



NEWSLETTER

Volume 21: 2

Editor: Ian E. Efford

March 2010

President's Message

Wow! Where did February go? Perhaps it has been all the Winter Olympic events that have had us glued to our television sets for the past two weeks! Or perhaps the terrific run of sunny and very warm weather!

The gardens are progressing at a pretty rapid rate, as every few days there are other things out there to see. I can't help wonder if all the rhododendrons will have finished blooming by the time of our plant sale in May.

Speaking of the plant sale, the club will be starting to gear up for our annual extravaganza. When you get a chance, volunteer to do one or more of the jobs that are required to be done either before the sale day or on the actual Saturday. It takes an effort by all of us to stage this event which gives us and the public a chance to buy a great variety of rhododendron (and other) plants not always seen in our area.

See you at the meeting.

David Annis

Future Events

3rd March 2010 7.30pm

Ingeborg Woodworth "Invitation to an International Symposium" to celebrate of 75 years of the German Rhododendron Society. Included will be excursions to historic rhododendron parks in Oldenburg and East-Frisia, Hachmann Nursery in Schleswig - Holstein also the famous "planten en bloemen" rhododendron garden plus sightseeing tour in Hamburg.

See the registration site: www.rhodo.org/2010 in the Summer ARS Journal, page 171.

17th March 2010 7.00pm The Propagation Group location to be announced

9-11th April 2010

The Ultimate Rhododendron Conference
April 9 – 11, 2010 at UBC Botanical Garden

1st May 2010 Saturday

THE PLANT SALE 10am-1.30pm

October 2010

"Celebrating 50 year of the Victoria Branch of the Australian Rhododendron Society and its famous National Rhododendron Garden"

The Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

A Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

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

Rhodos and Azaleas in Pots *

Mary Parker

I have been growing these beautiful plants in pots for about 15 years. At that time fellow rhodoholics didn't think it was such a good idea! But, when you have no more room in the garden my plants found their way into pots on patios. Point Defiance, for an example, grew in a large pot for at least 10 years blooming and looking great until I found a garden home for it.

When I moved from Qualicum Beach to Nanaimo two years ago I found I lived on solid clay with rocks for a lawn!!! I planted one rhodo high with what I thought was a good drainage base, but it died within the year. So, everything else stayed in pots or was moved to larger pots.

My planting medium consists of compost, bark mulch and soil. I usually throw in some bone meal and Epsom salts.

I find I have to fertilize twice a year, in the early spring and the end of May. In the late fall I give them a shot of Epsom salts. My recipe for fertilizer is as follows:

2 scoops (I use a 250 ml cottage cheese container) each of the following - Alfalfa meal; Canola meal; Bone meal; Epsom salts.

1 scoop each of the following - Granular moss killer; Green Leaf rhodo food; Dolopril lime.

I mix this all together in a 2 1/2 gallon bucket and apply as you would in the garden.

I installed an automatic watering system with 6 zones and each pot has one or two sprinkler heads [See below]. I put saucers under the pots in the summer so any nutrients and water can be used up by the plant. I water every other day for 5 mins or as needed for the weather conditions.

If you have any questions email me at maryjparker99@shaw.ca



March 2010

* [Editor: Note that this article is part of the three part series on potted plants in the last issue]

Note:

The Pacific Calcium Inc.'s product "**DoloPril**" is made of dolomite lime crushed to a very fine powder. The company claims that it adds calcium and magnesium; raises soil pH; reduces excess aluminum, iron, and manganese; improves efficiency of potassium; increases available and phosphorus and molybdenum.

Recreating a Garden: A Five Year Project.

Ian E. Efford

In Ottawa, I spent a number of years creating an extensive iris garden from scratch. Now, I am beginning to create a rhododendron garden. Changing gardens is a rather traumatic experience although tinged with excitement. We returned to BC and purchased our dream home on Maple Mountain with a spectacular view across the Gulf Island [or is that the Salish Sea islands now?] to the mountains with Black Tusk at Whistler in the far distance. The two acre garden was rocky, steep, and covered in wild flowers and arbutus. Being north facing, it was ideal for rhododendrons and not suitable for my old love of irises. A car accident meant that climbing slopes with tubs of soil, mulch, etc. was not in my long-term interest even for someone who claims to be a permanent 38! So we moved.

Our new home in Duncan is on one acre and is relatively flat so that all heavy items can be wheeled around. The garden had been in the care of a keen gardener but for five years it had been untouched except for cutting the lawn. The result was a magnificent growth of brambles and weeds and little or no hint of the plants that populated the garden.

We are now at the end of the first year of re-creating a garden with an emphasis on rhododendrons. Firstly came the hacking back of weeds resulting in the discovery of five flower beds that were under the mess. We also had to cut out a number of trees - young Douglas firs that were crowding out a stand of young pines, apple trees that produced fruit more suitable for paper production and some large grand firs that had been cut into lollipops. I hate topiary! We also spent the year being surprised by new arrivals in the various beds. The previous

owners had planted an excess of daffodils some years ago and they now formed many very dense clumps that will need dividing. Peonies have cropped up in a various places although they clearly have lacked care and need fertilization. In total 13 rhododendrons have been discovered with some azaleas completely covered with weeds and unrecognizable. We were blessed with many other surprises during the year including a broken sprinkler system which we could not make work until Canada Day.

North American

Haletia carolina [Snowdrop tree or Carolina Silverbell tree]

Franklinia alahama

Asian

Stewartia pseudocamellia [Japanese Stewartia or Deciduous Camellia]

Davidia involucrata [Handkerchief tree]

Sytrax japonica [Japanese styrax]

Magnolia sieboldii [Oyama Magnolia]

Magnolia Butterflies

Australasian

Asterotrichon discolor [Tasmanian Hemp-bush] *

Acacia melanoxyton [Tasmanian blackwood]

* This is a winter flowering tree but is often dioecious, as the plant has been grown from seed, it might take some years to determine if it will flower!
Note: This is the cloth hemp not the inhaling one!

Our lack of knowledge of just what is there has meant that most of the creativity in the first year had to take place in areas without existing flower beds. This means in the lawns especially the large front lawn. In all, seven new beds have been constructed using two different methods.



The bare lawn



Initial planting in new beds

Firstly, in the middle of the lawns I removed the sod with a sod cutter to create shaped beds. The sod was turned over and piled one to three layers thick in order to create shaped elevations in the beds. As the lawned areas of the garden are on clay, I added inexpensive top soil to about 30cm and then covered the whole bed with another 30cm. of wood chip mulch. The soil was pond dredgings [\$150/full load], rather than the better humus-laden soil that comes at about twice the price, but it does the job. I obtained the mulch free by asking companies chipping trees in the neighbourhood to dump their loads on our

property. One has to be persistent about asking because they do not always come even when promised. When the beds were patches were cleared in the mulch for planting and then the mulch raked back around the plants.

The planting of these beds followed a pattern. In each bed a flowering shade tree is the principal focus. These trees have been selected largely at the recommendations of local experts. The trees are listed in the box above. At the moment, they are small but should begin to provide shade during this year. The next consideration was the location of the rhododendrons in each bed with an emphasis on planting them at least 2 metres apart so that they have room for growth. Between the rhodos I am planting perennials that will provide colour and diversity during the rest of the year. In particular small clumps of non-bearded irises have been added which should flower between May and July.

Secondly, in another section of the garden we call the Garry Oak glade the new beds were constructed quite differently. The clean-up of the garden gave rise to a very large amount of branches, leaves and weeds. These were stacked into the shape of two beds and left for a couple of months with more material added as it became available. Eventually, wood chips were added and then a layer of top soil.

Rhododendrons were planted on this sandwich before a layer of wood chips were added as a final mulch. Between the rhodos I am adding various flowering bushes and perennials. Pear trees have been added in this area to compliment the existing plum trees.

During the first year I constructed the vegetable garden by dropping a load of top soil on the ground and racking it out. Not very elegant but we did get a good crop including an excess of spaghetti squash which overwhelmed us and our children, and contributed to the food supply at the food bank! This year we are adding a couple of new apple trees and establishing a little more order in this garden.



The first summer

Other sections of the garden are well stocked with perennials and rhodos are being added with emphasis on putting the azaleas in the inner garden which is double protected from deer. One feature of the previous owner that has caused some consternation is his love of grapes. We have at least six grape vines. One seedless grape is very welcome but one of the others in particular has an enormous production of edible, seeded grapes. With the best will in the world we cannot eat more than 2-3% of the crop and we are uninterested in wine production. Two or three times a week we took 10-15lbs of grapes to the



food bank but we have to consider cutting down all these additional vines and replacing them with flowering climbers.

There is also an inner, inner garden which is perfect as a nursery area for cuttings of rhodos, flowering bushes, irises, etc. This is probably the most useful area a gardener could have. It is protected and small enough so that hand weeding is not a chore. The gates must be kept close at all times, however, as 50 young rhododendron plants of different species were reduced to 25 when two visiting puppies found that the worked soil is ideal for digging holes and play fighting. Luckily, I do not have a gun!

Finally, another past love was rock and alpine plants and there is an ideal area to develop as a rock garden. I have even seen an old bath abandoned in my neighbour's garden which could become a raised trough as a centre piece to this garden. This project is part of our future plans.

Gardening is a delightful mixture of art and science and developing a new garden can give considerable long-term pleasure. Most of the joy is in sitting and thinking out what should be done, where plants should go and exactly which location would be the best for an individual rhodo. Some plants die but that just gives one the chance to do better the next time.

Visitors are welcome as are constructive comments and ideas about the evolution of this garden.

A new rhodo bed is rather stark in its first year. This can be overcome by a liberal sprinkling of annual seeds around the bed. These two species of Cosmos look like-well established 2m high bushes but were gone after the first frost.

Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden

Dave Godfrey

In 1996, the NIRS members decided to enter into a major project of building and maintaining a community rhododendron garden. On April 11th that year, the North Island Rhododendron Society joined with the City of Courtenay in the "Partners in Parks" program and commenced work on the garden. This joint project was made possible with funds raised by the members through plant sales and garden tours.

Located along the walking path between the Visitor Information Centre on Cliffe Avenue and the Courtenay Airpark, the garden is ideally situated for maximum public enjoyment. The garden consists of six beds containing over 130 varieties of rhododendrons. The first bed was completed in April 1996. Through hard work and collected plants, the sixth bed, known as the "BOVI" bed (Born on Vancouver Island), was built in October 2006. This bed was officially opened in May 2007, and contains only those rhododendrons which have been hybridized here on Vancouver Island.

As with most rhododendron gardens, this community garden is at its peak during April through June. Several hundred local residents and visitors enjoy the beauty of the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden every day throughout the year.



**Congratulations to
Mill Bay Garden Club**

25 years old on the
February 14

Rhododendron of the Year Awards

A new feature on the ARS District 1 Website: www.rhodos.ca is a page which summarizes the “Rhododendron of the Year Awards” for the Pacific Northwest and Southwestern British Columbia (ARS District 1) for the years 2002 to 2010.

Rhododendron of the Year Awards are made in four categories for each of eight geographical regions of the United States and Canada. These include elepidote rhododendrons, lepidote rhododendrons, deciduous azaleas and evergreen azaleas. Twenty-nine plants have been selected for the year 2010.



See the following webpage for more information: <http://www.rhododendron.org/royawardsintro6.htm>

Plants selected for the 2010 Rhododendron of the Year Awards were drawn from the American Rhododendron Society's “Proven Performers” lists. These lists are developed and updated each year by the local ARS chapters and are made up of plants that do very well in members' own gardens over many years.

The purpose of the ROY 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
- be pest and disease resistant



Plants selected for the “Northwest Region” (our region) for 2010 are:

‘Seaview Sunset’ (elepidote) - a Frank Fujioka cross of ‘Nancy Evans’ and ‘Canadian Sunset’

‘Too Bee’ (lepidote) – a Warren Berg cross of ‘Patricia’ and R. keiskei ‘Yaku Fairy’

‘Gibraltar’ (deciduous azalea) – a selection by Edmund de Rothschild

‘Rosebud’ (evergreen azalea) – a Joe Gable cross of ‘Louise Gable’ and ‘Caroline Gable’

See the webpage: <http://rhodos.ca/ROTY/roty.html> for Rhododendron of the Year Awards for the Pacific Northwest and Southwestern British Columbia (ARS District 1) for the years 2002 to 2010.

Note: Gibraltar, above is not labelled

2009-10 Directors

President:	David Annis
Vice President:	Alan Campbell
2 nd Vice-President	vacant
Treasurer:	Judeen Henrickson
Secretary:	
at Executive Meetings	David Annis
at General Meetings	Bill Dumont
Members at Large:	Sharon Tillie Jeremy Evans/ Marie Therese Evans Bill Dumont

2009-10 Conveners

Librarian:	vacant
Garden Tours:	Sharon Tillie
Spring Sale:	Peter Lewis
Club Liaison:	Ingeborg Woodsworth
Raffle:	Judeen Henrickson and Hilda Gerrits
Membership:	Sandra Stevenson
Speakers:	Alan Campbell
Tea Coordinator:	Marie Thérèse Evans
Ways and Mean: (vacant)	
Website: (vacant)	
Social:	(vacant)
Historian	Mona Kaiser
Propagation	Alan Campbell
Sunshine	Mary Gale
Editor	Ian E. Efford

A Note on Cuttings

Some meetings ago, I gave a short demonstration about taking cuttings, putting them in a pot and covering them with a plastic bag. This was a way that members taking cuttings for the first time could try their hand at the game. I suggested that the pots should be kept on a windowsill out of direct sunlight or, as someone suggested, on the refrigerator in order to give heat to the root area.

At the last meeting, Bill Dumont said that he had tried and all his cuttings went black and died!

Possible explanations are:

1. The soil used was not sterile, however, there are spores in all air samples so that even with sterile soil infection might occur.
2. The pots were in an area where the temperature was too high. This seems a likely explanation.

I suggest possibly a fungicide spray before the plastic bag is put on and keeping the plants in a warm but not hot location.

Other ideas on this matter are welcome!

Ian E. Efford



Rhododendron dauricum The white form from David Annis' garden and the pink from Ian Efford's.

R. dauricum is one of the earliest rhododendrons to flower usually opening in late January to early February. It is classified in the subsection Rhodorastra, for which there are only two species, the other being *R. mucronulatum*. These two species are very hardy and can grow to be a tall shrub. The two species are found from Eastern Siberia through China, Korea to Japan.

R. dauricum in winter taken from the <http://www.hirsutum.info/index.html>
[see below]



Do you receive the ARS Journal?

If not, please contact our membership secretary, Sandra Stevenson at 748-5570 or pinchofherbs@shaw.ca and she will investigate why there is a problem.

Web sites you must see!

<http://www.hirsutum.info/index.html>

This website contains an infinite amount of information about rhodos that you can search by entering the species or cultivar names.

<http://www.rosebay.org/chapterweb/specdegr.htm>

Interesting information and pictures from the ARS Massachusetts Chapter.