



The **Rhodoholic**



Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

Volume 27:7 October 2016

“Not-So-Presidential” Message

Barrie Agar, our new President, had planned to submit a note for the newsletter before she went to Victoria to experience surgery on her knee. We can all relate to the long list of tasks we absolutely must complete, both at work and at home, before we can begin a medical absence for any extended period of time. As she was unable to send a note, I will simply highlight several items, which Barrie, at our last Executive Meeting, appeared keen to begin.

Each year the CVRS donates approximately \$500 worth of plants to gardens in the Cowichan Valley. Members are encouraged to add to the list of possible recipients, which at this point is still short. It includes the Seniors Activity Center in downtown Duncan and Heiwa Park. The dedication of Heiwa



CVRS Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, October 5
7:30pm St. John's Church
Paul Wurz, Hidden Acres
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R. ‘Leverett Richards’

Hybridizer: Whitney, William E. (1975)
Brinnon, Washington, USA

R. wardii var *wardii* x *R. ‘F.C. Puddle Group* x
Mrs Betty Robertson’



Park took place on September 23, 2016, with the Mayor and Japanese Consul General, and other persons from across Canada, in attendance. If selected, this small park could feature *Rhododendron yakushimanum* very nicely.

Barrie, head gardener at Royal Rhodes, is also pursuing opportunities, through joint cooperation with other garden organizations, to bring in special speakers that might be unavailable to smaller organizations working on their own. She is also enthusiastic about possible Island Garden Tours to gardens that have been visited by members in the past, but which many current members have never seen. These include the gardens of Ken Gibson, George Frazer, Stubb's Island, Hidden Acres, Evelyn Weejes (Towner Crest), Saltspring Island, and Abkhase Garden.

Supporting new members of the CVRS is an area of focus for the Executive. The gift of a rhododendron seems most appropriate, but another idea is to invite members to sign up as MENTORS to new members.

Of considerable discussion is the need to meet the increasing public interest in purchasing rhododendrons for their gardens. This is most evident at CVRS Annual Spring Garden Fairs. At the September CVRS Meeting, discussion of a motion to allow the CVRS to purchase addi-

tional plants from Erica Nursery highlighted several important issues. These included: *first*, the importance of supporting local vendors; *second*, the importance of effective fundraising for the CVRS; *third*, limiting the number of plants purchased to ensure vendors are able to fairly sell their stocks. Requests for the purchase of additional stock must be approved by the membership; *fourth*, increasing the variety of plants available by encouraging new and different vendors; *fifth*, developing programs to increase the availability of plants from local vendors; *sixth*, the purchasing of additional plants by the CVRS be practiced only until local efforts meet the demands for stock. Following the discussion, the motion was carried:

That the CVRS membership approve the purchase of plants to the cap of \$1500, should the plants be required to meet the expected demand of sales at the Garden Fair.

I, personally, am looking forward to hearing about what Barrie's creative mind has been producing while she has been hampered physically during recovery from her surgery.

See you on Wednesday, October 5th. You will enjoy Paul Wurz's presentation!

Verna Buhler

“L” Rhododendrons

In keeping with the themed focus of this month's newsletter, in this issue, the *Rhododendrons* with names beginning with 'L', will be those of Vancouver Island and Northwest Coast hybridizers.



R. 'Langley Tranquility'

(unregistered)

Hybridizer: Clay, Les and Bev

Langley, B.C.

R. 'Graf Zeppelin' x R. 'King of Shrubs'

R. 'Lois Blackmore'

Hybridizer: Barlup, Jim (1996)

Bellevue, Washington, USA

R. 'Fantastica' x R. 'Rocky Point'



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October 5th: Special Guest Speaker, Paul Wurz

Hidden Acres Rhododendrons

Campbell River, BC



Paul Wurz, a retired schoolteacher, and Lynn Wurz, with a degree in Biology, began creating their own legacy when they retired in 1998 and began gardening fulltime. Paul is creating a **Living Library** of a stunning collection of rhododendrons at his Hidden Acres Rhododendron property near Campbell River on Vancouver Island. Lynn focuses on a vast collection of woodland companion plants.

Paul Wurz has the largest collection of rhododendron hybrids created by Vancouver's Jack Lofthouse in the world. His presentation will focus on the Lofthouse Legacy. With over 50 hybrids to his name, Jack G. Lofthouse (1915 – 2005) has made a substantial contribution to Rhododendron hybrids for the garden.

Wurz Mission:

"...to make as many of the new and specialty rhododendrons available to rhodo fanatics as possible."

They propagate approximately 1500 young rhodos each year, and welcome guests to visit their display garden of approximately 1000 hybrids and species rhododendrons, under planted with a variety of hostas, ferns and other companion plants.

Letter *from the Editor*



Although the weather has been absolutely winning, drops in temperature during increasing hours of darkness does encourage us to prepare our propagating beds for the collecting of cuttings from our favourite rhododendrons.

Perhaps many of us are not aware of how fortunate we are that highly knowledgeable “experts” within our own community are so willing to share with us their knowledge, experiences and stories. Perhaps this is because of their common characteristic: humility. They claim, with a chuckle, that they are not “experts”, that they know that there is too much that they do not know. Perhaps that is also why they are so gentle with “learners”.

As a new member of the executive, I was excited to host a meeting at our home so that I could point out my collection of rhododendrons to “rhodo people”. They were very “gentle” and nodded as I excitedly pointed out my favourites; they responded with odd comments: “There is some discussion that that rhodo may actually be a species”; “Its leaf is too small---it could be one of Hachman’s yellows, if you bought it from Ingeborg”; “Interestingly, that one is actually an *azaleodendron*; and then quietly later, “‘Crater Lake’ is really a hybrid, not *R. augustinii* ‘Crater Lake’ like you recorded on your label.” That was it! The beginning of personalizing one of my favourite lines from “The Game of Thrones”: “You know nothing, [Verna Buhler]!”

At the last Executive Meeting, three of five of us had never seen Ken Gibson’s garden, two had never been to Abkhazi Gardens, and one did not know who Lofthouse was. Is that shocking? Perhaps it shouldn’t be. The CVRS has a diverse membership, composed of both founders and the

relatively new; some new members recently attended their first meeting in September. So there ought to be many opportunities to learn and to teach. The propagation season is just beginning. To inspire us, several upcoming presentations will highlight the work of at least three hybridizers, **Lofthouse** and **Wurz** (October), and **Barlup** (March).

In this newsletter, Ian Efford, offers simple steps to take in supporting the efforts of an increasing number of members of the CVRS club who are enthusiastic about raising young rhododendron plants right here at home. Attempting to raise a plant from cuttings can lead to a very deep desire to learn more about that little piece of life. Parenting mode slips in, and so the drive to become a capable and effective parent begins---life changes; I discovered this last fall.

Considering these factors, it seems timely, that we draw attention to information about the “creations” and “creators” of our most loved rhododendrons. Drawing from a variety of sources, this newsletter issue attempts to introduce, or remind us, of our West Coast talented hybridizers and their hybrids, the variety of means to achieving these spectacular results, and our personal roles in supporting the growth of the genus *Rhododendron*.

“Experts” are genuinely encouraged to offer corrections and additional information. This editor is grateful for all input and feedback!

Verna Buhler

Ours is a Most Beautiful Torch

The current members of the CVRS have been delivered a torch to carry. Yes, it is heavy; it is a massive bouquet of an unparalleled beauty of 'leaf and bloom' that simply continues to unfold.

Meeting key international personalities at the Sydney Convention in May 2015, hearing the passion and urgency of Ian Efford's presentation of his scholarly book *The Public Rhododendrons Gardens of Vancouver Island*, visiting special Up-Island gardens on the CVRS Garden Tour in May 2016, are just a few of the experiences that have remained with me over the past year. Time spent with fellow CVRS members and the opportunities to visit their gardens have inspired me to expand my participation in what I have learned is the purpose and mission of the CVRS.

Some follow-up reading and research led me back to an article written by Alan Campbell in 2002. Some of the information in this article is included in Ian Efford's book in the chapter written by Alan Campbell "Vancouver Island Hybrids and Hybridizers". However, it was the melancholy in one section of his 2002 article that touched me with its relevance. Ian, in his presentation, passionately encouraged us to protect the rhododendron genus. He stressed the importance of labeling our plants, and he pursued the dream of propagating rhododendrons right here at home in the Cowichan Valley by developing the propagation project. Alan delivered this same message, years earlier, in his article:

*"Few propagators are bringing the Vancouver Island plants forward to be recognized, but those plants that are familiar to the public owe much of their notoriety to **Les Clay**. Les has done his part in bringing the Vancouver Island plants into the public eye, but he cannot nor should he have to do it alone. It may be said that the reason these plants are not registered, or even named for that matter, is because the hybridizer deemed his work unworthy. I disagree. The assessment and evaluation of a hybrid for registration may take up to 10 years, and as you may have noted, the majority of the hybridizers that I have mentioned are deceased, leaving their work unfinished. **As members of the different chapters of the ARS, one of our mandates is to ... "conduct scientific and educational activities, supervise test gardens, register new varieties, and maintain a variety check list..." I feel that we, as members of the Vancouver Island chapters of the ARS, have a responsibility to grasp the unfinished work of these Island hybridizers and strive to complete it, and to promote propagation and cultivation of their hybrids.**" (Alan Campbell, 2002)*

Alan's chapter, in Ian Efford's book, includes an accessible list of hybridizers and their contributions of specific hybrids. Versions of this information are also available in the booklet, *The Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society 'Celebrating the First 25 Years'* (Ian Efford, 2013), and portions can be found in the CVRS articles of newsletters available online.

If this information is so available, why include this in our October newsletter? To encourage us to do our parts in any of a variety of ways! We can build living libraries, select and share cuttings, and select and plant seeds. Perhaps those who attended **Wallace's** workshop at the Newport Convention this past weekend, can effectively begin hybridizing.

Except for four, *R.* 'Cowichan' (thanks Alan), *R.* 'Courtney King' (thanks **Joe Hudak**), *R.* 'Harry Carter' (thanks **Paul Wurz**), and *R.* 'Royston Red', none of the rhododendrons on the list are growing in my garden. I would like to change that; I would like to find these special plants and gather cuttings. It was exciting to gather cuttings from **Anne Slaby's** garden last fall, and slightly encouraging to have actually transplanted about forty small plants from the cuttings. However, I failed completely with others, and some of those, I recognize now, were on that list.

Check the extensive list on pages 14 and 15 in *The Public Rhododendrons Gardens of Vancouver Island*; if you have these plants in your gardens, run some cuttings over to the new propagator at Ian's---he is eager to teach and work with you. Other members of our chapter already propagate in their nurseries, and others are beginners, dabbling and learning. My husband and I have improved and expanded our own propagating space to overcome the errors of my first effort last season, so, of course, I would love some as well!

Thanks to the many humble experts (they really are experts!) in our midst, we, the newer members, can build on this fabulous information. We can learn "how" from them. Why don't we do that?

Verna Buhler

***R.* 'Lillian Hodgson'**

Hybridizer: Rhodes, R.C. (1979)

Gabriola Island, B.C.

R. 'Solent Queen' x *R.* 'Old Copper'



***R.* 'Lillian Peste'**

Hybridizer: Peste, F. (1970)

Shelton, Washington, USA

R. degronianum ssp *yakushimanum*
'Koichira Wada' x ??

What CVRS Members Are Doing

FULFILLING PURPOSES/MANDATES

As members of the different chapters of the ARS, one of our mandates is to . . . “conduct scientific and educational activities, supervise test gardens, register new varieties, and maintain a variety check list...”

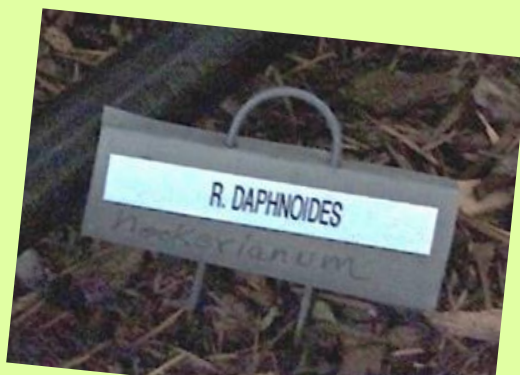
CVRS Members Build Living Libraries



CVRS Members Select, Raise, And Sell Rhododendrons



CVRS Members Grow, Record, Educate And Share



CVRS Members Propagate Rhododendrons



From Cuttings...



From Seed Selection...



Dixie's selected seed cross:

(Creamy Chiffon x Crest) x (Naomi x King of Shrubs)

In her last few years, Dixie saw some of these plants bloom, recorded the results, selected several favourites, and had begun the process of informally naming these after members of her family. Others had not yet bloomed.

The CVRS Propagator

Some months ago, Joe Hudak and I prepared a report in which we suggested that CVRS should have its own propagator, which would be available for any member who wished to root cuttings. The design was to be based on two successful propagators owned by Victoria RS members, Ken Webb and Moe Massa. We proposed one major difference from their designs, which was that ours should be easily moveable, so that it could be managed by different members at their homes. After some delays, this propagator is now complete and working.

The design is one where each part can be dismantled and moved easily. The parts are shown in the following photographs.



The Base



The bottom tray [right], the top tray [centre] and a cover [left]

This cover was used, not the one shown in the previous photo, as it provided a 3' clearance between lights and the plants.



The Cover



Heating cables being laid. Bricks are used to hold the cable in place and are removed after the sand is added.

The design differed from the two in Victoria in another way. Instead of an insulated box with a solid base, ours is not insulated and has a base consisting of cross planks that are spaced half an inch apart. These sit on supports, which run along the side of the bottom tray. This change allows the planks to be removed easily as they are not attached, and air to flow through to the roots of the cuttings. On top of these planks is a layer of pulp mill cloth, which allows air to pass through to the roots, and three inches of sand with the heating cable embedded in the middle. On top of the sand is a wire mesh to allow the easy movement of pots without disturbing the sand.

Pots are to be used rather than having the tray filled with growing mixture as it is expected that members will be using the propagator with individual pots for cuttings.



The finished propagator with the can of growing mixture in the foreground

At the moment, the propagator is in my garden but, at the will of the Executive, it can be moved very easily to another site. The pots would have to be removed, the sand moved to containers and then the whole thing dismantled, moved and reassembled with little effort.

Lights have not been installed at the moment, as there have been a number of technical issues that needed to be resolved. At the moment, I am seeking the best price for the lighting.

Now that the propagator is fully functional, cuttings are being added daily. All members are welcome to bring cuttings of any of their named azaleas or similar rhododendrons – those with soft leaves. [Large leaved rhododendrons will be put in the propagator in the autumn] You can bring them and prepare them yourself. Someone will help you, or just bring the cuttings and someone will prepare them for you. Ideally, we need ten cuttings from new growth – look on the shady side of the bush where the growth tends to be longer. New growth is found from beyond where the truss was attached. Bring cuttings immediately after you take them, in water or in a plastic bag with a wet paper towel include. Put the name of the plant in the bag!

Near the propagator is a bath with 10% chlorine bleach containing pots. Next to the propagator is the growing mixture in a black garbage can. Growth hormone, both powder and wet, is available. An exactor blade or very sharp knife is required.

Based on very successful rooting of azaleas, the pots being used are square [5 inch] or round [1 gallon], thin walled, plastic pots that have been cut down to 3.5 inches. These allow the roots to be very close to the heat and can be fitted into the space available. We need your spare 5-inch thin-walled pots.



The thin sided pots cut to 3.5 inches tall.

For the initial period, there will be five cuttings/pot and we would like two pots of each named plant's cuttings. **The pots must be labelled!** The name of plant, your name and the date are essential.

The propagator is at 2307 Lochsyde Drive off Lakes Road. Access is to the left of the house and preparation can be done in the greenhouse round the back where one can find a knife, growth hormone, etc. Contact me, at efford@shaw.ca or 250-597-4470 if you want to see the propagator, learn how to prepare cuttings, bring cuttings, etc. All members are encouraged to participate!

Ian E. Efford

Footnote: The members voted not to finance the construction of two propagators at Providence Farm, a small one for St. Ann's Garden Club and a larger one for the Therapy Nursery. I am pleased to say that these two propagators are now constructed and fully functional. The costs were covered by private donation by members of CVRS for which the Farm is fully grateful.



R. 'Lofthouse's Legacy'

Hybridizer: Lofthouse, J. G. (1984)

Vancouver, B.C.

R. 'Butter Brickle' x R. 'Viennese Waltz'

R. 'Loyd's Sweetie'

Hybridizer: Newcomb, L. L. (1970)

Snohomish, Washington, USA

R. 'Anna' x R. 'Cotton Candy'



If you think you know what fun is but aren't sure, try this as a measurement tool!!

PARTICIPATE In The CVRS Propagation Group

The CVRS Propagator is ready for you!

By the October 5th, CVRS Meeting, the CVRS propagator, currently set up at Ian Efford's home, will be emptied and ready to receive new cuttings.

After that date, members should add new rhododendron [not azalea] cuttings. All members are encouraged to participate!



- Choose your best, labelled rhododendrons, and from each of these take 10 cuttings. These are best taken from the shady side of the plant when the new growth is particularly vigorous;
- Place the cuttings in individual plastic bags with a piece of moist paper towel. Also, add the plant name, your name and telephone number on something that will not dissolve in the moist conditions;
- Bring the cuttings to either one of the next to meetings, or directly to Ian's house (please let us know when will be coming by: (250-597-4470));
- You can prepare the cuttings yourself or someone will prepare them for you. Everything required for preparation is available at Ian's;
- Examine your one-gallon pots; select those that have very thin sides and bring them to a meeting or to Ian's house. If you have time, it would help if these pots could be cut off to a height of 3.5 inches;
- If you are planning to take cuttings at one of the gardens such as Finnerty or Glendale, please let me know and take cuttings for CVRS. **Ian has computer printouts of all the plants at these two gardens.**

At the moment, the propagator does not have lights, however, as we have now completed a "teething run", I expect to purchase the lighting and set it up fairly soon.

Look forward to seeing you,

Ian Efford

When Propagating Rhododendrons From Seed, You will Need to Understand “GREX”

When a hybrid cross is made, all of the seedlings grown from the resulting seedpod are considered to be in the same **grex**. Any additional plants produced from the hybridization of the same two parental **greges** also belong to the **grex**.

All of the members of a specific **grex** may be loosely thought of as "sister plants", and just like the brothers and sisters of any family, may share many traits in common or look quite different from one another. This is due to the randomization of genes passed on to progeny during [sexual reproduction](#).

The hybridizer who created a new grex normally chooses to register the grex with a registration authority, thus creating a new grex name. While this is not necessary, it eliminates the naming fatigue of writing down the parentage for future crosses.

If two members of the same grex produce offspring, the offspring receive the same grex name as the parents. Individual plants may be given [cultivar](#) names to distinguish them from siblings in their grex.

Cultivar names are usually given to superior plants



R. 'Loderi King George', one of a familiar grex

[Photo courtesy Mike Trembath]

with the expectation of propagating that plant. All genetically identical copies of a plant, regardless of method of propagation (divisions or clones) share a cultivar name.

The non-specific **gregaric** name differs from a specific name in that the gregaric part of the name is capitalized, is not italicized, and may consist of up to four words; according to the [International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants](#)

In the following article, drawn from the November 2006 CVRS Newsletter, Norm Todd explains “grex” in a much more accessible manner.

A Grex to Remember

by Norman Todd

The word **grex** was used at a recent meeting and an attentive and sharp-minded member asked its meaning. I remember the first time I heard the word; I even remember who used it. It was **Bob Rhodes** who was the subject of **Alan Campbell's** fine article. I was a new member of the Vancouver Chapter and Bob was president.

Gardeners define the word as: “A group variety including more than one seedling of a given cross.” Probably the grex that we rhododendron growers come across most frequently and know best is ‘Loderi’. Using this as an example involves a complication, so we might as well deal with the complication first.

Sir Edmund Loder (1849–1920) inherited a 100-hectare estate, Leonardslee, in southern England, from his father-in-law. Evidently, it was a rather

drab valley with poor vegetation. Edmund set about to correct that and planted trees and shrubs in frenzied enthusiasm. He introduced antelopes, kangaroos, wallabies, deer and beaver—and rhododendrons.

In the mid-1800s, only a few rhododendron species had been introduced into cultivation in Britain. Man-made crosses of these species were being made. Loder did not start hybridizing until the latter years of the century, so was a bit of a latecomer among the rhododendron aristocracy. He had a superior form of *R. fortunei*. This plant had been introduced, from China, in the mid-century by **Robert Fortune**. One of Loder's neighbours had a magnificent specimen of the somewhat tender *R. griffithianum*. This species has huge flowers and powerful fragrance. The seed for this plant had been collected by **Joseph Hooker** in Sikkim, in 1850. Loder took the pollen from his neighbour's plant, put it on his *fortunei* and raised a swarm of seedlings. The complication is that all of these seedlings were called 'Loderi'; the name was officially recorded in 1901. This name gives the impression that the 'Loderi' are species, not hybrids—a usage not now permitted. A hybrid plant cannot have a Latin-sounding name.

The second complicating thing that Loder did, was give different names to 32 of the seedlings. This al-

so is not now permitted. Breeders are encouraged to name only the best of the bunch. Such a bunch is called a **grex**. Thus 'Loderi King George', 'Loderi Venus', 'Loderi Game Chick' are sister seedlings all from one grex. Several of these received Royal Horticultural Society awards---the first in 1914. Incidentally, another widely grown plant, 'Loder's White', comes from a different cross, *arboreum* var. *album* and *griffithianum*.

The word **grex** is not included in most household dictionaries. I am writing this in Microsoft Word and it does not like it at all*, I must admit it is not a word most would want to use in a poem. It does rhyme with vex and hex so it could be useful. **Stearn's Botanical Latin** gives: "flock, herd, drove, swarm, hence a group of species or hybrids." The *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Botany* gives: "A slug-like pseudoplasmodium formed by cellular slime moulds of the order Dictyosteliales." For our purposes, let's just stay with Stearn's definition.

* This Norm Todd article was drawn from the CVRS Newsletter, November 2006. The term, "grex", does not lead to resistance from current MS Word programs; Norm Todd's humour is delightful to experience.



R. 'Lem's Cameo'

Hybridizer: Lem, Halfdan (1956)

Seattle, Washington, USA

R. 'Dido Group' x R. 'Anna'

The Genus *Menziesia*

No Longer a Genus—instead, a *Rhododendron* species

In Kenneth Cox's recent article "The Genus *Menziesia* and Its Incorporation within the Genus *Rhododendron*" he explains how, for the last 25 years, scientists internationally have been using DNA sequencing to understand the *Rhododendron* taxonomy.

Rhododendron, *Kalmia*, and *Enkianthus* are all part of the plant family Ericaceae, as is the relative, *Menziesia*. Until recently, *Menziesia* was considered a genus.

Rhododendron enthusiasts in Canada could most likely recall when the plants commonly known as Labrador Tea shrubs, *Ledum groenlandicum*, or *Ledum latifolium*, became known as *Rhododendron groenlandicum*. Following studies in 1990, the genus *Ledum* was moved into the genus *Rhododendron*.



Menziesia menziesia 'Ylva': Vigorous and tall growing. A chance seedling of *Menziesia cilicalyx* var. *purpurea* with a probably pollen of *M. ferruginea*. Named 'Ylva' after the daughter of Henrik Zetterlund, a taxonomist based at Goteborg.



Menziesia menziesia 'Plum Drops' (RSBG) A fine form with large flowers and dense compact habit. Selection made by Steve Hootman at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden and the name chosen by his wife Suzanne. Grown from seed thought to have been supplied from Hideo Suzuki. Steve Hootman keyed this out to *M. cilicalyx* var. *multiflora* [Available at Glendoick]

More recently, Lynn Craven, an Australian taxonomist, studied the DNA data on the *Menziesia*, which resulted in the reclassification of *Menziesia* to *Rhododendron*. "Lynn Craven fell ill as his paper was reaching completion and he died in 2014, leaving work still to be done to finish the new *Menziesia* taxonomy." (Cox, 2016)

As with many other species of plants, not all the *Menziesia* species are considered suitable for development as garden cultivars. Barry Starling, of Devon, has been breeding *Menzeisia* for years and has created hybrids of interest for these purposes.

Material for this article was drawn from ***Rhododendron Species 2016 Volume 11***, Rhododendron Species Foundation and Botanical Garden, Washington, USA

An Exciting Find Among All Those Hybrids

Ian E. Efford

Members of ARS never complain that they do not have enough rhododendrons. We acquire plants at club raffles, as door prizes and as gifts at club picnics. Furthermore, not long after admiring a particular plant or complaining that it will not root from cuttings, another member will give you that plant which is surplus in their garden.



On top of all this, we all purchase plants at sales, whether we need them or not! Frequently, one overhears people saying that their main concern is to know where to plant the one that they have just received.

I trust the names of any hybrids that I receive and plant them to see what the flowers are like. If they are not spectacular or interesting, or if they are a wishy-washy pink, they drift back into the raffle or a public plant sale. If, however, the plant is a named species the situation is quite different. I review its distribution in the wild, its relatives, and use the standard books to confirm as accurately as possible that the identification is correct. This plant is also given a choice location in the garden or, if at all tender, is put into a nice pot. It is the biology of the plant that interests me, rather than the size or colour of its flowers.

PW 39

Very soon after I joined the Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society, I drove up to the Nanaimo or Mount Arrowsmith RS [I do not remember which one] to hear a presentation by Peter Wharton, who was the Curator of the David C. Lam Asian Garden in the University of British Columbia Botanic Garden, and also a well-known plant explorer. His main interests were Asian maples and rhododendrons. The host club had a policy of giving all attendees a raffle ticket for the door prize and, at the end of the meeting, I was handed the winning plant, donated by Peter Wharton. The label read *R. fortunei fortunei* PW39. At that time, I knew nothing about the plant and just planted it in the garden and waited.

The seeds of this plant had been collected by Peter Wharton, in 1994, at around 1,360 metres in the Dashahe Cathaya Reserve of northern Guizhou, China. As I received my plant about 12 years after the original collection date, I am not sure whether my small plant was germinated from this collection of seeds or is a second generation cutting of a plant that came from the original collection. It took another ten years before the plant in my garden flowered.



I was very impressed by the flowers which appeared in late June-July, well after other rhododendrons had flowered. The flowers were fairly large and in quite large loose trusses. They were all a clear white with a greenish throat. It is not surprising that the plant did not match the description of *R. fortunei fortunei* as that identification was, in all probability, the field identification made in the autumn when the seeds were collected. The white flowers suggested that it was *R. fortunei discolor* which is often white. But the flowers did not match the description of this subspecies either.

Both Douglas Justice at U.B.C. BG and Steve Hootman at RSBG said that the plant listed as PW39 was, in fact, *R. glanduliferum*. This agreed with the identification of PW39 by Harold Fearing. McQuire and Robinson describe the colour of the throat as pale yellow, but in mine it has a distinctive green tinge. One distinguishing feature the species is that the **outside** base of the corolla is "setulose-glandular" [covered with small bristles and glands], which it is. On the other hand, they describe the base of the corolla on the inside as "puberulous" [minutely hairy with short soft hairs]. The **inside** base of the corolla in my plant is quite smooth and not puberulous. I also confirmed that the inflorescence numbers in each truss fell within the given range of 5-18. In spite of this last difference, I believe that I have *R. glanduliferum*, a species that is uncommon in cultivation. Steve Hootman states that PW 39 represents a smaller leaved form of the species, which he calls the "Guizhou" form. A feature of this species is its scent of wintergreen.

R. glanduliferum

Although this species was first described by Franchet in 1886, it was not introduced into cultivation until 1995. Originally described from N.E. Yunnan it has now been collected in Southwest Guizhou bordering Yunnan, by Peter Wharton [1994], Peter Cox and Steve Hootman [1995], who

found it in small patches between potato fields. It was, again, found in this province by Steve Hootman in 2012. Although apparently rare in this region, it is now being used in reforestation programmes in the area.

I think that this species is an ideal addition to our local gardens. Its large clean white flowers, arriving in mid-summer, makes it quite different from most other rhododendrons. The plant has an upright and compact form. The new growth is green and the previous year's growth is yellow.

As with most species, one will not find this plant in the local nurseries. On Vancouver Island, I would try Hidden Acres Nursery first as they have quite a few well-grown species for sale. Failing that, the usual source would be the Rhododendron Species Botanic Garden in Federal Way. With the exchange rate making its plants expensive, the best alternative is Harold Fearing's nursery in the Fraser Valley. This is an excellent source of rhododendron species with accurate provenance. He has *R. glanduliferum*. One can find a list of the available plants and also a detailed account of the source of those plants at:

www.fearing.ca/ and <http://www.fearing.ca/pages/gallery.php>.

Finally, I will be putting some cuttings into our new CVRS propagator this autumn.



BCIS Oregon Garden Tour – May 2017

Get your bags packed for this one folks!! The BC Iris Society has organized an amazing tour of Iris and other gardens over a 4 day trip leaving Victoria on Friday morning May 12 on the MV Coho to Port Angeles.

After a catered lunch on board the ferry we travel by deluxe highway coach to Brinnon Washington to visit the world famous Whitney Rhododendron garden, which will be in full bloom. Then we head for Salem Oregon and a Welcome reception at the Shilo Inn.

On Day 2, we visit four spectacular nurseries/gardens that are part of the holy grail for Iris and Hosta lovers: Schreiners Irises-over 10 acres of display gardens with over 500 named varieties and countless companion plants, Mid America Irises with acres and acres of all kinds of irises, Seabright Hostas (more than 900 of them along with hundreds of ferns and epimediums!) and finally Keith Keppels iris garden with his amazing hybrids and vast landscapes of bearded irises. After hotel checkout on Sunday morning we start at the Adelman Peony garden-over 20 acres and 250 varieties and then head for Portland and two more exciting iris heavens – the Mount Pleasant Iris Farm and Aitkens Salmon Creek Garden.



Sunday evening we spend enjoying the historic Embassy Suites hotel in downtown Portland and their complementary drinks and snacks.

You have a free evening to enjoy a meal at one of the many Portland restaurants. Our final day begins with a visit to the Crystal Springs rhododendron gardens in Portland and then start heading north and home with a stop for a great lunch at the Emerald Casino, duty free shopping at the Pacific truck crossing and then enjoy the Pacific buffet on the BC ferry back to Swartz Bay and Victoria.

There will be opportunities for plant ordering and buying on this trip. All-inclusive cost is approximately \$650 per person double accommodation or \$890 single (final pricing in March 2017 depending on US\$ exchange) . This includes transportation, ferries, three night hotels, welcome party, all breakfasts, lunch on the MV Coho, garden entry fees, Saturday supper, casino lunch and buffet supper on the BC ferry.

To reserve your seat on this once in a lifetime trip send a cheque for \$150 made out to BCIS c/o 995 Hutchinson Road, Cobble Hill, BC V0R 1L4. Seats are limited so don't delay. Passports are required for all participants and travel medical insurance is highly recommended. Balance payable by March 15, 2017.

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