitats:

Abies forests at 2400 – 4300m
E. Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, S, Tibet,
And Arunachal Pradesh





Become a CVRS Member Re-new Your membership

Only \$35 full or couple
\$10 Associate



Learn More About
Species and Hybrid Rhododendrons
Unique Companion Plants
Propagation

Visit CVRS Member Gardens

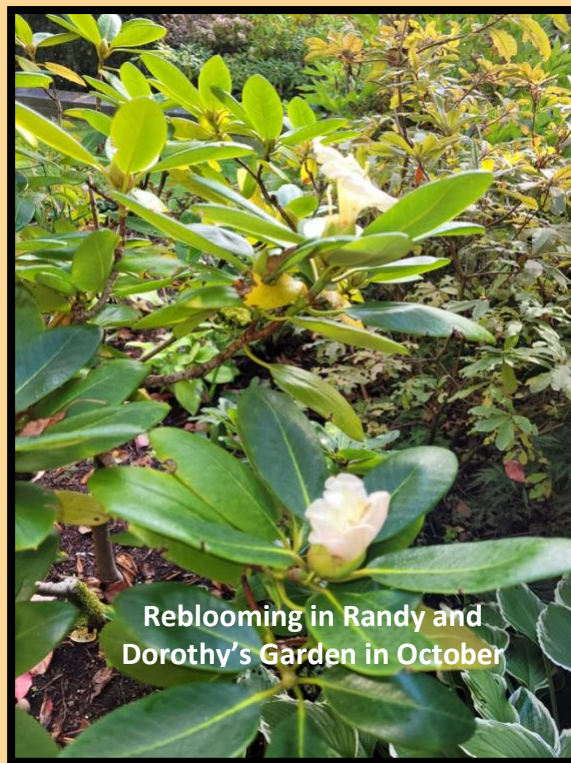
Open Your Gardens for Tours

Access special plant sales and plants

Hear expert speakers

Many more reasons to contact us:

cowichanvalleyrhododendron@gmail.com



2020 – 2021
Calendar of Events

Contact CVRS:

cowichanvalleyrhododendron@gmail.com

Wednesday, October 6, 2021 7 – 9pm

CVRS Monthly Meeting – Zoom

Speaker: Ron Long: ‘Death Valley Superbloom’

Thursday, October 14, 2021 7pm

Nanaimo Monthly Meeting, Beban Park Social Center (double vaccination and masks)

Speaker: Chris Southwick – Gardening with Rhododendrons”

Saturday, October 23 - Sunday October 24, 2021

ARS 2021 Fall Conference – Zoom (See Notice on Page

Saturday, November 6, 2021 Time - TBA

CVRS Monthly Meeting

Speaker: Howard Wills, Fernwood Nursery, UK: ‘The Wonderful World of Flowers’

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY EVENTS

Saturday, October 23 - Sunday October 24, 2021

ARS 2021 Virtual Fall Conference – Vancouver Island

October 26 - 29, 2021

New Zealand Rhododendron Association 76th Convention, New Plymouth, Taranaki, New Zealand.

May 4 - 8, 2022

ARS Annual Convention, Portland, Oregon More information <https://ars2022.org/>

2022:

ARS Fall Eastern Regional Conference, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Dates to be determined.

2023:

ARS Fall Western Regional Conference, Florence, Oregon. Dates to be determined.

2023:

ARS Annual Convention, Atlanta, Georgia. Joint ARS/ASA meeting. Dates to be determined.

USEFUL LINKS

Cowichan Rhododendron Society:

cowichanrhodos.ca/

Victoria Rhododendron Society:

victoriarhodo.ca/index.html

Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society:

marsrhodos.ca/

North Island Rhododendron Society:

nirsrhodos.ca/ws/

The American Rhododendron Society:

rhododendron.org/

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society:

nanaimorhodos.ca

Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden:

rhodygarden.org

Nanoose Garden Club:

nanoosegardenclub.ca/

Linda Gilkeson:

lindagilkeson.ca/

Vancouver Island Rock and Garden Society:

virags.com

Linda Chalker-Scott:

<https://puyallup.wsu.edu/lcs/>

Steve Henning:

rhodyman.net

Rhododendron, Camellia, Magnolia

<https://www.rhodogroup-rhs.org/>



Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

A Chapter of the American
Rhododendron Society P.O. Box 904
Duncan, British Columbia V9L 3Y2

<http://cowichanrhodos.ca>

2020-21 Executive

President: Verna Buhler
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Treasurer: Wendy Willson
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Director-at-Large: Candice Feeney
Director-at-Large: Carrie Nelson
Director-at-Large: Mary Pike
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Tea: Judeen Hendrickson
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Fundraising: The Executive Team
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CVRS Bus Tours: TBA
Library: Verna Buhler