



# NEWSLETTER

Volume 19: 4

Editor: Ian E. Efford

May 2008

## From the Editor

This is the last newsletter of the season, the next will be in September. I should explain the long article on virellas. They are grown in abundance in Australia and more and more in California. It is a group of rhododendrons with some of the most beautiful colour of all flowers. Generally, it is assumed that they are tropical but, after visiting Glen Jamieson's garden in the Parksville, I learned that he grows them in a greenhouse but has then outside most of the spring and summer. Members should consider growing a few as the increased average temperature will likely make the valley more hospitable to these jewels of the plant world.

## Plant Sale

- This Saturday 10am-2pm
- Come and bring a friend
- volunteers need for set-up 4-6pm
- Friday 2<sup>nd</sup>
- and, for clean-up 2-4pm Saturday
- Trusses wanted for show on Friday or early Saturday.
- Use masking tape to attach names to stem if known.
- Bring other plants for sale at our society table.
- Questions? Phone me at 246-1453.
- **Still need storage for truss stands.**

## What's Coming Up

May 3<sup>rd</sup>: 10am-2.00pm The plant sale at Queen of Angels School at the junction of Maple Bay Road and Tzouhalem Road.

**May 7<sup>th</sup>. 7.30pm The speaker will be Ingeborg Woodsworth on "Mother Nature's Handmaiden"**

May 14<sup>th</sup> 7.30pm Executive Meeting

May 20<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday at 6.00pm Three gardens are open for visitors with tea and cookies. See details below.

June 7<sup>th</sup> 12.30. **Society Pot-Luck Picnic** at Maria and Siggie Kemmler's home 3730 Gibbins Road, Duncan. More information to follow.

## Congratulations from ARS

The ARS has awarded our Chapter the "Outstanding Achievement Award" and sent congratulations to our President, Ingeborg, and all our members for teamwork and dedication by working toward membership development. You have accomplished the highest chapter growth in your category, two years in a row.

## The Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

A Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

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

## THE GARDEN TOURS

### Leslie Drew's Garden

Sometimes it seems that the garden my husband and I started here on a ridge in Sahtlam district in 1981 can best be described as a demonstration plot – an example of how and where not to plant rhododendrons. Because they're in heavy clay, several the old plantings are small in leaf and flower, and should have been moved or refurbished long ago. A few others are badly in need of shelter from the intense summer sun. "One of these days ..." as the old song goes.

Looking around, I'm always amazed that some are doing as well as they are, considering the abuse they've had. And the way some rhodos reshape themselves after being accidentally planted in the right place, like the old R. 'Vulcan' that was only half a bush when planted in 1982 and is now completely circular.

Another that has done well is the lovely soft-yellow-flowered species R. litiense that we got as a tiny plant from Peter Kearns in 1989 and is now five feet high. After two moves, at last it's happy, very happy, never gets any fertilizer, but needs lots of water in a hot summer.

Same with the Loderi King George – they took two shifts out of clay and the removal of conifer competitors to start reaching skyward.

The rhodos and I welcome visitors

### Sharon Tillie and Ruth Ker Gardens

Living side by side has been an advantage for Sharon Tillie and Ruth Ker to indulge in their general mutual plant obsession and in particular their love for Rhododendrons.

Ruth's pride and joy is a ten foot tall rhodie appropriately named Hallelujia and when viewed stimulates the unsuspecting admirer to burst into song with the refrain from Beethoven's ninth. A prize for the person who can sing the whole thing!!

Sharon's 'pride of place' is the species rhodo *calaphytum*, however, this rhodo started blooming on March 16, 2008 and it is doubtful that there will be any of the spectacular huge pink blooms left in May. However one can be satisfied by admiring the beautiful form and lovely large leaves.

There is much more to be seen at these gardens in progress (aren't they all?) Please join us on Tuesday May 20th, tea and goodies included at Sharon's.

Note: Park on the road outside 4373 Sunrise Road and walk down the driveway. Sharon and Ruth's driveway are connected; it's flat.

**Handicapped members can drive right down to the house.**

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**Which Rhododendrons are Good For Growing in Containers?**

Norman Todd

I grow thousands of rhododendrons in containers — black ones — for selling; and I hate them. I don't know why some understanding entrepreneur does not come out with a light coloured plastic pot. If the summer sun beats on black pots the soil

can reach sterilization temperatures and cook the roots.

So a good rule in selecting a container is to choose a light toned one. Glazed ceramic pots are good especially if of some thickness to provide some insulation for the plant's roots. Wooden ones are good too but not if the wood is treated with a phytotoxic preservative. An effective way to keep cool roots is to place a pot within a pot and fill the space with perlite or some other heat protecting material.

Many growers start out growing a small leafed rhododendron as a bonsai. The classic forms and protocol of bonsai growing intrigues my mind and I have a couple of books on the subject. I have sat in on a few lectures, but I am woefully inept at following the discipline. Still, I have a few "bonsais" at the back door and they give me a lot of pleasure. They don't have 100-year-old gnarled trunks; they are not even of kindergarten age; they are still in day-care. Still, they are very satisfying. Occasionally, one can find an old misshapen plant in a nursery that can be pruned and wired to give a geriatric look.

There is a growing interest among some rhododendron fanciers in trying their hand with some of the Madenia. These are the semi-tropical ones, many of which are wonderfully fragrant. *Rs. edgworthii*, *rhabdotum*, *crassum*, 'Else Frye', 'Fragrantissimum' are all good candidates. I have an 80 cm. 'Heaven Scent' that is just 80 cm. away from this computer that must have 100 flower

buds. I have to admit that the pot, though still almost portable stayed where it was through last winter when we had the coldest temperature (-9°C) we have ever experienced in the 30 years we have been in this place. My laziness overcame my common sense and I did not move it to a protected place and it did loose half its flower buds, but the smelly show was still worthwhile.

Some of the Madenia get really tall and as a lot of them are epiphytic in nature growing like orchids in the crotches of tree branches they tend to be open leggy plants so they do respond to some pruning. Do this early in the year so the dormant growth buds can break and grow and perhaps develop a flower bud. I have found that 'Mi Amor' breaks readily from the older wood.

The Japanese are of course the masters on container growing and many of their prized azalea trophy plants are hundreds of years old. At the Regional Conference at Harrison Hot Springs two years ago they had a workshop on bonsai. All those who attended came home with an azalea in a bonsai pot. Mine was certainly cruelly mistreated and ended up being shaped like a haggis but it is a treasure.

The Lapponica are good candidates for containers. Mounds of *impeditum* or *fastigiatum* arranged on a stairway look wonderful. Strangely, a plant most find somewhat challenging to grow in the ground — *campylogynum* ssp *myrtilloides* — does very well in a container. Its larger cousin — *campylogynum* ssp *celsum* —

performs equally well and is easier to bloom. Both are absolutely choice.

There is no shortage of material. The smallest garden or a balcony can become a veritable Eden with a few bums and a couple of twisted freaks. Of course there is a draw- back. They have to be watered in the summer. In very hot weather maybe even twice a day But so have we and one regime is to think of the plants when you fill your own glass.

### **What are Vireyas, and how to culture them.**

Glen Jamieson

Vireyas are a taxonomic group of rhododendrons that grow mostly in mountainous regions in tropical island countries in south-east Asia, including Indonesia, the Philippines, Malayasia and Papua New Guinea. A few species grow on the Asian mainland in Vietnam, China, Myanmar, and India. Of the 900 or so species in the Genus *Rhododendron*, about one-third are in the Section *Vireya* (Figure 1). The term vireya was created by Carl Blume in 1826 to honour his friend Julian Joseph Virey, and this name continues to be used for this section of the genus *Rhododendron*.

The number of species recorded growing in countries and on each of the main islands and island groups within south-east Asia are given in the following map:

In the wild, the majority of vireya species are found growing in tropical areas at elevations between 1000- 2500 m. In cool montane forests, many species grow as epiphytes, often high in trees where there more light is available to them than on the forest floor. In such habitats, morning sunshine often gives way to afternoon cloud cover followed by rain. Higher still, in more open areas, other species can be found growing terrestrially at heights of up to 4000 m.

Although the first live vireyas were introduced to Europe in 1845, both a lack of roads and malaria prevented serious exploration for them until after 1945. Since then, expansion of regional air travel and discovery of antibiotics has opened the equatorial regions up to plant hunters. By the 1960s, almost 300 species of vireyas had been identified, and hundreds of hybrids are now available.

### **Growing Vireyas**

Vireyas range in size from small-leaved plants that grow to only about 15 cm in diameter to large-leaved forms that can exceed 2-3 m in height if not pinched back. Some varieties can be “leggy”, but all take pruning well and can easily be controlled in size.

Vireyas can be planted in outside gardens where freezing does not occur; where it does occur, vireyas need to be sheltered during cold periods, as most will die if frozen. However, they are cool-growing plants best grown outside, and do not grow well with central heating if continuously grown inside as houseplants or with orchids in heated greenhouses.



R. stenophyllum

The root systems of vireyas consist of fine roots, and because in the wild their habitats often dry out regularly, they prefer a well-draining growing medium. If grown in the ground, they do well in raised beds, and if grown in pots, should not be over-watered.



R. Aleksandr

They grow well when pot-bound, and a typical growing medium is equal portions of coarse peat, coarse Perlite and orchid bark in a well-draining pot. Dappled light, rather than full sunlight, is recommended to avoid summer heating, to minimize leaf burn if watering is infrequent and to lengthen flower life spans. Vireyas, like most rhododendrons, do not require heavy fertilizing, and should be fertilized with a balanced mix at a concentration about half that used for other plants.



R. beyerinickianum

Vireyas are relatively easy to propagate, and most can be readily propagated from cuttings. Individual nodes can be rooted successfully by cutting leaves in half, scraping the lower portion of the stem to

expose the cambium, applying a rooting hormone, and then providing 20 C. bottom heat in a moist environment. A good rooting medium is milled sphagnum and perlite.

For further information, see [www.rhododendron.org](http://www.rhododendron.org) and [www.vireya.net](http://www.vireya.net) or Argent, G. 2006. Rhododendrons of Subgenus Vireya. Royal Horticultural Society: 362 p.

Dr. Glen Jamieson, past president of the Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society, has been championing the culture of vireyas in Canada for the last decade. He has about 120 vireya species and hybrids.

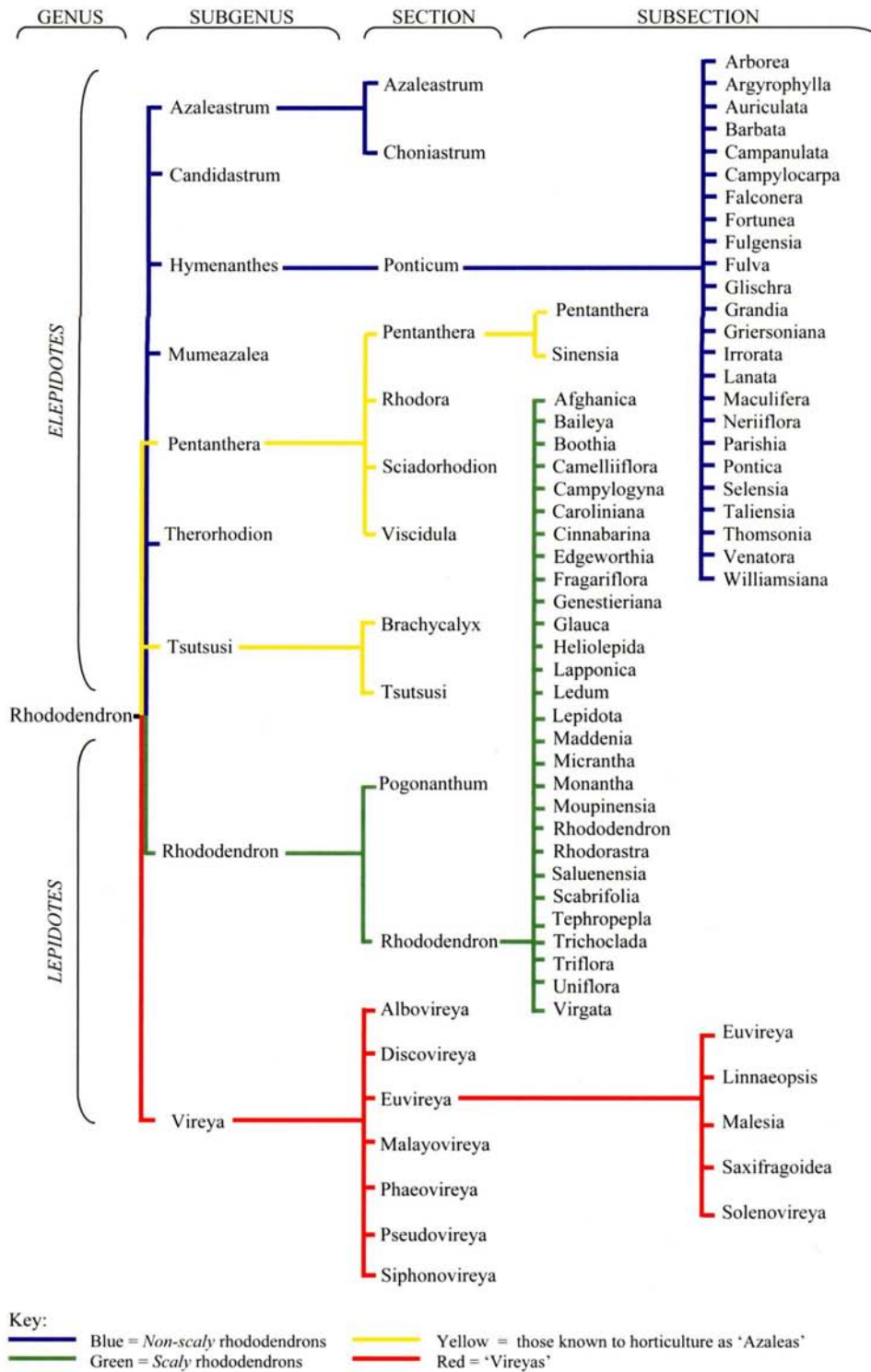
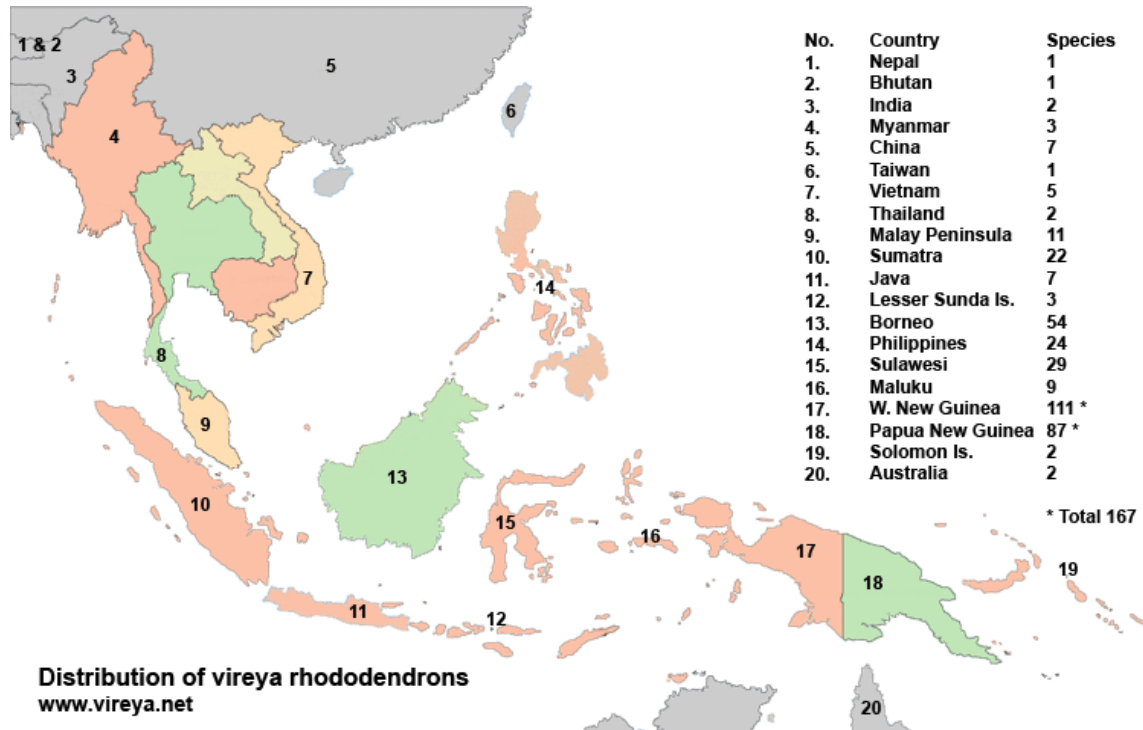


Figure 1: Taxonomic structure of the genus *Rhododendron* (Argent et al. 2006).q





### June Picnic

2. Saturday, June 7, 2008

Arrive at Noon, Lunch at 12:30 p.m.

Location: Maria and Siggie Kemmler’s lovely garden at **3730 Gibbins Rd.** The house number sign is up on a telephone pole which you can easily see if coming from the direction of Cowichan District Hospital. From the hospital you travel 2.8 km. then turn left down the lane to the Kemmler’s.

This is going to be an old fashioned potluck. Whatever food arrives we will eat and enjoy. The club will provide coffee and tea, punch, napkin and paper plates. **Please bring your own cutlery and cups.** It is recommended that you bring your own lawn chair. If you have any questions please contact:

Janet Gardner, Picnic Convener Phone: 748-1867 or e-mail at [jangardner@shaw.ca](mailto:jangardner@shaw.ca)

### President's Message

Greetings to all you busy gardeners!

Hopefully you have not had too much damage after that last snowfall. My poor rhodos took a severe beating from that one, 6 inches of heavy snow. Many plants will have to be given extra TLC. We shall have a discussion about that at the picnic.

Most importantly, did you remember to 'pot up' some plants for the club's plant table? This Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> is our PLANT SALE at Queen of Angels School. Please, do give a hand! This year we shall even have coffee and home-baked goodies as early as 8:00 am thanks to my wonderful friends, the members of Lake Cowichan's Community in Bloom.

That brings me to the Memorial Rhododendron Park in Lake Cowichan's Grand Opening on Saturday, May 17<sup>th</sup>. Please, do contact me if you are able to attend and/or help with the reception. I have sent two hundred invitations to rhododendron chapters and enthusiasts of the species that have expressed interest in this Memorial Rhododendron Park. It is a two-day event. On Sunday, May 18<sup>th</sup> we will enjoy a guided tour to private gardens in the area to view some 80 year old rhododendrons besides many other splendid plantings.

Looking forward to see you on Saturday at the Plant Sale.

Ingeborg

April Rose in Al and Liz Murray's Garden photographed by Nancy Breeze



# Memorial Rhododendron Park

## Grand Opening



## in Lake Cowichan, B.C.

Saturday, May 17th, 2008,

12:00 pm

Point Ideal Rd., next to *Info Centre*

‘BRINGING BACK OUR  
RHODODENDRON HERITAGE’

This is your first invitation  
to the  
**Grand Opening**  
Of the Memorial Rhododendron Park  
At Lake Cowichan, Vancouver Island,  
British Columbia

Reception to follow Grand Opening

Bringing back our rhododendron heritage  
through  
Garden Tours, Presentations  
And much more

Part of our town's **Annual Heritage Days**,

A three day event

May 16, 17 & 18

For further information on town of Lake  
Cowichan Days program please contact  
Katherine at Cowichan Lake District Chamber of  
Commerce and Visitor Centre (250)749-3244 or  
[info@cowichanlake.ca](mailto:info@cowichanlake.ca) Website:  
[www.cowichanlakecc.ca](http://www.cowichanlakecc.ca)

RSVP Ingeborg Woodsworth (250)749-6291

or [MayoCreekGardens@shaw.ca](mailto:MayoCreekGardens@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 & Peter Lewis
Members-at-Large:	Bill Dumont Leslie Bundon Sharon Tillie Jeremy & Marie Terese Evans
Ex-Officio	Alan Campbell

**2008 Conveners**

Garden Tours	Anne Slabey
Historian	Susan Stitt
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

**Note:**

I am still having trouble learning how to format the newsletter. In particular, finished pages “jump” around and sections “disappear”. Also, the file size is far too large and I would like advice on reducing it.

Any help would be appreciated after the 20<sup>th</sup> May.

IEE

**George Fraser Day  
& Heritage Fair  
Saturday, May 24, 2008**

- **10:30 am: Welcome Ceremony  
Bench Unveiling at George Fraser  
Memorial Park** (Corner of Main St. & Fraser Lane)
  - **10:45-11:45 am: Garden Tour  
Interpretative walk from Fraser Lane to ‘George Fraser Gardens’-the first memorial garden dedicated in 1993 by BC Chapters of the American Rhododendron Society & the Ucluelet and Area Historical Society** (Peninsula Rd. by Ucluelet Schools)
  - **11:45-12 pm: Special Dedication  
Honourary presentation in memory of the late Bob Sinclair, rhododendron propagator & owner of former ‘Misty Garden’ nursery in Ucluelet** (GFraser Gardens, Peninsula Rd.)
- 12 pm: Fraser Day Lunch  
Specials: Ukee Dogs Eatery** (Corner of Fraser Lane & Helen Rd.)  
**Cynamoka Coffee House** (1536 Peninsula Rd.)  
Both are in close walking distance to UAC Hall
- **1pm-4pm: Heritage Fair, UAC Hall** (1510 Peninsula Rd.)  
**Admission: \$2.00**  
**Historical Exhibits, Silent Auction, Coombs Old Time Fiddlers, Door Prizes, Refreshments, Guest Speakers, Plant Sale, Power Point Presentation of ‘George Fraser Project’ & More...**

**Everyone welcome!**

**Please join us for this special event to enjoy a day of West Coast heritage, hospitality & fun in “Friendly Ucluelet”**

**Contacts for More Information-**

Email: [gfraserproject@hotmail.com](mailto:gfraserproject@hotmail.com)

Wanda McAvoy, Fraser Day Event

Coordinator 250-726-7459

Dave McIntosh, Heritage Fair Director

250-726-4308