



# NEWSLETTER

Volume 19: 4

Editor: Ian E. Efford

April 2008

## From the Editor

Things are slowly coming together! My real concern now is a need for at least one longer article each month that are of general interest to the members. I have written one for this month but, as I am not an expert of rhododendrons, it is about botanic gardens. Unless I begin to receive articles from other authors, you will be learning a lot about such gardens around the world as Shirley and I have visited more than 100. That should encourage you to write an article for the newsletter!

## Rhodo of the Year

Each year all the ARS branches submit a list of plants that they consider outstanding performers in their district. These are compiled into recommendations for each region of North America. If you look on 42-46 in your most recent Journal, you will see the photos of the four recommended for our region. Let us know your suggestions for next year by e-mailing the names to our president.

## What's Coming Up

April Meeting: Wednesday 2nd, 7.30pm

**Leslie Drew will speak on the major contribution the Stokers and the Simpsons made to rhododendron growing in this part of the world.**

April 9<sup>th</sup>: The directors' meeting will be at 7.30pm. Location to be determined

April 23<sup>rd</sup>: The propagation meeting will be at 7:30 pm at the Effords' home at 1435 Georgia Park Heights, Crofton. All are welcome

May 3<sup>rd</sup>: The plant sale will take place between 10am-2.00pm. This year it will be at Queen of Angels School at the junction of Maple Bay Road and Tzouhalem Road.

May 7<sup>th</sup>: The speaker will be Ingeborg Woodsworth on "Mother Nature's Handmaiden"

## The Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

A Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

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

### Ian Anderson

Ian passed away peacefully March 4, 2008. He was born in England. He and his wife Doris came to Canada in 1991. They settled on Somenos Rd and built a beautiful garden named Gilda II, named after their first garden in England. They joined the Cowichan Rhodo Society in 1992.

Ian served as treasure for 2 terms and vice president and President. Many club picnics were held in their lovely garden. This garden became a little large to care for so they down-sized and moved to less acreage on Donnay Drive. By the end of 2007 they had Gilda III in perfect condition. The plants were growing beautifully but sadly too late for Ian to enjoy.

As a special tribute to Ian, Doris will have the garden on our spring garden tour in April.

Ian will be sadly missed.

### A SPRING SURPRISE

Norman Todd

I know spring is not here yet if you go by something as technical as an equinox that occurs with some precision someplace in the world but there is a first flower on a plant that had been forgotten in the mess I call my garden and that to me means spring has arrived. The plant has the name *hylaenum* on it. That probably doesn't mean much to most people but that is really not so surprising as until fairly recently those who know about these things said it was doubtful if it was in cultivation.

*Hylaenum* means 'living on the mountain' and I can believe that is where it would show up best as it will get to be a fairly large shrub or small tree. The now dated but still regularly used Davidian's *The Rhododendron Species* with its four volumes of boilerplate prose does not even describe it other than placing it in with the Thomsonia. The Coxes say it should probably be merged with *faucium*. No matter, it pleases me. The one, solitary truss has a dozen rich pink flowers, bell-shaped, each about 5cm long. These are supplying an army of small ants with a Cowichan Bay smorgasbord of scrumptious sustenance. The upper lobes of the corolla are heavily spotted in purple/pink.

Now comes the dilemma. The first part of the Species Workshop was on the weekend of 15-16 March had the top North American taxonomical expert, Steve Hootman, teaching those fortunate enough to be attending just how to key out the various species. This abstruse and, to most, mysterious process was made transparent by Steve. He could have confirmed, or deny, the authenticity of my plant's label. But to sever that one truss would take a fair amount of courage. Then, if Steve pronounced it was merely *faucium* or, still worse, a hybrid could I accept the resulting psychological damage? I still have memories of a visit Steve made to our garden and to my deep chagrin pronounced many of my chest-swelling treasures to be rouges. One characteristic of the plant gives me a little confidence; the bark is supposed to be smooth and peeling. My plant is not old enough so show this clearly but there are indications that the bark may exhibit this. I hope so. *Barbatum* is another species with shiny puplish bark. I have a clear image in my mind of a surreal grove of century-old *barbatums* in Dunedin, New Zealand with shining ghostly trunks. My

plants of *barbatum* are still just juniors at a quarter of that age and only now does this become a feature worth remarking on.

I have a lovely yellow of low sprawling habit now blooming. It has the name *valentinianum* on it. I can't remember where this plant came from. It may be it came from a now demised plant of that name that occupied what proved to be an inhospitable site. The late Herman Vaartnou decreed it to be merely a lowly hybrid called 'Quaver'. 'Quaver' is a Rothschild cross of *sulphureum* and *leucaspis*. Herman maintained that *valentinianum* should have a straight style (you can gather from this degree of exactitude how fussy these darned taxonomists can be — and very often they disagree with each other). The little that I have read on *valentinianum* does not mention a straight style as being diagnostic. The few pictures I have seen of *valentinianum* show a style much longer than the anthers — not the case in my plant — so I am resigned to having one less species and will not waste Steve's time. From a landscaper's plebian point of view, 'Quaver' is probably a more pleasing plant so I can rationalize about playing down the snobbiness.

Somewhat disappointing this year is the amount of bloom on the four or five plants I have of *irroratum*. The flower colour on the species is very variable; some are deep pink, some almost white and some cream. Some open in early March and others stay in tight bud until April. They all exhibit a severe case of measles. Every lobe is covered with (non-infectious spots) that might inhibit our medical members from including *irroratum* in their gardens. Two of Victoria's local dignitaries are commemorated by what the socially conscious cognoscenti claim to be good

members of the species; 'Prince Abkhazi' and 'Princess Abkhazi'. These originated from the aforementioned Herman Vaartnou's garden and were grown from open pollinated seed. The Prince, in accordance with the protocol, comes two weeks before the Princess. I would never wish to be counted among those who cast any doubt on the purity of their lineage so the plants are in the *irrorata* for sure and I definitely did not take a branch to the Workshop for forensic examination. We have a very fine watercolor by Bonnie Moro of the freckled Princess gracing a wall that one faces descending stairs so it is always advisable to hold the banister tightly as the picture is mesmerizingly dangerous.

I will remark on one other gem that is in bloom. It may be worth having keyed out. I got it many years ago from Milton Wildfong of Mission. He called it the Exbury form of *strigillosum*. Most of us think of this species as being a strong primary red and I have to admit that I like the forms that stay red better. (Also they are certainly better sellers.) The Exbury form opens with deep red flowers but fairly quickly they fade to deep pink. There is a close relative called *pachytrichum* that has pink flowers. Ken Gibson grows a plant called *monosematum* that some authorities classify as a variety of *pachytrichum*. This is described as being half way between *strigillosum* and *pachytrichum*. It could be that what I call the Exbury form of *strigillosum* is this intergrade.

I have to mention one other spring surprise. Again, I have some doubt about the correct nomenclature for this plant. It is certainly *oreodoxa* but is it Variety *oreodoxa* or Variety *fargesii*? The flower is a deep pink that is more typical of *fargesii*. I have another plant with that name and it is the best moisture meter in

the garden. As soon as this *oreodoxa* experiences any lack of moisture the leaves curl up, long before any other rhodo shows any sign of stress. This is said to be a genetic trait of *oreodoxa*. The plant that is blooming now does not evince this habit.

One conclusion from all this is that names can become a fetish or a phobia. One should also remember that there is sometimes no clear disjoint between species. The concept of a species is a fluid one— essential for science but not at all necessary for the enjoyment of a garden. Still, I would not like to be referred to as thingimijig.

**Rhododendron Guide CD**

A new Pacific Northwest rhododendron guide on a CD costing about \$30 is described in the latest Journal [page 4]. If you are interested in obtaining a copy, let me know and I will arrange a bulk order which should reduce shipping costs.

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

**2008 Directors**

President:	Ingeborg Woodsworth
First Vice President:	vacant
Second Vice President:	Janet Gardner
Secretary:	
Meetings:	David Annis
Executive:	Janet Gardner
Treasurer:	Siggi Kemmler
Membership:	Carrie Nelson and Peter Lewis
Members-at-Large:	Bill Dumont Leslie Bundon Sharon Tillie Jeremy and Marie Terese Evans
Ex-Officio	Alan Campbell

**2008 Conveners**

Garden Tours	Anne Slabey
Historian	vacant
Inter-Chapter Relations	
	Ingeborg Woodsworth
Librarian	Leslie Bundon
Newsletter	Ian E. Efford
Ways and Means	Peter Lewis
Raffle	Hilda Gerrits
Speakers	Alan Campbell
Spring Sale	Ian E. Efford
Propagation	Alan Campbell
Refreshments	Maria Kemmler
Sunshine	Judeen Hendrickson
Website	Alan Campbell

**Equipment**

Bill Dumont has arranged for the projector to be replaced. We fail to provide adequate assistance to speakers who use our equipment. We need a volunteer or two who will really learn how to use the projector so that they can assist speakers.

**President's Message**

Spring - always a very busy time - in the garden and this year for the board of our chapter "the amendment of By-Laws". Janet and I have spent a lot of time reading and re-writing what needed attention; the first of such work in 18 years. Very time-consuming.

Remember, you are to vote on this at the May meeting.

We also have to "sign up" for the various jobs needed to make our May 3rd Plant Sale a success at the same meeting. With pleasure I recall 'helping unload' growers vehicles of their rhododendrons and finding myself immediately in competition with another club member for 'that' beautiful plant. This is the best way for new members to gain knowledge and plants. Please, do help - even for just a short time, remember "Many hands ..."

Hopefully you already have plants in containers ready for our club's "plant sales table". Perennials, bulbs (snow drops need dividing), shrubs, small trees, all are wanted. Remember, this table's proceeds go completely to our club's treasury. Put a name tag plus an extra tag for pricing in to each pot.

I shall get away from this computer, I hope, and get out in my garden to pot up some more 'off-sets, layers and bulbs. Happy Gardening,

Ingeborg

**Cowichan Valley Garden Club**

Annual Spring Flower Show and Plant Sale - Saturday May 3, 2008 – 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm St. Peter's Church Hall, 5800 Church Road (off Maple Bay Road), Duncan.

Admission:

Adults/Seniors: \$2.00, Children: \$1.00.

Afternoon Tea: Adults/Seniors: \$2.00, Children: \$2.00

Flower Show Entries from the public most welcome. Please email Maureen Deptuck at [moeanddon@shaw.ca](mailto:moeanddon@shaw.ca) to enter.

***Note: This sale begins during our own Society sale and is just a block away. Go to both!***

**March 13, 2008**

**Executive Meeting**

Below are summarized the important

issues discussed at the Executive Meeting unless they are covered in other sections of this newsletter.

**Name Tags:** To make the society more friendly, especially to newcomers, we encourage you to wear name tags at the meetings and to speak to anyone you have not met.

**Volunteers:** Again, a plea for volunteers as a number of positions are open. Bev Mountain has resigned as club Historian so that we need a volunteer for that position as well as Vice-President and sales coordinator for next year. Let one of the Executives know of your interest. Judeen Hendrickson has agreed to do the Sunshine position.

**Monthly Meetings.** It has been agreed that our monthly meetings will be held as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday: The General Meeting
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday: The Executive Meeting
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday Propagation meeting
- last Wednesday Newsletter is distributed

Some month may have a fifth week to be used for rest!  
For next season, an annual

calendar will be distributed with the August newsletter.

**Plant Sale:** the following rhododendron nurseries will be offering plants at the sale:

- Firwood Nursery
- Cherry Point Nursery
- Mayo Creek Nursery
- Prospect Nursery
- Hidden Acres Nursery

In addition, these nurseries will be offering complimentary plants

- Keith Muir
- Alba Plants
- Silver Sage Nursery
- Providence Farm

Peter Lewis is gathering prizes for the sale and he expects them to far exceed the value of any previous raffle. Be prepared to purchase lots of tickets!

**Bus Tour:** Bill Dumont has fully booked the tour for late May.

**Program Costs:** It was confirmed that the Speakers Convener has a budget of \$1000 each year. Within this budget, the convener has the flexibility to adjust expenditures at their discretion.



**Garden Tours:** I apologize for not giving a calendar in the last issue of the garden visits for this year. It was sent to me by Anne Slaby and has completely vanished from my computer! Here is:

Wednesday, April 23; 6:30 p.m.

**Doris Anderson** 1365 Donnay Dr. Duncan

Come and see a new garden created by rhodo experts!

Tuesday, May 20; 6:00 p.m.

**Leslie Drew** 4491 Crighton Rd. Duncan

**Ruth Ker** 4310 Sunrise Rd. Duncan

**Sharon Tillie** 4372 Sunrise Rd. Duncan

### Hakone Gardens and its Neighbours.

Ian E. Efford

As a frequent visitor to San Francisco with a strong interest in plants, I sought out botanic gardens and soon found that there are at least 42 within a hour's drive. That, of course, is assuming that one avoids the peak traffic periods when moving ten kilometres in an hour can be a challenge. These gardens range from those exclusive to particular plants such as roses or Californian native plants, through formal gardens, to park-like gardens and everything in between. Some are very well-known and others require considerable detective work to find them.

If one were in San Francisco for a weekend, a two day trip would

give time to visit five of six very different gardens which all lie along a route that takes one to the South West Bay area, starting about 30 minutes due south of the city. As one drives south on 280 along the eastern slope of the Coast Range it is not too long before one finds Filoli Garden just to the west of the highway [Edgeworth Road exit].

Filoli is a private property of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and has considerable historic interest inside the house as well as an exquisite 16 acre formal garden in a 645 acre estate. This garden is well worth a hour or two but note that they ban food and drink, tripods or acrylic paint!! There is a café if one needs sustenance. Isabella Worn supervised the planting of the Filoli garden and enriched the garden with a variety of plants, including hundreds of Camellias, Rhododendrons, Roses, and Magnolias. Her ingenious designs and great sense of color were hallmarks of the garden that survives today as one of America's finest historic gardens.

Returning to 280 and continuing south before taking the opportunity to cross over to 101, which is running parallel and to the east. Soon one comes to Menlo Park and just west of the highway on Willow Road one finds a small but very interesting garden. This is the test garden of Sunset Publishing which produces Sunset magazine. This garden is divided into six climatic zones and the half and hour it takes to walk around is well- worth the time. We were lucky enough to meet one of the professional photographers who gave us a short course on the problems of photographing a stunning clematis in a pot.

Back on 101 and continuing south one can switch to 85 and soon turn off west

along the road that takes you to the centre of Saratoga. Saratoga, by the way, is one of the loveliest small communities in Silicon Valley. It is largely an area of bungalows with many beautiful gardens. It lies in the foothills on the east side of the coast range about 40 minutes south of San Francisco and is part of the area from Los Gatos to Palo Alto which is a gardener's paradise.

Hakone Gardens is an 18 acre Japanese garden founded as a private garden in 1915 and designed to reflect the Fuji-Hakone National Park in Japan. The garden is now owned by the City of Saratoga and run by a foundation. The garden consists a Pond Garden, a Tea Garden, a Zen Garden and a bamboo garden - Kizuna-En. Located throughout these gardens are Japanese buildings which add to the atmosphere. These buildings are all authentic, even to the extent of the most recent one being constructed in Japan and then transported and raised by Japanese craftsmen. During our visit it did not rain but it was misty and one could well imagine that we were in a garden in central Japan during winter.

Of particular note were the groves of bamboo - 20 ft high or more with beautiful green stems 4" across! The camelias covered the hillside with 6-8ft bushes. The peak flowering for rhododendron, camelias, etc. is usually in late March-early April.

Hakone Gardens are just a couple of minutes west of the centre of the

village and it is well worth stopping there for a coffee or a meal and a browse around the lovely village centre.

Afterwards, by driving a couple of minutes south from the centre one finds another exciting attraction - Villa Montalvo. This can be visited for three different reasons. Firstly, it is a fairly extensive arboretum; secondly, it is a major music festival site with outdoor concerts throughout the year. Finally, there is a major art school and a brand new art centre. This complements the art programme at Hakone Gardens which emphasizes Japanese art.

Villa Montalvo entrance is free and the walks are lovely but you are on your own a little information about the arboretum, . Hakone Gardens are free but you pay for parking. There is information about the garden and a list of plants but the list should be picked up before a tour as the plants are numbered, not named, along the trails. Some of the interesting plants - irises, for example - are not always labelled.

After Saratoga, one can travel west right over the coastal mountains to Santa Cruz where the university has a large mediterranean garden that is quite different from the usual botanic gardens and shows the extreme differences between wet and very dry gardens. A return along the coastal road to San Francisco usually gives you spectacular views of the coast and the extreme sail board antics of the Californian youth!



Anyone contemplating a holiday with garden visits in the south bay area would be well advised to look at one or two publications. “The complete guide to North American Gardens: The West Coast” by William C. Mulligan and “The San Francisco Bay: The Garden

Lover’s Guide” by Ron Sullivan. These books are useful in preventing you from driving past gardens on your route and regretting the fact that you missed them!

<http://www.hakone.com;>  
<http://www.villamontalvo.org/>



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## The Silver Bowl

Leslie Drew

Your Editor has asked for a summary of how the club's Silver Bowl came into existence. Though it's almost as old as the CVRS itself, it seems much older --such are the tricks time plays.

In 1990, my husband and I went to Birks in Victoria to buy this very handsome bowl on the club's behalf for something like \$500, no paltry sum for a fledgling group. The club hadn't much money on hand, but our annual plant sales brought in more than they do today, and the idea of a bowl being awarded annually to a hard-working member seemed a good one. Here was something useful as well as ornamental, and what we chose was large enough to accommodate a single blossom of, say, one of Halfdan Lem's great glories like 'Point Defiance'.

Our first Newsletters give the background. The Newsletter of November 1990 (Vol. 2 No. 9) stated the bowl is to be presented annually to a member who has done notable work for the society. The recipients' names and the year of presentation are engraved on little plaques attached to the applewood base.

Dave Dougan was chairman of the first of the first selection committee, and the recipients have been: 1990 Fred Collins, 1991 Dave Dougan, 1992 Leslie Drew, 1993 Margaret deWeese, 1994 Stan Groves, 1995 Peter Kearns, 1996 Sandra Evelyn, 1997 Allan and Liz Murray, 1998 Greg, Etta and Ruth Cook, 1999 Daphne Jackson, 2000 Doris and Ian Anderson, 2001 Ann Springford, 2002 Ken Flett, 2003 Roger and Anne Slaby, 2004 Janet and David Gardner, 2005 Alan and Sandy Campbell, 2006 Joyce Gammie and 2007 Ingeborg Woodsworth.

The bowl is also a memorial. Between embossed designs, are the names of members who have contributed to the genus in the Cowichan Valley, the first being Jean Bazett and Dorothy Shaw, who were close friends. Jean Bazett operated a nursery with a selection of rhododendrons, and Dorothy Shaw was an outstanding gardener and rhododendron enthusiast. Both encouraged rhododendron growing at a time when the

genus was much less popular than it is today.

To their names have been added, through the years, those of Pat Stone, Peter Stone, and Charlie Raymond, none of whom had received the bowl in the annual presentations.



### Congratulations

Ingeborg was awarded the Silver Bowl at our last meeting.