



# NEWSLETTER

Volume 19: 5

Editor: Ian E. Efford

September 2008

**At the September meeting on September 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7.30pm, there will be an election for the Executive of the Society. The following have been nominated for the year September 2008- May 2009.**

President	David Annis	Vice-President	Vacant
Second Vice-Pres.	Janet Gardner	Secretary	Janet Gardner
Treasurer	Vacant	Members at Large	Sharon Tillie, Jeremy and Marie Therese Evans
			A further member is to be confirmed

## Conveners are as follows:

Librarian	Leslie Bundon	Membership	Carrie Nelson
Newsletter Editor	Ian Efford	Speakers/Program	Alan Campbell
Historian	Vacant	Tea Co-ordinator	Vacant
Garden Tours	Open	Ways and Means	Vacant
Spring Sale	Vacant	Website	Alan Campbell
Club Liaison	Ingeborg Woodsworth	Social	Judeen Hendrickson
Raffle/Bargain Table	Judeen Hendrickson and Hilda Gerrits		

## What's coming up.

**September 3<sup>rd</sup>** Lieut.-Colonel Dr. Richard Stoker and his wife Susan, who retired to the Cowichan Valley in about 1900 from India, are now recognized as being among the very first people to study southern Vancouver Island from a botanical standpoint. Over the next 30 years they made an outstanding garden at Marble Bay on Cowichan Lake, which their great friends and admirers, Buchanan and Suzanne Simpson, extended into rhododendrons. Susan Stoker was a prolific wildflower artist. Rhododendron gardener **Leslie Drew** will give an illustrated talk titled **An unsolved Mystery: The Disappearance of Susan Stoker's Paintings of the Wildflowers of Cowichan.**

Al Campbell will also give a workshop on cutting propagation.

## The Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

A Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

PO Box 904, Duncan, British Columbia V9L 3Y3 <http://cowichan.rhodos.ca>

## President's Message

Greetings - Autumn Greetings to you all!

Are you ready yet to 'let go' of summer, particularly this year where it was so late in coming. Hopefully you have stored up lots of energy and enthusiasm for rhododendron club activities.

Nominations are coming up, don't forget. Pick up the phone or e-mail Janet Gardner and tell her what you would like to do this coming year. Let's keep the club running happily and smoothly, we are a cheerful and energetic group after all.

A special 'Thank you' to those who have already accepted a position for the coming year.

Our chapter has been leading the way in attracting new members in the BC District of ARS in the last couple of years, and I am confident, will continue in such good form.

Did you read in the last ARS Journal the 'update report' on the Memorial Rhododendron Park' in Lake Cowichan? Park visitors have been so responsive, it is heartwarming to work and share information on rhododendrons on site. Come on out and have a look, your ideas and suggestions also are always welcome.

This will be my last message to you all. It has been a pleasure to be your president for the last few years. Thank you all for being available whenever I needed you. Let's continue to make our meetings and events such memorable occasions.

Best regards, **Ingeborg**

P.S. Jim Crawford brought nine boxes of rhododendron books of great value to my place. I have sorted and entered those books into our club library. With quite a number of duplications, your executive will set a date for an auction/fundraiser of these. Prepare yourself for a wonderful winter of good reading.

## From the Editor

Over the summer I have received help from Bert Buckley and Garth Wedemire concerning the software issues causing me trouble in compiling

the newsletter. I thank them both

In this issue is a short article about Finnerty Garden. I hope to make this the first of a series about public gardens on Vancouver Island with significant rhododendron displays. This should guide you in planning outings next spring.

The Society's exciting two day tour of the west coast was to be recognized in an article in this newsletter, however, I was surprised when at a chance meeting with the author he denied any knowledge of the subject! Instead, our editor has written a short note and substituted pictures for words.

Ian E. Efford  
250-246-1453 [efford@shaw.ca](mailto:efford@shaw.ca)

## A Gardener's Finnerty Experience

**Rhonda Rose, Supervisor, Grounds,  
University of Victoria**

Finnerty garden is one of the places on campus where you can have many different experiences. As a gardener there is the maintenance part of the day to day, the changing seasons and the many relationships you create with people, those who visit daily as well as first time visitors. I must also mention the relationship we have with the four-legged creatures, not necessarily a friendly relationship, and with the feathered friends who stay year round or stop by on their way to their summer or winter refuge.

The garden is on a bus route and many students just pass by on their way to classes, some totally in their own world, never noticing you or the plants around them. The gardener sees a young girl coming and going to school everyday, I recently stopped to chat and found out she is finishing her degree. Where does the time go. These warm days of spring bring some of the students out from their classes into the garden to practice their lines for a play, an instrument, or a song for a recital; a great opportunity for the gardener to experience a little culture at work. There are many who come for the quiet solitude to read or just sit and reflect. The first week of June will find the garden full of black gowns with colourful collars to reflect the graduating students from the many faculties on campus, having their photos taken in front of the many

Rhododendrons and azaleas; the gardener is now a set director.

The garden is also in the middle of the community and there are many neighbours who visit to compare notes on what they should be doing in their own garden or whether you should be doing what you are doing at all. You hear about their dog, their children and sometimes meet the grandchildren. Unfortunately you sometimes don't see a regular visitor for a week or two only to find out that they no longer are able to make their regular walk through the garden. This news is like losing a plant: a friendship that you have nurtured is suddenly not around.



### **R. purabulum at Finnerty Garden**

The garden provides the gardener a test everyday to distinguish the sound of a certain bird or the fragrance of a certain plant, challenging to the sensory perception be it good or bad. The visual stimulation of the transformation of winter twigs to soft vibrant foliage of spring, the fireworks display of the summer perennials, and the fall display of dazzling autumn colour.

The garden is a dynamic place where strangely enough a plant you put in a few years ago is now a mature specimen that you can stand beside and reflect on the day you planted it. It is also a place where a winter storm can wipe out years of hard work leaving you devastated only to realize you have been provided with a blank canvas to work with. It is a place where a few can see what commonly only appears in books or slide shows.

The gardener in Finnerty has the opportunity to work with the expertise of the advisory board, Rhododendron society and others to create something they can be proud to present to the world. It is a unique opportunity that allows a gardener to work, learn and grow to face the challenges we face whenever we work with nature.

I have moved out of the garden to a supervisory position, and every visit to the gardens reminds me that you can move a gardener out of the garden but you can never take the gardener out of the person.

[Ed. Finnerty Garden, on the south side of the University of Victoria campus, is open all year and free. It has a large collection of older rhododendrons and magnolias and a beautiful place for a visit].]

## **Which Rhododendrons are good for growing in containers?**

### **Norman Todd**

I grow thousands of rhododendrons in containers — black ones — for selling; and I hate them. I don't know why some understanding entrepreneur does not come out with a light coloured plastic pot. If the summer sun beats on black pots the soil can reach sterilization temperatures and cook the roots.

So a good rule in selecting a container is to choose a light toned one. Glazed ceramic pots are good especially if of some thickness to provide some insulation for the plant's roots. Wooden ones are good too but not if the wood is treated with a phytotoxic preservative. An effective way to keep cool roots is to place a pot within a pot and fill the space with perlite or some other heat protecting material.

Many growers start out growing a small leafed rhododendron as a bonsai. The classic forms and protocol of bonsai growing intrigues my mind and I have a couple of books on the subject. I have sat in on a few lectures, but I am woefully inept at following the discipline. Still, I have a

few “bonsais” at the back door and they give me a lot of pleasure. They don’t have 100-year-old gnarled trunks; they are not even of kindergarten age; they are still in day-care. Still, they are very satisfying. Occasionally, one can find an old misshapen plant in a nursery that can be pruned and wired to give a geriatric look.

There is a growing interest among some rhododendron fanciers in trying their hand with some of the *Madenia*. These are the semi-tropical ones, many of which are wonderfully fragrant. *Rs. edgworthii*, *rhabdotum*, *crassum*, ‘Else Frye’, ‘Fragrantissimum’ are all good candidates. I have an 80 cm. ‘Heaven Scent’ that is just 80 cm. away from this computer that must have 100 flower buds. I have to admit that the pot, though still almost portable stayed where it was through last winter when we had the coldest temperature (-9°C) we have ever experienced in the 30 years we have been in this place. My laziness overcame my common sense and I did not move it to a protected place and it did lose half its flower buds, but the smelly show was still worthwhile.

Some of the *Madenia* get really tall and as a lot of them are epiphytic in nature growing like orchids in the crotches of tree branches they tend to be open leggy plants so they do respond to some pruning. Do this early in the year so the dormant growth buds can break and grow and perhaps develop a flower bud. I have found that ‘Mi Amor’ breaks readily from the older wood.

The Japanese are of course the masters on container growing and many of their prized azalea trophy plants are hundreds of years old. At the Regional Conference at Harrison Hot Springs two years ago they had a workshop on bonsai. All those who attended came home with an azalea in a bonsai pot. Mine was certainly cruelly mistreated and ended up being shaped like a haggis but it is a treasure.

The *Lapponica* are good candidates for containers. Mounds of *impeditum* or *fastigiatum* arranged on a stairway look wonderful. Strangely, a plant most find somewhat challenging to grow in the ground — *campylogynum* ssp *myrtilloides* — does very well in a container. Its larger cousin —

*campylogynum* ssp *celsum* — performs equally well and is easier to bloom. Both are absolutely choice.

There is no shortage of material. The smallest garden or a balcony can become a veritable Eden with a few bums and a couple of twisted freaks. Of course there is a draw-back. They have to be watered in the summer. In very hot weather maybe even twice a day. But so have we and one regime is to think of the plants when you fill your own glass.

## Plant Sale

Queen of Angels School was an excellent location this year and total sales was the best over the last three years with a net income to the Society of \$1,134.73. I, again, thank all the volunteers and also the school for providing the facilities.

Ian E. Efford, Sales Coordinator

## Vancouver Island Hybridizers con’t: The Cowichan Connection

### Alan Campbell

Henry Ford is quoted as saying “...anyone who keeps learning stays young.” That need to stay young is never more apparent to me than when our 3 year old grandson, Kenyon, arrives, picks out ‘his’ shovel and says “come on Grandpa, we’ve got lots of work to do today.” The most important aspect of my ‘work’ here is not to stifle but channel the enthusiasm of this budding rhododendron grower.

Those who are drawn to and join the rhododendron society share, I expect, a common compulsion. The desire to learn more about growing rhododendrons. To learn more one needs guidance, a teacher. When Sandy and I joined the Cowichan Valley Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society in 1994 we found the members more than willing to listen to our beginner questions and answer what they could. Two of these members whose working careers had them in the teaching profession, though now retired, were well suited to responding to inquiring minds.



Fred Collin, an Industrial Arts teacher in Maple Ridge, B.C., joined the rhododendron society through the Vancouver Chapter in 1962. Fred eventually became the President of the Vancouver Chapter in 1970. Upon retiring from teaching, Fred, his wife Ann, along with their three children moved to Vancouver Island in the late 1970's. It wasn't long before Fred gathered up like minded people and pushed for the formation of the first rhododendron society Chapter on Vancouver Island. The Victoria Rhododendron Society held its first meeting in 1980. With more interest being shown by members from the Cowichan Valley Fred instigated and pushed to have a rhodo Chapter closer to home. In 1989 the Cowichan Valley Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society was chartered.

Members of the Cowichan Valley Chapter became well acquainted with the Cherry Point garden of Fred and Ann Collins. I recall one instance when Fred asked Sandy and I to help him re-arrange some of his plants around his garden. After spending the afternoon moving plants, interspaced with questions and answers on rhodo growing, a couple of plants still were in need of replanting. I asked Fred where he would like them moved to and he replied "...oh, put them in your truck and take them home." I know for a fact that Sandy and I were not the only ones to experience Fred's generosity

'Olympic Lady' (*R. williamsianum* x 'Loderi King George') was one of the plants that Fred had growing in his garden. At some point Fred realized that one branch on this plant was producing larger leaves and flower trusses than on the rest of the plant. The cuttings Fred rooted from this 'sport' continued to exhibit the exceptional development, so much so that more plants were rooted and it can be found in many local and not so local gardens. A good yellow that Fred named and grew was 'Orient' ( 'Hawk Jervis Bay' x 'Naomi Exbury'). In vol. 61, number 3, summer 2007 Journal of the ARS there is an article written by Clive Justice of the Vancouver Chapter. The article is titled *The Vancouver Rhododendron Society: A Chapter of the ARS, The First 50 Years, 1955-2005, Part 1*. The article tells, in part, of a truss show in 1967 in which "...the trophy for the best new unnamed seedling truss, ...was won by Mr. Fred Collins for the cross of 'Hawk' x 'Naomi'

(Langton)". The inference here is that the original cross was made by Eric Langton a well known hybridizer of that time. None the less it was Fred Collins who grew the seed, evaluated the seedling, and finally chose the best plant which we grow as 'Orient' today.

The third hybrid which can be attributed to Fred Collins is the one I consider to be the nicest of the three. Fred took pollen from 'Mrs. Furnival' and placed it back onto the same plant. The resulting offspring from this crossing, which Fred had growing in his Red Baron Place garden, was simply labelled 'Mrs. Furnival Selfed'. The habit of this plant mimics the parent though the flower is a more pastel pink with red spotting rather than the large glaring blotch on the upper lobes. What really adds to this plant's attraction is the very frilled edging to the flower lobes. I once mentioned to Fred that I thought this hybrid should be registered and asked what name he would like to see it registered under, he replied "Annabelle". The plant growing in our garden is labelled as such and registration is being pursued.

During our recent visit to Britain and the International Rhododendron Conference in Edinburgh we toured many private gardens. In conversation with the owner of one such garden, the Bargany Castle and Gardens in Ayreshire, the comment was made that "... the finest Britons have emigrated." This statement holds true when speaking of Peter Kearns.

Living in Southwest England, Peter attended school in Tauton which served him well as he entered Oxford and took his BSc. Teaching became Peter's vocation and eventually, in the late 60's, the Shawnigan Lake Boy's School became his location. Teacher to Housemaster to a recruiter of students in Hong Kong for Canadian Private Schools, Peter devoted his working life to the education of succeeding classmen.

It was during his tenure in the Orient that Peter contemplated putting down roots and it was toward the Cowichan Valley his thoughts ran. Friends Daphne and Geoff Jackson kept Peter appraised of the real estate market and he accepted their advice and recommendation of an acceptable property. Sight unseen, Peter bought and moved to his home in Cowichan Bay in the mid 1970's, a property that neighboured the

exceptional and mature garden of the Jackson's.

Once retired from teaching one would think that Peter had plenty to keep him busy what with being an avid golfer, fly fisherman and an accomplished classical musician performing with many Vancouver Island orchestras but the rhododendrons in the Daphne and Geoff's garden caught his eye and the learning process continued. Peter eventually joined Fred Collins and others from the Cowichan Valley who traveled to the Victoria rhodo club meetings and became a Charter member of the Cowichan Chapter.

Peter became interested in trying to grow rhododendrons from seed and what better source of seed than the many plants growing in the Jackson garden. Many of the rhodos in the Daphne's garden were initially carefully chosen and planted years before when the property was owned by Dave and Laurana Dougan a well known couple in the Island rhododendron scene. The resulting seedlings grown on by Peter are open pollinated seedlings, Bumblebee seedlings as they are called affectionately in rhodo circles. The resulting fine plants are a good argument for not laboriously deadheading plants each Spring.

'Cowichan', the hybrid that our Chapter uses on its letterhead and as the crest which adorns our Chapter vests is a seedling grown from seed collected off of the species *R. williamsianum*. 'Cowichan' has leaves that are larger and more elongated than those on the species and the flower is also larger and a deeper pink. I have been told a number of times that this plant was registered but I can't find the documentation to verify this. Seed collected from off of 'Babylon' has given a plant which Peter named for his mother 'Cecily Enid'. The huge white flowers with the dark blotch are reminiscent of 'Babylon' though the foliage is not. The leaves are smaller more rounded and very dark green. Peter had thought that the other parent of 'Cecily Enid' may be *R. vernicosum*. A sister seedling from this cross is unnamed as yet and blooms pure white. A seed pod from *R. insigne* produced some interesting plants though the only known one still growing is in a garden in Nanaimo. Peter has lost these plants from his own garden though but thought the one he called 'Purple Pompom' was the nicest. The woman still growing this hybrid in Nanaimo calls the plant 'Peter's Purple Pompom'. The truss

colour I should expect is explained in the name and though the species parent is *R. insigne* the well known 'metallic' under leaf characteristic is not carried on into the offspring. Peter suspects the other parent was 'Purple Splendour'. My favourite of Peter's plants is one that he calls 'Viddy' named after his cat. 'Viddy' is a plant produced from seed collected from *R. forrestii*. This plant's habit is slow growing, low and compact with very small leaves along with larger pink bells. An excellent rhodo for the rock garden or in a container.

For many years Peter supplied the plant material that we always tried winning from the club raffle table. His abilities in propagation were and are enviable. Using a modified version of a Nearing Frame Peter produced plants from cuttings at an amazing rate. When I first approached him for tips on cutting propagation his warning of 'running out of room' has quickly come to pass. Though Peter always supplied a large variety of rhodos for the raffle and the plant sales seldom did he offer up his own hybrids. Such is his modesty.

Fred Collins and Peter Kearns, two members of the Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society have both been rightly awarded the ARS Bronze Medal by the Chapter, the highest award that a Chapter can bestow. From caring for and guiding the scions of adulthood to the propagation of rhododendron culture these two men epitomize the mantle of Teacher.

### **Aging and Fitness**

A few of our members are over 50 and sometimes feel the strain of digging and weeding. Members of The Australian Rhododendron Society, Victoria Branch experience similar problems and suggested that the following exercises might help.

“Begin by standing on a comfortable surface, where you have plenty of room at each side. With a 5-lb potato sack in each hand, extend your arms straight out from your sides and hold them there as long as you can. Try to reach a full minute, and then relax. Each day you'll find that you can hold this position for just a bit longer.

After a couple of weeks, move up to 10-lb potato sacks. Then try 50-lb potato sacks and then eventually try to get to where you can lift a 100-lb potato sack in each hand and hold your arms straight for more than a full minute.

After you feel confident at that level, put a potato in each of the sacks.”

### **Tofino Tour**

In late May, Bill Dumont arranged for about 50 members of our Society and other clubs, some from as far away as the Fraser Valley, to travel by bus to Tofino visiting rhododendron gardens. On the first day, we visited the ancient forest at Cathedral Grove, the George Fraser remembrance efforts in Ucluelet, and the Pacific Rim National Park. The next day Ken Gibson showed us around his famous garden in Tofino [ rhodo paradise!], the rarely visited gardens on Stubb's Island [Clayoquot Island] a private island off Tofino, and Milner Gardens on the way home. Everyone on the trip was impressed by the tour and Bill was highly praised for his organizing skill. An added bonus was that the tour was also profitable for the Society. Plans are tentatively underway for another tour next year to gardens in Washington State and possibly Oregon.

Special thanks go to Ken Gibson for showing 50 people around his lovely garden and to Sharon and Chris Taylor-Whelan, the gardeners and caretakers of Stubbs Island, for showing us around that garden and allowing us to disturb the peace of one of the scenic jewels along our west coast. Finally, thanks, Bill, for a job well done!



Island's peaceful garden

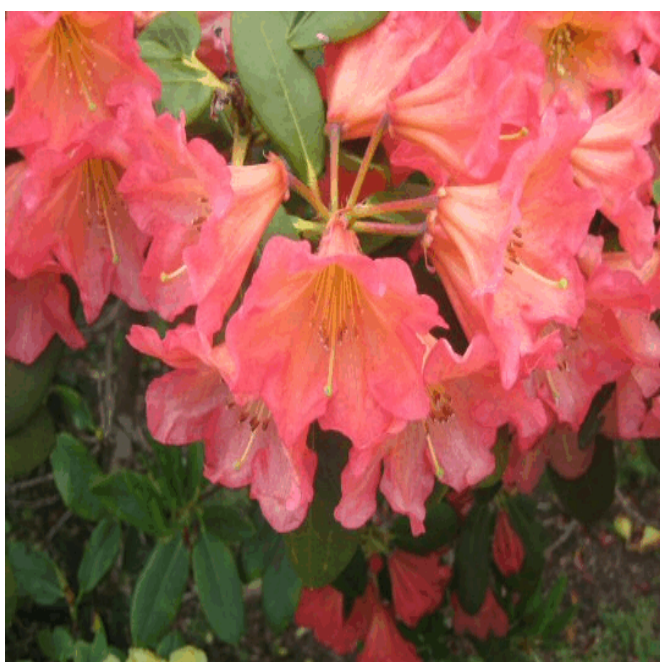
Clayoquot







Ken Gibson and Brenda Dumont



Two of the many beauties in Ken's garden





Milner Garden and the house.



## Seeds of Adventure

One of the highlights of the International Rhododendron Conference in Edinburgh in May was a talk by two of the world experts on the exploring and collecting of rhododendrons in the Himalayas. Peter Cox is the second generation of three generations of explorers in his family [Euan, Peter, and Kenneth] and also the owner of one of the most famous rhododendron nurseries, Glendoick Gardens, near Perth, Scotland. Peter's companion on many expeditions was Sir Peter Hutchinson. Their lecture on the history of their expeditions was fascinating. As a bonus, they also released their new book on the same subject "**Seeds of Adventure**". This beautifully illustrated book has now arrived at the Rhododendron Species Foundation book store and can be purchased for \$80 plus shipping.

Anyone interested in purchasing the book [a future Christmas present?] can contact the store directly or we could put in a bulk order from the Society. Orders sent down in the next couple of weeks would be shipped up to the UBC Botanic Garden with the annual plant shipment in Mid-September. They could then be collected by a member of the society who goes over to collect plants that they have ordered. Failing that, I will be there on the 25<sup>th</sup> September.

If interest in placing an order, please contact me at the meeting where I will have a copy for people to examine, at 246-1453 or [efford@shaw.ca](mailto:efford@shaw.ca).

Ian E. Efford

### Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society Calender 2008

Unless stated otherwise, meeting are on Wednesday evenings at 7.30. The location of the general meeting will be St John's Church on Jubilee Street in Duncan. The location of other meetings will be announced at the general meeting and in the newsletter.

September	3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday	General Meeting	<b>Leslie Drew “More on the Buchanan Simpsons of Marble Bay”</b> <b>Al Campbell will give a workshop on cutting propagation.</b> Election of new Executive.
	10 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday	Executive Meeting	
	17 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday	Propagation Meeting	
October	1 <sup>st</sup> Wednesday	General Meeting	Norma Senn “The History of Pacific Northwest Horticulture”
	8 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday	Executive Meeting	
	15 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday	Propagation Meeting	
	27 <sup>th</sup> Monday	in Nanaimo	Ian Wright “Managing the Phytophthora Devastation in UK Gardens
	28 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday	in Victoria	Ian Wright “Managing the Phytophthora Devastation in UK Gardens
November	5 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday	General Meeting	Ian E. Efford “Rhododendrons and History in Edinburgh”
	12 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday	Executive Meeting	
	19 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday	Propagation Meeting	
December	3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday	<b>Christmas Dinner!!!!</b>	

Note: the Executive has decided that, at the discretion of the president, some Executive meetings will be held electronically.