



Newsletter

Volume 23:7 Editor: Ian Efford October 2012

President's Message

Last weekend, along with over 230 other rhododendron enthusiasts, I attended a very enjoyable ARS conference in Nanaimo. The attendees came from across North America with the majority from the west coast. An excellent after dinner talk was given by Garth Wedemire, our guest speaker in November, who described with beautiful pictures of rhododendrons in five exceptional gardens on Vancouver Island. The next night Steve Hootman, the executive Director of the Rhododendron Species Botanic Garden at Federal Way just south of Seattle, gave an illustrated talk about his expeditions to explore for new rhododendrons in the mountains of Papua New Guinea and Southern China.

One general session was devoted to the history of three well-known gardens on the island - The Weesje's garden in Saanich, Milner Garden in Qualicum and Finnerty Garden at the University of Victoria - and the history of rhododendron nurseries on the island and the inter-relationships between them. All these talks were very well presented and most interesting. As in all conferences, there was another series of talks in the next room but one cannot be in two rooms at once! Bus tours occupied much of the time on the first and third days and these appeared to have been enjoyed by everyone.

CVRS contributed to the conference by organizing the silent auction. Bill Dumont, assisted by Joe Hudak, did an excellent job of obtaining 60 donations and presenting them in a very attractive display. The final result was income of over \$2,000 which goes towards paying for the conference expenses.

Conferences are usually accompanied by large plant sales and this one was no exception. One whole room was devoted to plants from both Canada and the United States the latter including a comprehensive collection of species from the Rhododendron Species Botanic Garden. Your executive has been discussing the support that we normally provide to one of the main rhododendron gardens. Last year we sent funding to the RSBG and this year we received a tentative request from Milner Gardens.

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Coming Events

October 3
Carmen Varcoe: Bhutan

November 7
Garth Wedemire: A Personal Perspective on the East Coast Convention last Spring

After some discussion, the committee felt that we should support our local Lake Cowichan Rhododendron Garden. After discussion with the available Executive members, it was decided to take advantage of the presence of the RSBG plants at the sale and purchase \$300 of species for Lake Cowichan RG. Alan Campbell chose the plants and, by the time you read this, they should have been turned over to that group. This collection will boost the number of species in that garden and, when they are mature, be a source of cuttings for our Members.

Finally, in this newsletter there is a short article on the propagation workshop to be held in Victoria this month. I would recommend anyone interested attend this one day session. It will consist of talks by experts, hands on demonstrations, private discussion with experts as one wanders around the Webb's garden, and access to a wide range of plants from which you will be encouraged to take cuttings. You will be able to take these cuttings home or put them in the Webbs' propagation unit and collect them after they have rooted. All this for \$25 which includes lunch, coffee and snacks!

Ian E. Efford

Grass Clippings as a Fertilizer

I have a neighbour who cuts his grass very frequently using a large lawnmower with attached grass bags. I suggested that, rather than take the clippings to the Bing Road recycling centre, he dump them in my garden. More recently, another neighbour has been persuaded to do the same. I mix the clippings with the Garry oak leaves that fall on the property each autumn and the mound is left to compost before being added to beds that are in need of a boost.

I did not realize the amount of fertilizer that was been "donated" to my garden by this process until I learned that Falk (1976)* had studied a conventionally managed lawn in California. From the 110 square metre lawn [ca. 30 x 40 ft], 63kg dry weight of living and dead vegetation was removed by raking and mowing in the course of a year. This contained the equivalent of 3,300g of nitrogen, 960g of phosphorus and 1,850g of potassium. Fertilizers and manure equivalent of 1,720g nitrogen, 430g phosphorus and 860g potassium had to be applied to maintain a healthy lawn.

It is clear that the owner of the property would save money by leaving the grass clipping on the lawn rather than take the nutrients away and replacing them with fertilizers each year. Of course, the lawn would no longer appear pristine, manicured expected by the neighbours in many sub-divisions! Keeping a lawn at 2.5 inches during the summer helps the grass, a cold climate plant, by keeping the roots cool and moist. Leaving the clippings on the ground retains the nutrients and reduces the need for fertilizers.

Finally, if you have spare lawn clippings I am always willing to receive them!

Ian E. Efford

* Falk, J.H. (1976) Energetics of a suburban lawn ecosystem. *Ecology* 57: 141-150.

Fragrant Foliage

Some of our rhodos have foliage that is fragrant. Our featured species this month is *R. campylogynum* which has tiny, shiny leaves that give off a scent when handled. The Species Foundation website states that it is a 'dwarf evergreen alpine shrub typically with a dense, mounding habit.

The flowers (late spring) are pink to salmon-pink, red, claret, purple, plum to almost black-purple, or cream. The campanulate blossoms resemble small thimbles nodding at the ends of their long pedicels. The small rounded to elliptic leaves are typically quite shiny with a glaucous underside. A fantastic specimen plant for the rock or woodland garden. Also nice in a container or as a mass groundcover planting. Found in a wide range of habitats from 8,000 to 16,000 ft. in N India (Arunachal Pradesh), N Burma, S Tibet & Yunnan, China."

Diane Scott President, NIRS

Quoted from the January 2012 newsletter of the North Island Rhododendron Society

Has anyone seen this rhododendron?

Roy Elvin's son-in-law took this picture of a rhododendron that said to be 140 years old. Has anyone any idea where this might be located?

If so, please tell Roy or contact him at relvins@shaw.ca.



A Comment and Response Concerning Q & A Meeting Last Month

Comment:

When I joined the Society I wanted to learn more about growing and nurturing my rhodies. So this meeting was just what I had hoped for! I could tell that everyone was enjoying it as well. Would it be possible to have a 'short' Q & A at our monthly meeting? It would be very helpful to us 'new' members to learn about problems in our own gardens.

Ali Morris

Response:

In the past we have tried the 'short Q&A' period during meetings, we have also tried a Q&A column in the newsletter but both attempts were very short-lived as no questions were forthcoming. It appeared that people with questions are more comfortable asking questions 'one on one' with someone before, after or during the coffee break rather than seemingly asking a 'stupid' question in front of everyone. But we can always try again.

Alan Campbell

The *Phytophthora* Battle Continues

Ian Wright continues to lead the battle against *Phytophthora* in the Natural Trust in England and is playing a wider role in association with the UK Government's Plant Health Agency. They have produced two new films that might interest members. The first is on *Phytophthora* itself:

<http://www.fera.defra.gov.uk/plants/plantHealth/pests/Diseases/phytophthora/video.cfm>

and the second is on Tree Health action plan and posters....

<http://www.fera.defra.gov.uk/plants/plantHealth/treeHealth.cfm>

He states that "The nightmare of a widespread tree host with *Phytophthora* (Larch) is difficult to envisage ever controlling. Over 3000ha are now under notice as having the disease and will be felled. That's a lot for the UK (nowhere near Canada's scale!) The Rhododendrons this year have been fantastic which makes the campaign all the more important."

This disease is not a serious problem for rhododendrons on Vancouver Island but a slight change in the climate could well make it so. A warm wet spell would be the sort of change that may make a difference.

Victoria Propagating Group

The Victoria Propagating Group is to hold another Propagating Workshop. It will be on October 13, 2012 at Madeleine & Ken Webbs' house – 5008 Old West Saanich Road, Saanich, B.C. This will be a hands on workshop where everyone will be able to choose cuttings and actually stick them in our propagator. We will be working mostly outside and in the garden, so warm and dry clothes will be necessary. Talks and discussions will be lead by most of the local propagators and hybridizers. The charge will be \$25 and will include a hot lunch and coffee breaks. We will start around 9:30 am to give people from the mainland and up island time to get here. We hope to finish with an early dinner at a

local restaurant (not included) to give enough time for everyone to get home.

We are very lucky to have **Dennis Bottemiller** from the Rhododendron Species Foundation here to give us some tips about how he runs his propagation greenhouses at RSBG.

For registration and questions email Ken & Madeleine at kenwebb@live.ca or phone 250-744-1785. Please register early because we do have limited space.

Butchart Gardens

Graham Bell

Enticing visitors to Vancouver Island since the early 1900s, these breathtaking gardens are now a designated National Historic Site. Starting with the Sunken Garden, once a limestone quarry, The Butchart Gardens offers 22 ha (55 acres) of spectacular beauty in every season.

Spring features countless tulips, daffodils and hyacinths, with the glorious Rose Garden bursting into bloom in the summer. Perennial borders start their stunning show in late summer, and the Japanese maples turn to russet, gold, and red in the fall. Entertainment highlights in July and August include music under the stars, Night Illuminations, and Saturday Fireworks. Christmas is a magical wonderland, including a new outdoor ice skating rink.



The Sunken Garden

Not a lot is known to us as to the plant tastes of Jennie Butchart and her husband Robert, but we do know they obviously enjoyed Rhododendrons a great deal as they made them the backbone of many of the garden areas on their estate.

According to our records it appears most of the rhododendrons and azaleas were purchased from local nurseries. The earliest invoice we could find for the purchase of rhododendrons was dated November 25, 1911 from Flewin's Gardens. This property was located at 866 Heywood Avenue, directly across the street from Beacon Hill Park in Victoria. The purchase included 12 Rhododendron 'Pink Pearl' for the astronomical price of \$30.00,

which I'm sure would have seemed like a king's ransom in those days! Following this purchase there were a number of acquisitions made during the next few years which included a wide variety of plant material from Layritz Nurseries where the well known nurseryman Richard Layritz was busy producing a multitude of plants for the burgeoning little city of Victoria. Some of the well known varieties of rhododendrons purchased from Layritz included Rh. 'Chevalier Felix de Sauvage', Rh. 'Unique', Rh 'Anthony Waterer' and Rh. 'Pink Pearl'. These rhododendrons have stood the test of time and not only can you still find some of the original plants in our garden, but you can find many of the very same varieties available at your local nursery today. Numerous azaleas were also purchased and many of these plants also can still be found in the oldest areas of the gardens.

Butchart Gardens - The Japanese Garden



2012 Cowichan Valley Bus Tour to the North Shore and Vancouver

Sandra Stevenson

Bright and early on a Friday morning in May a lovely new Mercedes bus met 40 members of the Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Club and friends at the Duncan train station. Following coffee and donuts in the parking lot we were transported to the Queen of Oak Bay ferry in Nanaimo. There we enjoyed a breakfast while watching the Coastal Mountains of the mainland magnify as the ferry approached Horseshoe Bay.

After our more than competent bus driver, navigated the switchbacks on a very steep incline in **Lions Bay** we were welcomed by our hosts Richard and Heather Mossakowski in their woodland garden. They toured us around this mature one acre garden that has evolved over the past 30 years.

It is comprised of 1500 rhododendrons of which 380 were species rhododendrons. The canopy of fir, cedar, and deciduous trees set the perfect stage for an understory of rhododendrons. The steep embankment was terraced with narrow trails formerly used by wildlife to access the water source

on top of the Lions. With great care we navigated the mountainside winding our way past numerous cultivars of rhododendrons from large leaf to dwarf. Every turn provided framed views of Howe Sound. A deck overlooking the woodland and blending with the garden provided the perfect seating area for peaceful contemplation. This extension of the mountainside captured stunning views of Horseshoe Bay and the North Shore and gave many opportunities for postcard perfect photos.



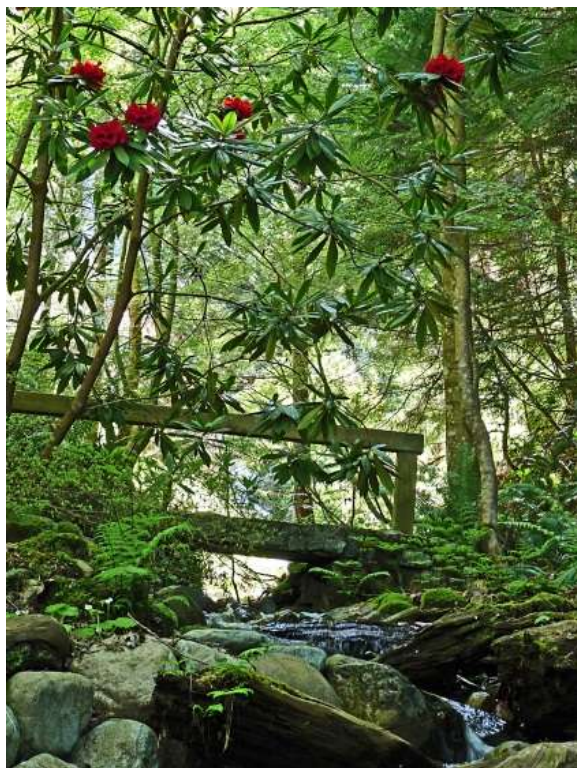
A short walk down the road brought us to Joe and Joanne Ronsley's garden. This mature woodland setting has been developed over the past 35 years. Gentians and *Podophyllum* provided a ribbon of color along the walkway on our approach down to the house.

A number of steep trails and bridges assisted with navigating this two acre mountainside garden. A swift creek waving down the mountainside set the scene for the hundreds of trees, rhododendrons, and perennials waiting for us to explore. Many treasures including a grouping of *Arisaema* were in full glory along the foot trails.





Our Host welcomed us to his home and deck for our group to once again enjoy the spectacular views of Howe Sound and a bird's eye view of the numerous tree-sized rhododendrons: Macabeanum, Yakusimanum, Loderi, Augustinii and many more too numerous to mention graced the mountainside.





Next on our agenda was lunch at the beautiful Park and Tilford Gardens in North Vancouver. This is a well-manicured garden on a three acre site. It was created in 1968 by a privately owned distillery. It consists of the Oriental Gardens, the White Gardens, the Rock Pool, the Native Garden, the Herb Garden, the Display Garden and the Colonnade Garden.

The City of Vancouver and Vancouver Parks, acquired 4500 of their plants when the nursery closed in 1966. These now 50 years old plus rhododendrons and azaleas provide a spectacular display near Lost Lagoon in Stanley Park. The setting of magnolias and evergreens surrounded by the breath taking views of azaleas and rhododendrons were out in full glory surpassing our expectations of a marvelous display.



Lunch, catered by Bill Dumont, was a special treat of a variety of sandwiches, salads, fresh fruit, chocolate desserts, and wine - presentation perfect in this setting of garden rooms and the hot noon day sun.

Our next stop was Stanley Park, The Ted and Mary Greig Rhododendron Garden. Ted and Mary Greig operated a nursery specializing in both hybrid and species rhododendrons from 1935 to 1966 in Royston on Vancouver Island.



We would like to have lingered in this magical setting for hours though the day's events were not over so once again we boarded the bus to our next stop, the Delta Vancouver Hotel.

After check-in and a few minutes to put our feet up we departed for our final organized event for the day, dinner.



The dining experience was at the Claypot Hotpot and BBQ in Richmond. We were seated at round tables of eight and given verbal instruction on our dinner of Mongolian Hotpot. This challenging event has everyone working for their meal. We cooked our own meal of varied meats, seafood, fresh greens and noodles in a large pot of boiling broth situated in the center of the table. Of course when your highly anticipated mouthfuls of food were cooked to perfection you would remove your basket from this hot pot of broth and hope your food had not jumped the boundaries and ended up a free for all in the pot. If in fact your basket did come up empty, you would have to fish for your supper. More often than not you would end up with your neighbour's food that had strayed from their cooking basket. No fisticuffs at our table, in fact we managed to keep quite civilized, though I did hear a few energetic comments coming from other tables. All and all everyone walked away intact, well fed, and many of the highest of compliments were heard regarding the whole experience.



Day 2 Bus Tour

UBC Botanical Gardens is our first stop on day two of the tour. It was founded in 1916 and is one of Canada's oldest University Botanical Gardens.

It spans 78 acres of which five are allocated to the botanical garden. Thousands of plants display more than 8000 species including collections of maples, magnolias, rhododendrons, cornus, sorbus, alpine plants and many more perennial and woodland plants. The photos attached provide only a glimpse of this magnificent garden. We oriented ourselves to our maps and planned our walking routes to ensure we saw our desired selections of plants leaving enough time to browse the gift shop and attend the UBC annual plant sale. We had an opportunity to purchase a few of the numerous cultivars of plants, shrubs and trees we were coveting while meandering the pathways.





While we shopped for our treasures a few of us took some time for a little relaxation before pressing on to the Southlands Nursery.



Southlands Nursery was updated by Thomas Hobbs and Brent Beattie some twenty years ago. It is now an artful setting to display plants and all things related to gardening. We were very happy to begin a buying frenzy and were forced to practise restraint only because we were travelling by bus.



The Van Dusen Botanical Garden in the heart of Vancouver is the final garden on our tour. The garden opened to the public in 1975 following a history of being Vancouver's first golf course. It boasts more than 250,000 plants representing ecosystems from around the world. The Rhododendron Walk, collection of azaleas, magnolias, camellias, acers, betulas, meconopsis, ferns, trees, shrubs, perennials too many to name, small ponds, pools and creeks are spread around this fifty-five acre site. We took the afternoon to stroll and enjoy this grand garden in its peak season of May bloom.

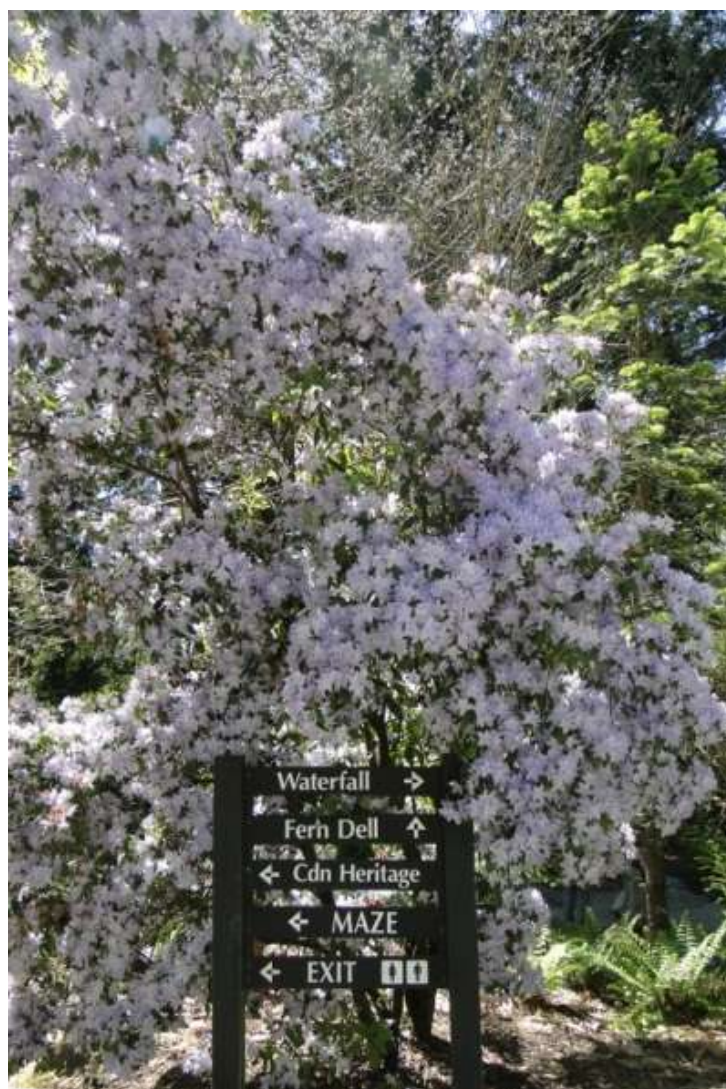


Tea and lunch were enjoyed on the patio surrounded by this treasure we were about to explore. Numerous cultivars of mature rhododendrons and azaleas along the Rhododendron walk towered over us as we expanded our wish list. We walked the numerous trails and absorbed the sights and sounds of this beautiful world class garden. The new garden and plant shop offered an opportunity to add unique items to our trips collections.

After our few hours at Van Dusen and one last head count we filed onto the bus destined for The Spirit of Vancouver Island where the Pacific Buffet awaited us. The food was plentiful with a great selection. Most enjoyable was sharing it with friends and family while reminiscing about the trip.

Thank you to Sharon Tillie, Carrie Nelson, Jillian Kondrat, and Ursula Siefert for photos.





**Cowichan Valley Rhododendron
Society
Programme 2012-2013**

**7:30 pm at St John's Anglican Church
163 First St, Duncan, BC V9L 1R1
(1st and Jubilee)**

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| September 5 | By popular demand, the evening will be devoted to a panel answering members questions about any aspect of rhododendron cultivation, hybridization, etc. Bring your questions, leaves that appear to have problems, etc. |
| October 3 | Carmen Varcoe will present a talk on Bhutan, which is located in the centre of the natural distribution of rhododendrons. |
| November 7 | Garth Wedemire will present a personal perspective on the East Coast Convention last Spring |
| December 5 | The Christmas dinner. |
| February 6 | TBA |
| March 6 | TBA |
| April 3 | TBA |
| May 4 | Garden Fair (10 – 2) |
| May 6 | TBA |
| June 22 | Summer Picnic |



**2012-2013
Executive**

Past President: David Annis
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Vice President: Sandra Stevenson
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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: vacant
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: vacant
Garden Tours: vacant
Plant Sale: the team
Facility Liason: Roy Elvins
Christmas Party: The team
Publicity: vacant