



NEWSLETTER

Volume 22:9 Editor: Ian Efford December 2011

Vice President's Message

I would like to thank Sandra Stevenson for holding the fort while I took a gardener's holiday.

The Christmas Party is an informal gathering where we can socialize outside of the normal discussion of rhododendrons. **To this end, I encourage our past members to come. If driving at night prevents you attending, please let me know and we will arrange for you to be picked-up and returned home.** Let's make this a joyous friendly party!

The ARS regional conference in September of 2012 is a major rhododendron event on the island. CVRS's contribution will be to provide a volunteer to coordinate the silent auction. Who ever volunteers will receive help from knowledgeable CVRS and Nanaimo RS members. The job will involve the coordination of other volunteers so that the person in charge does not have to spend long periods in Nanaimo. Let me know if you would consider volunteering for this task.

As I mention in an article in this issue, we are looking for suggestions for the next site for our rhododendron donation. Ideally, it should be a government or non-profit site, suitable for rhododendrons and where they will be looked after and watered. Remember, public exposure is one of our objectives. Suggestions can be given to any member of the Executive.

Your Executive has approved the purchase of quite a few plants for eventual sale at an excellent price at our annual "Garden Fair and Rhododendron Sale". The intent is that these purchases be financially neutral or profitable for the society

I should note that we have lost some members this year and the change in the ARS fee structure has meant that some of our married members with two memberships have become one. This has dropped our overall membership significantly. Try to bring a potential member to one of our meetings so that we can recover our numbers.

I hope to meet everyone at the party but, if you are sunning yourself in the south, my best wishes to you and your families for the holiday and for 2012.

Ian E. Efford
President

Coming Events

December 7
Christmas Party

February 1
Bill Terry: "The Perfect Garden: Plant Hunting in Tibet"

March 7
Geoff Ball: "Milner Gardens and It's Rhodendrons"

May 5
2012 Cowichan Valley Garden Fair and Rhodo Sale – Cowex



From the Editor

Congratulations to Bill Dumont for editing the November issue. It was included a very good account of the excellent May bus tour that he organized. Members should use every opportunity to visit Wingswept and Lu Zsu as they are both outstanding gardens in their own way. Wingswept is one of the best formal gardens that one can see in B.C. and it meticulously maintained by the owners. Lu Zsu, on the other hand, is a woodland garden cut directly out of the forest on a mountain side and is an ideal setting for rhododendrons of which there are thousands. It reflects the owner's obsession with this genus and there are very few places, even large botanic gardens, that can equal the breadth of species and cultivars that he has collected.

As many of our members were personal friends of Harry Wright and almost all of us have met him at one time, I have reprinted the obituary from the Comox Valley Echo.

Unfortunately, on my return from New Zealand I did not find a pile of new articles waiting for me to use in this edition of the newsletter! For this reason, there are only two original articles. You can access some very interesting articles in the newsletter of our District's societies. In particular, Brenda MacDonald is publishing a series on individual species and the hybrids that included this species as a parent. To can be seen in the South Fraser RS newsletter such as the one on *R.*



R. sanguineum Engraving by Lillian Snelling, 1929 Curtis's Botanical Magazine

sanguineum to be found in the October 2011 issue. The second is by Linda Derkarch and deals with companion plants in summer, particularly *Clematis*. This article was printed in the Mount Arrowsmith newsletter for September 2011: (23) 7. All these articles can be found at www.rhodos.ca.

I would ask you to consider writing an article or a short note on some aspect of you dealings with rhododendrons - problems you are having, questions, successes - all will be welcome.

Ian E. Efford, Editor

Christmas Event

Wednesday December 7 @ 6pm

Our Christmas Party will be held at St. John's Church in our regular meeting area.

We request that each member bring a few items:

- Sweet or Savory dish
- Gift under \$ 20 for raffle table (an arm's length of raffle tickets are sold for \$5 to bid on gifts – all proceeds are donated to charity)
- Food item for the Food Bank donation
- Bring Photo for contest and four quarters for voting on your favorite photo (see below)

The HO HO Rhodo Photo Contest

The rules are simple, dig through those thousands of coloured Rhodo photos that you have on your computer and pick one you like . Send it to your favourite Photo

processing place like Peacocks, London Drugs or Walmart and get them to produce it in 8x10in or 9x12in. Next bring it to the Christmas party along with 4 (yes, four) quarters and you might just end the evening much wealthier than when you arrived!!!

The only rule about the photo is that there has to be a rhodo somewhere in the photo; if you know it's name so much the better but not necessary and oh yes, it does not have to be in bloom. So you can even go out and shoot a few now .

The social begins at 6 pm for drinks. Our food will be served at 6:30pm. We look forward to visiting with all of you Wednesday December 7 @ 6pm.



Ericoid mycorrhizas of Rhododendron

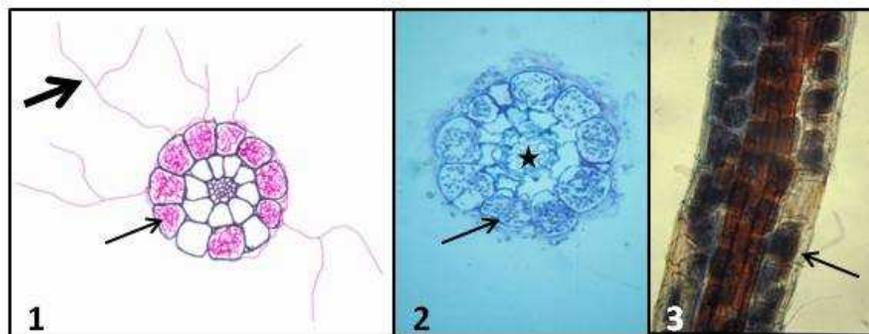
Shannon Berch, BC Ministry of Environment

Horticulturally important members of the plant family Ericaceae include showy rhododendrons, azaleas, and heathers as well as berry-forming huckleberries and blueberries. In nature, these plants grow in harsh environments characterized by soils with poor nutrient status, low pH, readily available metals, poor or very free drainage, and plant litter that can inhibit decomposition by binding and inhibiting decomposer enzymes (Cairney and Meharg 2003). Helping to overcome these challenges are the ericoid mycorrhizal fungi that colonize the very fine 'hair' roots of these plants. These mycorrhizal fungi enable their host plants to access nutrients such as nitrogen from complex organic forms and to avoid the toxicity of high concentrations of metals such as aluminum, copper, iron, lead and zinc.

Hair roots of ericaceous plants, whether salal, heather or rhododendron, are very thin and simple, consisting of a layer of epidermal cells, one or two layers of cortical cells, and the central vascular tissue (Figure 2, star). Without the aid of a microscope it is not possible to see the intricate structures that characterize the ericoid mycorrhiza. The mycorrhizal

fungus grows through the soil (Figure 1, large arrow) and, when it encounters a hair root, it penetrates the outer cell wall and enters the epidermal cell. Here it forms loops of hyphae (Figures 1, 2, and 3 small arrows) in intimate contact with the active cytoplasm of the cell and initiates the transfer to the plant of nutrients such as nitrogen that it has taken up from the soil. In exchange, the fungus presumably benefits from its association with the plant through the transfer of simple sugars from the plant to the fungus.

Although it is possible to purchase mycorrhizal inoculum in some garden centres in the Victoria area, unfortunately those products are not suitable for use with ericaceous plants like rhododendrons. However, in 2011 at least one commercial ericoid mycorrhizal inoculants product was made available by a company in Florida 'in limited supply for experimentation' (http://www.hortsorb.com/DIEHARD_Ericoid_Root_Dip.asp). Whether such products will ever become widely available should depend on whether experimental results support the value of using such products for rooting cuttings in the nursery or for improving growth of rhododendrons and other ericaceous plants in our gardens. Although a growing number of scientific papers are demonstrating that the formation of ericoid mycorrhizas by rhododendrons is quite common in nature and in gardens, we still lack evidence on whether these



Figures 1 – 3. Ericoid mycorrhizas of salal (*Gaultheria shallon*). 1. Line drawing illustrating fungal hyphae (large arrow) in the soil connecting to the mycorrhiza (small arrow). 2. Thin section of ericoid mycorrhiza illustrating the central vascular tissues (star) and the outer layer of epidermal cells colonized by the mycorrhizal fungal hyphae. 3. Whole mount of hair root; blue-black contents are looped mycorrhizal hyphae inside of epidermal cells (small arrow).

plants should be inoculated or whether the mycorrhizal fungi are sufficiently available in nature. Because the ericoid mycorrhizal fungi are not host specific and are apparently quite wide-spread, we may find that inoculation does not provide sufficient benefit to justify the cost. Further research and efficient extension of experimental results should in time clarify this situation. In the meantime, it may suffice to continue to amend rhododendron beds with organic matter (e.g. ground bark or leaf mould) to ensure that the amended soil is a suitable habitat for both the rhododendrons and their ericoid mycorrhizal fungi.

Literature Cited

Cairney, J. W. G., and A. A. Meharg. 2003. *Ericoid mycorrhiza: a partnership that exploits harsh edaphic conditions. European Journal of Soil Science* 54: 735–740.

Garden Tour of France, Belgium and Holland Featuring Floriade 2012 – World Horticultural Expo - May 29 - June 12, 2012

The tour will commence in France where gardens in Paris, Versailles, Giverny, Dieppe and Vernon will be visited. Next is Belgium with stops in The Imperial City of Bruges and Antwerp, hometown of Rubens. Continue to Holland with a stop in Lieden located near Amsterdam. Travel to Apeldoorn before arriving in Venlo where the “Floriade 2012 World Horticultural Expo” is being held. [Tour Information](#)

Glen Jamieson will be hosting this tour.
Glen.Jamieson@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Rhododendrons as part of the Streetscape

Ian E. Efford

A student study at U.B.C. some years ago showed that there was a close correlation between the value of property in different areas of Vancouver and the number of trees per acre. The trees were counted from aerial photos, in those same areas. The more trees, the higher value of the property. In part this was a result of property size but it also reflected that the streets were more likely to be lined with trees in the wealthier neighbourhoods. As we drive through a district or enter a village our views are influenced by the atmosphere and ambience created by the vegetation.

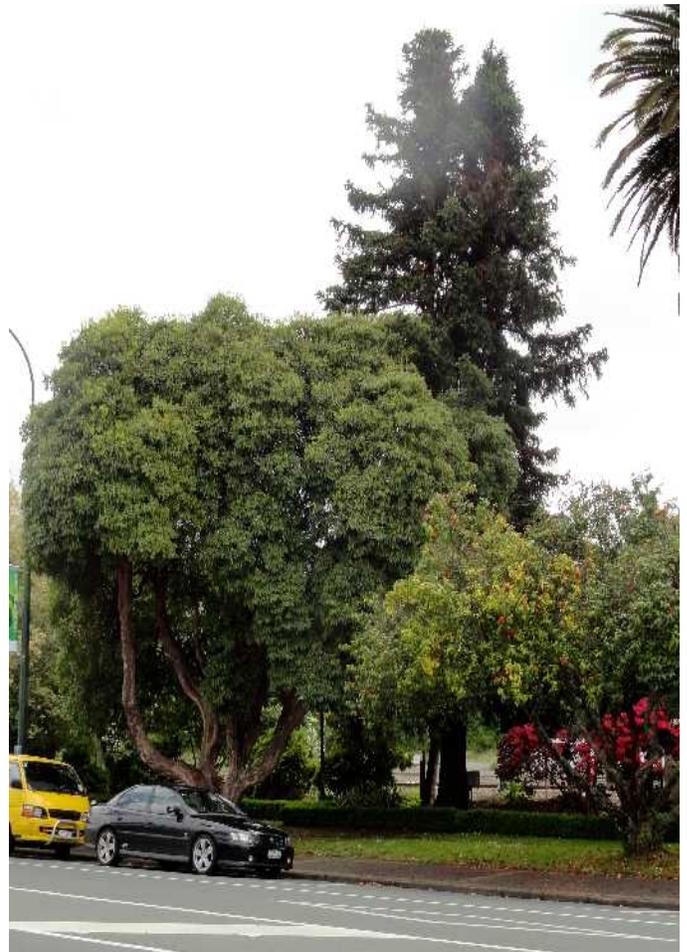
While we were touring New Zealand during the last couple of months, the important role that rhododendrons can play in public landscaping became very obvious. The country is largely rural with only four major cities and the population is spread out over much of the country in small villages and towns. There is a great emphasis on gardening, public gardens and botanic gardens most

of which have no entry charge. As we were there during spring, it was very obvious that rhododendrons are a major feature of both private and public gardens. What struck me most, however, was their use in lining the roads and small public spaces in the towns and villages.

On one trip, we traveled east across the coastal mountain range of the north island from New Plymouth. The countryside was the poorest we saw at anytime during the month of travel and this was reflected in the first village we entered after crossing the divide. Unlike most New Zealand villages which reflect a comfortable wealth, this one had no shops or stores and most buildings were boarded up. In this environment it was surprising to find a few rhododendrons lining the main street and the grass verges cut. In fact, the only person we saw in the village was a man cutting the grass in the public area with a lawnmower.

We continued east and decided that we would have lunch at the first “large” town on this rural road. The town was Taumarunu [most place names in New Zealand are Maori and learning to pronounce them is a way that the locals understood would have taken us a few more months]. On entering the main street which paralleled the railway line were greeted with a blaze of colour from azaleas and rhododendrons which extended right through the middle of the town. The following pictures show the effect. It certainly made one want to stop and walk around the town. In fact, it was obvious that the town was only a little more wealthy than the first town and the cafes served only the basic foods but in both cases the flowers in the street made a real difference and one was left with the impression that this was a town worth visiting.

Most of the plants in this community appeared quite old and they may have been planted during wealthier times. In particular, one gnarled old rhododendron tree was most impressive, towering nearly 40 foot above a car parked in the road beside it. The tree was so large that I thought it must be something else, but it had just finished flowering and I was able to find and reach one spent flower that was just about to fall to the ground and which confirmed that it was indeed a rhodo.



A very old rhododendron in the main street of Taumarunu, New Zealand

Rhododendrons lining the main street of Taumaruna, New Zealand





At the other end of the economic spectrum is the tourist town of Rotorua in the volcanic region - probably the most visited town in the country. Here one can find rhododendrons lining many streets. They appear to have been trimmed to create ideal street trees and certainly contribute to the pleasure for visitors.



A street in Rotorua lined with rhododendrons

Thinking of the Cowichan Valley, I believe we would enjoy the valley and its small towns more if we undertook more landscaping with flowering trees and bushes, particularly with rhododendrons.

Furthermore, it would encourage visitors stay a little longer as they pass through the region. This idea is matched by our programme of donating annually \$500 worth of rhododendrons to a government or non-profit organization in the Regional District. We make every effort to locate these plants in sites that are public and where the plants will be looked after and watered regularly. So far, we have plants at:

- The Lake Cowichan Memorial Rhododendron Garden
- The campus of Vancouver Island University
- The northern entrance to Crofton [site preparation is underway]
- and some at the new Cowichan Exhibition Grounds.

We already have on hand the plants to be donated next year but so far no possible sites have been suggested. Members should let us have their suggestions and they will be considered and a recommendation made to the membership for the site for 2012. Let us have some ideas from other parts of the Region - Cobble Hill, Shawnigan Lake, Chemainus, Cowichan Bay etc.

In addition to these donations, we should encourage the local governments to plant other flowering trees and bushes and perennials in order to make the Valley attractive to visitors and a beautiful and restful place for the residents.

The Lapponicum Series of the Genus Rhododendron

Ian Wallace and Norm Brown, Ferny Creek Horticultural Society, Victoria, Australia

This series (alternatively classified as the Subsection Lapponicum of the Section Rhododendron) contains the largest natural group of truly dwarf alpine rhodo species, rarely exceeding five feet in height. They

have aromatic evergreen leaves with dense scales on both surfaces, making them Lepidotes. The flowers are mostly in purple or pink shades with the odd yellow displayed in small terminal trusses or in some cases singly. The flowers themselves are generally funnel-shaped or tubular and not of a very thick texture, which can cause them to be easily damaged by windy wet weather. Most have short flower stalks with the calyx and the seed capsule also quite small.

Their normal distribution covers a large area of Western China down to Tibet and the Eastern Himalayas, and reaching high altitudes which generally makes them cold resistant, but all must have good drainage.

There are many worthwhile plants garden plants in the series, most of which will do well in the Dandenongs [Ed. hills east of Melbourne where the Australian National Rhododendron Garden is located] and the foothills, but are very difficult on the lower slopes. One definite plus is that they generally flower as young plants. If they become leggy or misshapen they can be pruned with electric shears after flowering without causing too much harm.

Many of these plants have been used in hybridizing, particularly with the Triflorum Series (Triflorum Subsection), eg. *R. augustinii*, to create a wide range of almost blue hybrids originally for the Northern Hemisphere.

To show the smaller members of the series at their best, and if room permits, it is better to plant them in groups of three or more to achieve the full effect of massed colour.

Some Lapponicum species that are still likely to be available:

- *R. chryseum*. Can be cream to yellow with 4-5 flowers in truss and height to 2 feet. Goes well with purple.
- *R. fastigiatum*. Light to dark purple, 4-5 flowers in truss, height to 3 feet, good glaucous foliage.
- *R. hippophaeoides*. Lavender blue flowers,

compact truss, height to 5 feet, likes a moist area, early flowering. „Haba Shan“ is probably the best form.

- *R. impeditum*. Commonly grown, small purple flowers vary in colour, true dwarf.
- *R. lapponicum*. The series type. Flowers purple, 3 to a truss, height to 3 feet. Difficult to grow.
- *R. intracatum*. Lavender to mauve flowers in compact truss, height to 3 feet, one of the best.
- *R. rupicola*. Commonly yellow, but best form plum crimson, outstanding, height to 2 feet, can be leggy.
- *R. russatum*. Flowers reddish to intense violet, 4-6 to a truss, height 2-6 feet, leaves can be up to 2.5 inches long.
- *R. scintillans*. Flowers purple rose to royal blue, 2-3 in a truss, height to 3 feet, tends to be straggly in shade.

- *R. websterianum*. Flowers can be purple, but mostly pale blue in Australia. Height 3 feet, keep moist.



R. lapponicum

A re-print of part of an article in the October 2011 newsletter of the Victoria Branch of the Australian Rhododendron Society,

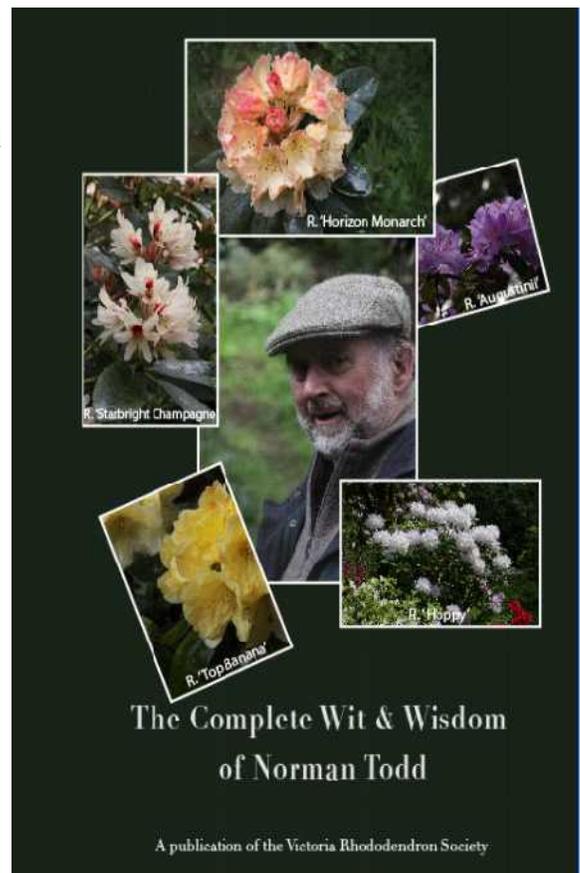
An Ideal Christmas Present for Gardeners

Our Society has purchased 30 copies of Norman Todd's book, "[The Complete Wit & Wisdom of Norman Todd](#)" and it will be available at the Christmas Party and at our February meeting for \$12 to members and \$15 to the public.

This 236 page book contains 74 of Norm's articles written over the last 30 years. It will entertain and inform you about rhodo care, history and the finer things in a rhodoholics life. Thoughts on slug courtship habits, WASHing your rhodos so they don't end up as ASH, benefits of having a dead head while deadheading, and many more wise, intriguing observations from a renowned rhododendron master.

This book will make great Christmas gifts or a gift to encourage others to become involved with rhodos.

All funds from the sale of Norm's book have been generously donated to the VRS by Norm.



Harry Russell Wright

“It is with great sadness that the family of Harry Russell Wright announce his sudden passing. With his ever loving wife by his side, Harry passed away at home on the evening of Thursday, November 3rd.



Harry is survived by his spouse Gwen, daughters Debbie (Barr McLaren), Brenda (Jerry Desrochers), Sherry (Luis Rebolledo), his son Gary (Joanne Campbell); grandchildren William, Renee, Ben, Kaylen and Breanne; brothers Murchie and Marvin and countless dear friends. Harry is predeceased by his daughter Tammy.

Harry, who was born on September 06, 1932 in Odell River, N.B. lived a life of passion. It was throughout his decorated 20 year career in the military service, as a member of NATO Peacekeeping troops, that he met Gwen, the love of his life and spouse of 53 years. In 1967 Harry and Gwen moved their young family to Comox Valley, where he worked first as sole proprietor of a landscaping business and then as Town Parks Foreman for the City of Courtenay. It is in these capacities that Harry's passion for rhododendrons flourished, resulting in the beauty that is present at many of the city's parks. When not basking in the loving company of his children and grandchildren, Harry would be found with his many friends from the Rhodo and Garden Club, of which he was a founding member. Harry received numerous awards from the American Rhododendron Association for his work hybridizing rhodos.

As an active member of our community, Harry has worked closely with Citizens on Patrol, minor hockey, and Scouts Canada.”

This obituary is taken from one published in Comox Valley Echo on November 8, 2011



2011-2012 Executive

Past President: David Annis

President: Ian Efford

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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: Debra Kobulka

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: Mona Kaiser (pending) and Liz Murray

Garden Tours: Ingeborg Wordsworth (pending)

Plant Sale: the team

Facility Liason: Roy Elvins

Christmas Party: The team

COWICHAN VALLEY RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

Programme for 2011-2012

7:30 pm at St John's Anglican Church

163 First St, Duncan, BC V9L 1R1

(1st and Jubilee)

September 7	Siggi Kemmler and Ken Webb "Rhododendron Nurseries in North Germany"
October 5	Bill McMillan "Selected English Gardens and Birds"
November 2	Gerry Gibbens "The Rhododendrons at VanDusen Gardens"
December 7	Christmas Party
February 1	Bill Terry "The Perfect Garden: Plant Hunting in Tibet" Co-Sponsored with the Cowichan Valley Garden Club
March 7	Geoff Ball "Milner Garden and its Rhododendrons"
March 20	District 1 Executive Meeting
April 4	Bill Bischoff "A Prize Winning Garden in the Making"
May 2	Dennis Bottemiller, Rhododendron Species Botanic Garden "Variables in Propagation of Rhododendron Cuttings"
May 5	Garden Fair and Rhododendron Sale
June 16	Summer Picnic