Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society
R. Cowichan

Newsletter

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Fred Appreciated

Though the CVRS Christmas party had to be cancelled—or is it postponed?—because of the snow, one of the guests of honour, ***Fred Collins****, had his gift of a basket of goodies delivered to his home in Duncan. The party was to have been Appreciation Night for Fred and for* ***Stan*** *and* ***Nyra Groves****, now living at Sidney. Both men are founding members and the Groves were frequent hosts to Christmas parties in the chapter's early days. Possible rescheduling will be discussed in early January. The basketful of treats was arranged by* ***Maria Kemmler****.*

What's Coming Up

January Meeting: Wednesday January 3 in St. John's Anglican Church Hall, 486 Jubilee Street, Duncan. Set-up at 7 PM, meeting starts 7:30.

Speakers: **Janet Gardner** will give a PowerPoint presentation on the azaleas and other rhododendrons still blossoming each spring at the long-neglected garden of **Cedric** and **Gertrude Myers** at Honeymoon Bay. The club's Propagating Group is helping the present owners to identify the plants and advising on restoration. **Leslie Drew** will give a short talk on rhodo record-keeping, old-style.

Tea and Goodies: **Ruth Cook***(748-8293), **Dawn Fedorchuk** (715-1233) and **Sandy** and **Alan Campbell** (743-3597).
* indicates team leader.

Directors' Meeting: Directors will meet on Wednesday, January 10, at the home of **Bill Dumont**, 1753 Peerless Road, Cobble Hill.
Note: This is a change to one week earlier.

Propagating Group Meeting: No meeting in January

Annual Spring Sale: May 5 in the Rabbit Barn at the Exhibition Grounds.

Next meeting to be held January 3, 2007,
in St. John's Anglican Church Hall,
486 Jubilee Street, Duncan

The Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society
A Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society
PO Box 904, Duncan, BC V9L 3Y2 *http://cowichan.rhodos.ca*

President's Message

New Year's Greetings to you all! May all your dreams and expectations for the new year be fulfilled.

I'm sorry that the Christmas party had to be called off owing to the snow. We all looked forward to a good time visiting with one another. The organizers had spent hours arranging the event, and for that I thank them sincerely. To make up for the disappointment, it has been suggested that we have an Easter party celebrating spring. Let's talk about that at our January 3rd meeting.

At this meeting, **Janet Gardner**, using our newly acquired PowerPoint projector, will ask us to identify those lovely old azaleas and other rhododendrons at the former **Myers** garden in Honeymoon Bay. **Cedric Myers** was well known for the azaleas he propagated and donated to the Finnerty Garden at the University of Victoria.

Thinking of sunshine and rhodos in flower, the 2007 ARS annual convention "Rhododendrons at the Golden Gate" is a must.

And how about this, you enthusiastic propagators: growers can now register a rhododendron name on-line via the ARS Web site: *http://www.rhododendron.org/name_registration.htm.* This is your chance to choose a unique name.

What a good time, in this miserable weather, to dream and plan next year's plantings!

by Ingeborg Woodsworth

January in the Garden

by Allan and Liz Murray

Ooops! We neglected to talk about snow last month! Did you get enough? Do your rhododendrons have damage? As we write (December 14), we're just able to assess some of the damage in our garden and decide how to do the repairs. The snowfall this time was more destructive than in 1996 when the snow was deeper and came down a lot lighter and in three sessions.

Snow can be good on rhodos. If it is light it can cushion around the plant, preventing freezing and dessication of leaves and stems. Light snow can be released from the branches with a gentle tap. However, as we all know a gardener has to sleep, and a lot of snow can fall through the night.

A number of years ago, we faced a fierce outflow wind from the north with no snow protection, and we lost a number of plants. This time, the heavy, wet snow has dragged down branches, crushed smaller plants like the "yaks", and split branches on larger rhodos. Heavily laden branches from the large trees snapped and landed on rhodo plants, and caused their own damage.

Here's what to do: wait until the plant is completely out of the snow to assess the damage. Walk around and check all of the branches. Small splits are difficult to see, so check everywhere. You want to leave the plant in the most visually pleasing shape and leave it strong to withstand whatever the next storm brings. Cut well below the breaks, leaving clean cuts and few "stumps". When looking at a rhodo branch you can see where the old leaf scars were. Cut just above the leaf scar, and the new growth will break there. Try to leave the plant looking as natural as possible. Sometimes you will have to take out more than you would like at this point. Remember that the root is still the same size as it was before you cut the top and that it has the strength to put growth on the top side in the next growing season. Be tough, be strong – prune with sharp pruners appropriate to the sizes of the branches. Your plant will be better off and your landscape tidier. Happy New Year to all, and may your buds blossom to beautiful trusses!

PROPAGATION GROUP

Layering: Two Techniques

by Carrie Nelson

The following information is taken from **Harold R. Greer**'s Web site: ***http://www.flounder.ca/Fraser-South/basics/propagation.asp***

> *Layering . . . can be a method for a gardener to grow an additional plant exactly like the parent plant. Simply pull a long limb . . . down onto the ground, wound or notch the bottom side, cover it with loose soil mix and weight it down with a rock. It will take at least a year and possibly two before the limb is sufficiently rooted to be cut from the plant, though some evergreen azaleas root faster.*
>
> *The use of root hormone on the wound may speed the process, but is not absolutely necessary.*

Although Harold's method is the simplest, I find that the "new" plant lying on the ground is often attacked by weevils or other earthly creatures and it sets them back. I prefer to take a low lying branch, notch it where it will be dipped in the soil, add some rooting hormone, and secure it to the ground with a wire hanger so it won't pop out of the ground. Finally, I use a piece of twine or nylon stocking to gently pull the tip of the dipped branch back toward the parent plant so that it is in an upright position. I secure the twine/nylon to a sturdy limb of the mother plant. This will get the plant growing upward and it's less likely to be trod upon or buried in mulch or munched by weevils. It still takes at least a year to establish roots.

Trouble in the Cutting Bed

by Ian Efford

As a member of the Propagating Group, I approached building a cutting bed with excess enthusiasm. My table is constructed of 4 × 4 posts and beams bolted together and it is stronger than the foundation of most houses! All went well except for two components—the heat and the lights.

In the case of the heat, I purchased a 10 m heating cable to embed in the sand base. This cable was made by EasyHeat and was called Greenstart. It has a built-in thermostat set at 20°C. After setting up the table, putting in the seedlings, etc., the cable did not work. I dismantled the bed, returned the cable for a refund, and found another source in Saanich. Same cable, same make, same result—a dud cable. I then telephoned a number of wholesale suppliers and the manufacturer in Ontario only to discover that this manufacturer does not make the cable any more and refuses to warranty its old product.

For lighting, I followed the article in the recent *American Rhododendron Society Journal* ("It's Your Money: Using Better Lighting to Grow Rhododendrons" by E. White Smith, Summer 2006, p. 156) and purchased four T8 electronic-start fluorescent tubes and the appropriate fixtures. These are very energy-efficient and cut running costs compared with the old tubes. The result was very poor lighting; in fact, only at night could I tell that the lights were on. What had I done wrong? There was a simple solution, but it took me two trips to the supplier and a discussion with an electrician to find out. These lights have electronic ballasts that will not work unless they are completely grounded. Once the wiring was reconnected with emphasis on the grounding wire, all worked well.

I'm ordering new heating cables from the United States and once everything is working it will be too late to take cuttings, but I will be raring to go next year!

The ARS Convention

The **American Rhododendron Society** convention, "Rhododendrons at the Golden Gate," to be held April 12–15 at the Embassy Suites Hotel, South San Francisco, now has a Web site. The Web address for those planning to attend is ***http://www.ars2007conf.org*** and has full details about registering.

R. macrophyllum Research Program Update

by Dean Goard

In late August, a group of *Rhododendron macrophyllum* aficionados met at the Helen R. Whiteley Center on San Juan Island. The major topics of this workshop were the geographical map of *R. macrophyllum* populations and variation within this species, both within and between populations.

Dr. Ben Hall reported on studies of two genes that show a remarkable extent of DNA variation across *R. macrophyllum* and his plans to expand these studies to additional genetic regions. There was general agreement that comparative growth studies under controlled garden conditions might lead to a clearer understanding of both flower and DNA variation in *R. macrophyllum*.

Given the large differences in rainfall, solar illumination, and temperature across the region and the genotypic differences between populations, it seems likely that selection for fitness in specific microenvironments has shaped the genomes of the *R. macrophyllum* populations growing in them. A suitable test for the existence of such adaptive differences would be to carry out common garden growth studies like those performed in the mid-20th century by **Clausen**, **Keck**, and **Hiesey**.

It was agreed that a number of regional sampling locations and test-garden sites would be necessary. Victoria was proposed as a site representing rain-shadow coastal locations. I have been in discussions with the University of Victoria about availability of suitable space, but it does not look too promising. In the New Year, I will be meeting with representatives of the native plant gardens at the Horticultural Centre of the Pacific (Glendale Gardens).

The current plans are to make cuttings of selected plants in autumn 2006, then to proceed with the larger project one year later. During 2006–2007, additional meetings will be held, either at the Lake Wilderness Center in the South King County Arboretum or at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden.

In October, Ron Knight and I went up to the Mt. Elphinstone site. We labelled and numbered what appeared to be the seven clumps of rhodos and, where possible, collected some seeds and a few cuttings. The seeds had opened and were quite damp, but have been dried out and I will try to germinate them this month. Cuttings are in my propagator. We'll see how they do.

Other reported sites in British Columbia include:

- the western end of Haslam Lake, west of Ladysmith, and north of Cowichan Lake; and southeast Middle Quinsam Lake (reported in *Discovery* the quarterly of the Vancouver Natural History Society New Series Vol. 1 No. 4 (No. 157) Dec. 1972–Feb. 1973;
- a site near Mt. Tetrahedron on the Sunshine Coast (but no details yet); and
- north and east of the Skagit site at Roscoe Lake in the Cascades.

So in moving forward with this research project, we need to confirm a test garden site in Victoria, some of these possible sites on the coast, and appeal to the greater public for additional sites of *R. macrophyllum*.

The Plant Sale

Planning has begun for the 2007 plant sale on May 5th in the Rabbit Barn at the Exhibition Grounds. This is a return to an earlier location that was abandoned before I came on the scene. It has been chosen as it is better known, has far more space, has vehicle access for vendors, and has plenty of parking. We hope that the number of buyers will be increased by some of these factors and that the vendors will be happier.

Changing locations three years in a row is not good marketing but, on the other hand, we have been told that last year many potential buyers did not know the location of the church. Publicizing the date and location by word of mouth would help immensely, and I hope you will all tell friends and mention it at garden club or other club meetings. Mentioning it more than once helps!

At one time, the members' table was loaded and we had very good sales. The number of plants has dropped off and we hope that you will all consider bringing plants to sell, either rhododendrons or other choice plants from your garden that are in surplus. I need not remind you that garden plants that become uncontrollable—"weedy" plants—should be put on the compost heap rather than taken to plant sales.

Volunteers will remain the mainstay of the plant sale, so jot down the date on your calendar and put your name down when the time comes.

by Ian Efford, Co-ordinator

2007 Rhododendron of the Year Awards*

Plants Suitable For The Northwestern Region

Elepidote Rhododendron: 'Nancy Evans' (*R.* 'Hotei' × *R.* 'Lem's Cameo')
Flower light yellow with some early orange shading on lobes and reverse, orange-red buds, hose-in-hose, openly funnel-shaped, wavy lobes, 2-1/2" across. Held in ball-shaped trusses of 19 flowers. Blooms midseason. Leaves narrowly elliptic to elliptic, 4" long, glossy, medium green, bronze colored when new. Rounded, compact plant habit. Grows to a typical height of 3' in 10 yrs. Hardy to 5°F (–15°C). Hybridized by Brockenbrough. [Photo by Eleanor Philp]

Lepidote Rhododendron: 'Blaney's Blue' (*R. augustinii* 'Tower Court' × *R.* 'Blue Diamond')
Flower inside light purple, outside strong violet, unmarked, funnel-shaped, wavy-edged lobes, 1-1/2" across. Lax truss holds 3 flowers. Blooms midseason. Leaves elliptic, acute apex, rounded base, 1" long, flat margins, glossy, dark yellowish green, changing to a bronze tone in winter. Grows to a height of 5' in 10 yrs. Plant and bud hardy to at least –5°F (–21°C). Hybridized by Blaney. [Photo by Stuart Imrie]

Evergreen Azalea: 'Mitsuki' (*R.* 'Girard's Rose' sport)
Flower white with numerous irregular streaks of light purple, openly funnel-shaped, 2-1/2" across. Flat inflorescence holds 2–3 flowers. Blooms early midseason. Leaves elliptic, broadly acute apex, cuneate base, margins up-curved, 1-1/8" long, dull green. Dense growth habit. Grows to a typical height of 2' in 10 yrs. Hardy to 5°F (–15°C). Grown from seed obtained by Higashi Nursery from Hiroshima, Japan. [Photo by Harold Greer]

Deciduous Azalea: 'Cecile' (Parentage unknown)
Flower salmon pink with yellow blotch on upper lobe, tubular funnel-shaped, 3–5" across. Ball-shaped, dense truss contains 8–11 flowers. Blooms midseason to late midseason. Leaves elliptic with acute apex and cuneate base, deciduous. Upright, open habit. Grows to a height of 6' in 10 years. Hardy to –5°F (–21°C). Initially raised by Lionel de Rothschild. [Photo by Jim Whillhite]

* The information above and below is adapted from the American Rhododendron Society Web site. For Northwest region ROY winners in 2004, 2005, 2006, see ***http://www.rhododendron.org/roy07nw.htm***

Twenty-seven rhododendrons selected for their adaptability in eight regions of the United States have been awarded Rhododendron of the Year (ROY) honors for 2007. The purpose of the awards is to educate the public about the wide range of rhododendrons that can be grown successfully in people's gardens. To be selected for a ROY award a plant must have excellent foliage and flowers, have an attractive growth habit, prove itself hardy for the specific region and be pest and disease resistant. The Plant Award Committee chooses four plants for each region–an elepidote and a lepidote rhododendron and a deciduous and an evergreen azalea.

Editor's Notebook

by Leslie Drew

The winds, the snow, and the cold of late November and early December will have taken a toll in broken branches in many of our gardens. If fir branches didn't come down and whack some of our rhododendrons during the high winds, then the first thaw thumped them with snow loads, and if that wasn't enough the weight of ice-laden snow on the plants themselves was sometimes enough to snap their branches. I haven't surveyed the scene, but it's probably worth making a few notes on how much damage was done and whether fir branches placed tipi-style around them as protectors might have spared the most vulnerable plants.

While we worried about our beloved rhodos, we were mercifully distracted by the birds. At **Ann Springford**'s garden at Maple Bay, 12 quail showed up—for the 12 days of Christmas?—and perched at the top of a magnolia, begging for food, which, of course, she tossed out onto crusted snow and which vanished in a flash.

Here at Sahtlam Rise, as long as the ground is bare in late autumn, sooty grouse emerge from the fir forests at twilight, eating seeds of I don't know what. Whenever snow comes in deep drifts, as it did starting November 26, they come up to the house at dusk for a supper of cotoneaster and pyracantha berries, always their last edibles of the season, and then, on whirring wings, fly down to roost on the fir trees. Without them to marvel at in disconcerting times, we would be poor indeed.

John Trelawny, who died on December 1st, was a man who made the most of life. He had been a career soldier who fought in the British Army in the Second World War, been badly injured, taken prisoner, and afterwards, like many veterans, came to the Island. Here, he turned his hand to any task and did it well while getting established and raising a family. To his friends in rhododendron circles he was a plantsman. He knew a great deal about plants yet was the first to say he didn't know everything. He had lectured at the University of Victoria, from which he later received an honorary degree; he had written on native plants—his book, *Wildflowers of Alaska and the Yukon*, is a standard reference work—and he and Ruth, his wife of 58 years, made a very fine garden at their seafront home north of Victoria. Visitors were always gladly welcomed and shown around by the gentle man with the ready smile. We shall miss him.

—2007 Directors—

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