



Newsletter

Volume 24:2 Editor: Ian Efford March 2013

President's Message

Over the next eight weeks we will need members to volunteer for jobs that are essential to the functioning our Society.

First we need people to join the Executive or act as one of the co-ordinators during 2013-14. The jobs are all listed at the back of each newsletter. If you have any interest at all in helping, please let me or Sandra Stevenson know. [I should note that Sandra is away until the end of the second week of March!]. You might wish to take on one of the more active jobs, such as editor, or a small job, such co-ordinating the refreshment team. I have been editor for a number of years and my last issue will be the 25th anniversary special edition which will come out in June. The job is not onerous if you are reasonably well organized and, if necessary, I will not only help in the transition but will offer to prepare one article an issue. I find that being editor is very interesting as I learn a lot by reviewing articles and choosing what to publish. Corresponding with various authors also provides a flow of new information and ideas.

Step up to the plate and volunteer a little of your time in support of your society!

The second volunteer openings come with the Garden Fair, one of our primary sources of income. These jobs take place over two days and can be very small, for example, looking after the coffee and doughnuts, or more important, such as being a cashier or tallying the money. If every member would volunteer for two hours, we would have the job covered. Spouses [Partners] are also welcome. I guarantee that we have a job that would suit you!

A volunteer form will be circulated at the next meeting, please put your name down!

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Coming Events

March 6	Susan and Art Lightburn "China – Part II"
April 3	Ron Long "The Rare and Endangered Plants of Pink Mountain"

President's Message cont'

In the case of the Garden Fair, it looks as if we will have even more vendors than last year as the Fair is becoming an established annual event in the region. To make it a great success, we need to attract as many gardeners as possible, which means that we need you to encourage all your friends to come and, if you tweet, please read the short note in this newsletter which gives you the coordinates to publicize our new Twitter page, prepared by Brenda Dumont.

Sandra is preparing a draft programme for next year with a eclectic mixture of speakers and a little more emphasis on the practical side of gardening and rhododendron culture. If you have any suggestions for potential speakers, please let her know.

We have an excellent library and some very good new books. Do not hesitate to borrow them during our meetings, I am sure you will find them interesting and informative.

The 6th March brings our next speakers, Art and Susan Lightburn who will present the second half of their talk on China. I hope to see you all there and, in the mean time, as the weather warms, it is time to finish the clean up of the garden and begin to enjoy the rhododendrons as they come into bloom. My *R.dauicum*, always a very early bloomer, is the first to flower this year.

Ian E. Efford

25th Anniversary

The society, founded in 1988, should be celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. It is proposed that this takes place on June 22nd at the summer picnic. Maria and Siggi Kemmler have offered their beautiful garden for the event.

It is proposed that we revive the Strawberry Tea Garden Party that was held for a couple of years at Ingeborg Woodworth's Mayo Creek Rhododendron Nursery. This would replace the lunch event that we have held in the past.

We would like to make sure that all past members are invited as well as our District 1 president and past president and the presidents of the other ARS branches on Vancouver Island.

In addition, as editor, I am hoping we will have a special edition of the newsletter in June which will be a commemorative issue with snippets of information from the past and photos of key players

in the history of our society. Please look up old photos or accounts of events so that we can consider them for inclusion.

The Executive welcomes your views on both these issues.

Bus Tour to the US

We are four people short of the numbers needed to break even on the bus tour. If you know of anyone interested in going on this trip, please have them contact **Bill 250-743-9882 or Ian E. Efford 250-597-4470** asap. This tour will visit some very interesting gardens and the price is excellent.

Companion Plants for Rhododendrons

[Heath Family: Ericaceae]

Colleen Forster

What is the ultimate companion for rhododendrons? Why, more rhododendrons of course!

This genus of plants is not only one of the largest, but one of the most diverse on the planet. From the tiniest alpine mounds to the noble giants of the Himalayan forests, the colours, forms, and textures are virtually limitless. The mother lode of the wild forms is southwest Asia, but their range spans much of the northern hemisphere and into Australasia, and includes upwards of 900 species – so far! We owe a great debt to those intrepid plant explorers - Fortune, Wilson, Kingdon-Ward, Hooker, Forest, and others, without whose groundwork we could never experience the wealth of selected forms and hybrids (approaching 10,000 now), that we enjoy today.

Most of us regard rhodos as wonderful spring-flowering plants that embrace nearly every colour of the rainbow except true blue, but I offer you these plants as indispensable foliage accents for the other 11 months of the year. The diversity of colour, form and texture applies equally as well to the leaves as it does to the blooms, and I truly think this feature is much under-emphasized. The blooms open in a blaze of colour, peak within a week or two, fade and wither, and if you're lucky, fall to the ground. But the leaves – well! – they emerge from those tiny buds, unfurling and changing day by day, and instead of withering, they become more glorious, with colours, bracts, indumentum, shine, and fragrance. Pinch off those faded flowers and watch

your rhodos 'bloom' all over again. Close your eyes and use your other senses – fondle the plush, soft, indumented leaves of 'Teddy Bear'; feel the bristles of 'Snow Lady'; smell the spicy resin of the *R. dauricum* hybrids or *R. primuliflorum*; listen to the patter of bright falling leaves of the deciduous azaleas on a fine autumn day. There is so much beauty beyond the blooms, if we only look.



Lem's Cameo

We don't have to be fanatics or connoisseurs to have a wonderful collection, but an understanding of the parent species will guide us to the more interesting hybrids. There are selections available to offer many features – the soft blue leaves of 'Ramapo' and *R. oreotrephes*, the glossy mahogany of 'Lem's Cameo' and *R. williamsianum*; the burgundy red of 'Moser's Maroon' and *R. lutescens*. Indumentum (fuzz on leaves – not a disease!) comes in many forms and colours - from silvery-white to fawn to tan to richest cinnamon. It may be matted or plush velvet, and it may be on the underside only, or both sides, and even on the stems. The influence of *R. yakushimanum*, *bureavii*, *smirnowii*, *rex* and others can be seen in many fine hybrids. The size of the leaves varies from the tiniest *R. complexum* and *nivale*, to the massive tropical foliage of *R. sinogrande* ; and the shapes go from the perky round leaves of *R. orbiculare* and *thomsonii* to the long narrow leaves of *R. makinoi* and *roxianum*. To prepare lists of the ones with all these features would take a book in itself. I suggest you take a cold rainy evening or two, sit in a comfy chair with a good pot of tea, pick up your best rhodo book,



R. primuliforme

cover up the bright coloured flowers and find the magic of the leaves!

Next spring, in June when nearly all the flowers are finished, cruise the plant centers and public gardens and start your shopping all over again. You won't be sorry. Happy Planting!



R. rex ssp fictolacteam var miniforme

Ed. photos added to this article were taken from <http://www.hirsutum.info/>

More on Trees and Bushes as Companion Plants

Ian E. Efford

Bernie Dinter gave an excellent review of the role flowering trees and bushes in complementing our rhododendrons and providing diverse colours to our gardens throughout every month of the year. Our own garden contains a number of the examples that he recommended - *Styrax*, *Stewartia*, *Davidia*, *Magnolia sieboldii* and *Cornus kousa* and *nuttallii*. These are doing well although some of the smaller plants are prone to deer nibbling off the tops of the leaders. Our *Stewartia*, in particular suffered such a fate with the result that we have a rather large bush which we hope will develop a leader and grow into a large tree over time.

These have been planted in the garden with a simple design principle, for every flower bed there should

***Koelreuteria paniculata* - Golden Rain Tree**

Our Society bus tour to the northern part of Vancouver Island took us to Filberg Park. One of the most spectacular trees in that park was a graceful Golden Rain Tree. What does one do? - admire it, photograph it, or, as a couple of members did, reach up and take a handful of the distinctive seed pods. The seeds obtained resulted in four seedlings of which two survive. Mine is growing well in the garden although, again, the leader was eaten by deer despite the wire protective netting around the plant [the new netting is taller!]. It will take some time to grow into a large tree and I hope to be around during part of that time but it is satisfying to know that the cost was \$0.

be a different flowering tree which will develop into a shade tree. This tree will provide various degrees of shade for the five rhododendrons in that bed depending on the time of day. The rhododendrons are planted at least five or six foot apart. I know that some of our experts plant them much closer, even as close as 2ft, and move them as they grow too large for the location but I have not reached that density requirements at this time.

For most of us purchasing more than a few trees at \$100 each is a significant cost. All is not lost, however, and I would like to give some examples of alternative methods of acquiring some of the most interesting specimens.

***Haletia carolina* - Snowdrop Tree**

Another garden tour took us to Moe and Johanna Massa garden in Sooke where we saw a beautiful example of *Haletia* with its hanging bell flowers. Later, at a propagation meeting, Moe made available a large number of the seed. I treated 300 of these seeds to various regimes including some period of freezing and refrigeration, etc. Eventually, after a year or so, a few seed germinated and one survived to be planted out in the garden. It is now four foot high and growing well although prone to develop braches from the bottom of the main stem. I am removing these in the hope that the tree will grow quite quickly. Total cost \$0.

Azara

In visiting the garden of an earlier club speaker, Bill Terry, to see his *Meconopsis* garden in flower, I saw a plant that I have never seen before. Do any members grow it? *Azara* is a large bush from Chile with beautiful orange flowers which, in the absence of petals, are formed from bunches of the brightly coloured stamens. I asked for a branch but our trip back from Sechelt took a couple of days as we visited Paul Wurz's Hidden Acres Rhododendron Garden in Campbell River on the way. The cuttings were planted but did not do too well and eventually died. On contacting Bill, he said that he would be driving through Duncan in a week or so and would bring another branch. We stood in the parking lot of Thrifty's as they turned off the Trans-Canada drove into the parking lot, handed over the branch, waved and drove away. Three cuttings from this material did root and should grow into plant able size later this summer. Again, cost \$0.

Grevillea victoriae - Royal or Mountain Gevillia

In the same garden, Bill has another large bush of one of the Australian *Grevillea*, in this case with small red flowers that form a colourful brush. *G. victoriae* is a particularly good example of this genus as it is hardy and can live on mountains where it experiences snow and cold. The branch that we obtained from Bill's small tree was hardier than the *Azara* and made it home, survived the cutting and rooting stages and is now growing quite well in pots in the greenhouse. In fact, over the last couple of months, some of the plants are actually flowering although at 6 inches in height with only one or two flowers they cannot be said to be spectacular quite just yet! Once these are in an exposed sunny spot in the garden the cost will have been \$0 and some will end up in some other gardens in the Valley.



Flowering Grevillea victoriae cuttings

Sophora -Kowhai

My last example is *Sophora*, a tree in the pea family [Fabaceae] that is very common in both in the wild and in parks and gardens in New Zealand. I understand that it is considered the national tree of the country by many of the population although the spectacular New Zealand Christmas tree, Pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*) also claims the title. *Sophora* is obviously hardy as it is found covered in large yellow pea-like flowers throughout the country but also in the southern part of the south island where the climatic conditions are not unlike that on Vancouver Island. I understand, however, that it is best planted out after it is two years old as the young plants are sensitive to the cold. A few seeds of this tree came into my hands and two have germinated and now seem healthy although still small. Again, these might be planted out in late May 2014.

I am not against buying flowering trees from nurseries to complement our rhododendron collections, but, snatching opportunities to obtain cutting material or seed from new or unusual examples and is quite exciting when one succeeds. In fact, getting a couple of seeds to germinate out of 300 is a little like winning the lottery and seeing them grow to viable plants is a real joy. Most of these plants will not reach full maturity until I am well past it but with any luck they will be admired and appreciated by future gardeners. These beautiful trees will also provide shade to the surrounding rhododendrons in the flower beds. The fact that they cost nothing makes them even more special.



Sophora flowering in the street in Queenstown, New Zealand

Points of Interest

Laura Grant, the Executive Director of ARS, sends the following message:

If any members wish to view the Journal online only and stop receiving hard copy, please let me know. With the most recent increase in postage rates, it would help if many members would choose this option.

Instructions:

1. Access the ARS Office website:

www.arsoffice.org

2. Click on "View Journal American Rhododendron Society online edition 3. If you

already have a username and password, click on "login". If you do not have a username and password, click on "Register Now" and follow instructions for obtaining them online.

Connie Kline, Convention Registrar, ARS 2013 convention in Seattle:

Could you remind their members, that the convention registration forms need to be postmarked no later than 2/28/13 if they want to take advantage of the lower registration rate. It should also be noted that payment for the Seattle convention can be made in Canadian dollars which will eliminate the cost of conversion.

Corrections

I apologize for two errors that appeared in the November newsletter.

1. The co-chairs of the 2015 conference in Victoria will be Lois Blackmore and Calvin Parsons. In the newsletter Ken Webb was accidentally named instead of Calvin.

2. With reference to the award to Garth Wedermire, it was inadvertently stated that he received the Silver Medal of the ARS. In fact, the award citation stated:

"The ARS Chapters of District One take great pleasure in presenting the District Award of Exceptional Contribution to **GARTH WEDEMIRE** for your many contributions to the District over three decades. Your previously awarded medals and

accolades speak to your expertise in many fields such as propagation, judging and computer software that has been significant at the District level. As our webmaster you greatly facilitate communication with the District Chapters. You are a talented, enthusiastic speaker who has given countless memorable presentations over the years. In doing so, you provide encouragement in your quiet caring way to our members. Your love of photography that you share with others is inspirational. Thank you for sharing your passion and your active ongoing support of District One activities."

Garth will also receive the \$20 pure silver coin with the pink rhododendron and Swarovski crystals from the Canadian mint.

Ian E. Efford, Editor

Truss Shows

In the Winter 2013 issue of the ARS Journal there was an article by Bruce Feller which stated that almost all branches of ARS have truss shows. The article says that they are “the most popular and exciting event for many society members - exhibitors and spectators alike”. The author also “encourages participation in Flower Shows, both for the social elements involved and so that you may further enjoy the results reflecting your successful efforts in the garden”.

CVRS certainly had truss shows in the past but they died out apparently because of the long, complicated process of judging. It is also felt that the members were less interested in the competitive process than the flowers themselves. Having watched the cut throat competition in at iris meetings in the United States, I certainly agree with that sentiment and refuse to take part in any flower competition.

Unfortunately, in the process, we lost the other aspect which was the display of beautiful flowers

during the season. I suggest that we should re-established a truss display at our meetings where members bring a few of the best trusses in the garden that month, so people can see the range of flowers and the way the season varies across the Cowichan Valley. Alan Campbell has just said that he has four rhodos in flower this week and I have one. The season is a little earlier down in Shawnigan Lake than in Duncan.

So bring your trusses along, named if possible but if not someone might be able to put a name to your plant.

Another article in the same issue of the journal says that a public choice vote on the best trusses proves to be exciting for non-rhododendron enthusiasts and might attract new members. Could we instigate such a voting system at our display of flowers at the Garden Fair? We need someone to coordinate such and activity.

Ian E. Efford

Problems with Ants!

‘If’ writes an old herbalist “you stamp lupins and therewith rub around the bottom or lower parts of any tree, no ants or pismires will go up and touch the same tree” [I started to look up ‘pismeres’ in the dictionary, to provide a scholarly footnote, but decided that I would sooner retain my own fantasy image of a fabulous monster like those in a

mediaeval bestiary, all the more terrible for being only an eighth of an inch long. Then a sense of academic duty prevailing, I did look it up; and all it said was ‘ant’.

From “old Wives’ Lore for Gardeners” Maureen and Bridget Boland 1976.

SOME OLD ENGLISH PROVERBS

A rhododendron set in lime, looks like a curate doing time.

The wildest dreams of Kew Come true In Katmandu.

One years seeds Seven years weeds.

CVRS is now in the Facebook era!

www.facebook.com/cowichanvalleygardenfair

Brenda Dumont has been kind enough to prepare a Facebook page for the Garden Fair. She says that we can start publicizing this in the CVRS newsletter, on both website, and any other place we can think of. All members who have Facebook accounts should help to publicize the Garden Fair as this is a simple way to promote our activities.

Brenda says that people need to know that the Garden Fair has a Facebook page and what the web address is (Facebook's search engine is the greatest). She has been directing people to the Facebook page through the Twitter account, but additional distribution is required.

It is NOT good enough for print to put just the Facebook icon. You also need to put /cowichanvalleygardenfair. Of course, online all you need is the Facebook icon along with the above link to the page.



ANNUAL

Vancouver
Island
Heather
Society

HEATHER SALE

Saturday, March 30, 2013
Cobble Hill Farmers' Institute
3550 Watson Avenue
Cobble Hill, B.C.
10:00 - 12:00 (or until sold out)

Exciting new introductions for 2013 will include
winter-blooming heaths, summer blooming heathers,
spring tips and starter kits.

For detailed information:
www.bcheathersociety.org



2012-2013

Executive

Past President: David Annis

President: Ian Efford

(efford@shaw.ca 250597-4470)

Vice President: Sandra Stevenson

(pinchofherbs@shaw.ca 250-748-557)

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: vacant

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: vacant

Garden Tours: Alan Murray

Plant Sale: the team

Facility Liason: Roy Elvins

Christmas Party: The team

Publicity: vacant

**Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society
Programme 2012-2013**

**7:30 pm at St John's Anglican Church
163 First St, Duncan, BC V9L 1R1
(1St and Jubilee)**

September 5	By popular demand, the evening will be devoted to a panel answering members questions about any aspect of rhododendron cultivation, hybridization, etc
October 3	Carmen Varcoe will present a talk on Bhutan, which is located in the centre of the natural distribution of rhododendrons.
November 7	Garth Wedemire will present "Rhododendrons and Azaleas in North Carolina"
December 5	The Christmas Dinner
January 9	Ian E. Efford "Exploring New Zealand Gardens" - Note, this is a CV Garden Club meeting. All CVRS members are invited.
February 6	Bernie Dinter "Colour in the Garden Year 'Round"
March 6	Susan and Art Lightburn "China Part II"
April 3	Ron Long "The Rare and Endangered Plants of Pink Mountain"
May 1	Joan B. Gibb "Dominion Brook Park Rhododendron Garden"
May 4	Garden Fair
June 22	Summer Picnic