



# NEWSLETTER

Volume 22:5 Editor: Ian E. Efford May 2011

## President's Message

If we thought February and March weren't very good for weather when we were in the middle of those months, April hasn't been much better, has it? Sure, there might have been a day or two throughout the month where we were teased into thinking it was going to get warmer only to find that the next several days were cold and wet. At least the weather has got all of us talking about something else rather than the election!

Our plant sale is coming off on Saturday. It will be similar to past sales in many ways but will have some interesting differences that 'the team' hopes will create some public interest and generate more purchases. This year's event will be a 'trial' of bigger things to come in the future. The success of the sale depends on all members of the club. This sale is our major fund raiser and the funds earned pay for all the expenses we incur throughout the rest of the year. As I write this message, I still have jobs that need to be filled and I will be working on that in the next few days.

The month of May is usually busy with lots of events. You should find the speaker at the meeting really interesting as he talks about his China trip. May also brings us tours of member's gardens. Sharon Tillie has been rounding up a list of gardens that are going to be opened for viewing during some of the weekday evenings. Can we tour your garden?

Bill Dumont has organized the Bus Tour to the Fraser Valley for the club. He has several gardens for you to see and has arranged for you to stay in Harrison so you can enjoy the pools at the hot springs. Those of you that have been on Bill's tours before know that he does a great job. The June picnic is being set for Saturday, June 11<sup>th</sup>. The venue will be Mary Gale's ocean-front garden in Mill Bay. (Thank you Mary for saying 'yes' to my request). It is usually warm enough for a picnic by that time of the year, but knowing this spring, who knows. We have a month and a half of praying that the weather will be good for this annual event.

See you at the sale.

David Annis

### IMPORTANT PLANT SALE REMINDERS

- Bring trusses to the hall between 4-8 this Friday night or before 9.20 the next morning
- Members may pre-select plants before the sale by putting them in the holding area before 9.20am Saturday
- If you have a four-wheeled trolley, bring it to the sale to help with plant moving on Friday and Saturday.
- Tag it with your name.

## Coming Events

**April 30, Saturday**  
10 am – 2 pm  
The Plant Sale  
Cowichan Exhibition  
Grounds

**May 4, Wednesday**  
7:30 pm  
"Six and a Half Weeks in  
China: The Gardens and the  
People"  
Art and Susan Lightburn

**May 13-14**  
The Society Bus Tour -  
The Fraser Valley  
[A few seats remain  
available - call Bill Dumont  
at 250-743-9882  
immediately if you want to  
join the tour. Those already  
registered must pay the  
balance owing by May 4 or  
mail cheque to 1753 Peerless  
Road, Cobble hill V0R 1L6]

**May 22, Sunday**  
Nanaimo Rhododendron  
Society Garden Tour  
[See earlier edition of the  
newsletter]  
**Note: Tickets will be  
available at the May 4  
meeting**

**June 11, Saturday**  
The Society Picnic at Mary  
Gale's 2895 Church Way  
Mill Bay [Details to follow]

## From the Editor

This issue contains another article in the series on Island public gardens with interesting rhododendron collections. This garden, Dominion Brook Park, is of particular interest as it contains some very old plants that came from the original seed collections of some species. As it is right beside the airport at Sydney, it is easy to visit when collecting someone at the airport!

Another garden is the Playfair Park one which already has had two previous articles but this time there is a collage of photos taken by our president, David Annis. I have five more gardens to go in the series with a total of about 25. These latter gardens are becoming more difficult as experts on these gardens promise articles but do not write them!

I am sorry that in the last issue of the newsletter *Rhododendron anwheiense* was printed without the first “e”, a mistake that I passed on from the source of the picture.

As we are at the height of rhododendron flowering [or would be if the weather would warm up a little] I wish you happy garden visits and a peaceful summer. I will return in late August with the next issue.

Ian E. Efford ([efford@shaw.ca](mailto:efford@shaw.ca))

## A Very Useful Report

In reviewing information on the Washington State University website, I came across a reference which looks as if it would be very useful to our members. I suggest you have a look for yourselves.

### A Guide to Root Weevil Control for the Earth-Friendly Gardener

Antonelli Art; Byther R.S.; Collman, S.J.; Davidson, A.D.; and Maleike, R.R. How to Identify Rhododendron and Azalea Problems. WSU Extension Bulletin # EB1229.

<http://king.wsu.edu/gardening/MGCD/WSUEB/EB1229.pdf>

A view of the Himalayas taken from Darjeeling with a magnificent rhododendron in the foreground.



*Photograph submitted by Joan B. Gibbs, 2010*

## Dominion Brook Park: A Place to Visit in Sydney

Joan B. Gibbs

Dominion Brook Park is a unique 11 acre park on the Saanich Peninsula created by the Canadian Department of Agriculture as a public demonstration arboretum and ornamental garden. The land was cleared in 1912 and immediately readied for planting under the direction of W.T. Macoun, Dominion Horticulturist, son of the world famous botanist, John Macoun.

Plant material was ordered from well-known nurseries in Britain, France, Holland, Germany, Japan and the USA. We are fortunate to have the original 1913 invoices as well as detailed record cards of each plant with Latin name, common name, source, location and information on growth and mortality due to such things as weather or even if stolen. These detailed records reveal fascinating information about individual trees and shrubs, e.g. our European Beech was grown from seed collected at Flanders and planted in the Park in 1922.

Quite by chance, one of CVRSs members, the late Bill Dale, gave me a copy of a letter from Dr. C.S. Sargent (that Sargentii ) to George Fraser, Ucluelet, from the Arnold Arboretum, Boston, mentioning rhododendrons and ornamentals grown from seed collected in Western China by the renowned plant hunter, Ernest 'Chinese' Wilson and sent to the Farm. We have been able to identify survivors from this original planting.

Of the hundreds of species planted over the last 99 years, many have not survived but an amazing number have grown to maturity. Our pride and joy is the collection of mature conifers. There are three of the eight



1912 Land clearing team  
*Photograph from the Sydney Archives.*

rhododendrons ordered from Barbier Nursery, Orleans, France (1913) still thriving: *R. onsloviaenum*, *R. William Gladstone* and *R. Alexander Adie*.

Not only were the plant selections exciting, the layout of the Park was masterly landscaped in the variation of terrain which combines, glades, dells and vistas with ponds and pools with extensive stonework and of course, Dominion Brook.



*R. strigillosum* grown from seed collected by Ernest Wilson in Western China  
*Photograph from the Sydney Archives*

During the years when DBP was meticulously maintained by Experimental Farm staff, the Park was a popular place for family and community events and as such played an important role in the social history of the Peninsula. When federal funding for maintenance ceased in the early 1980s, the unique plantings began to disappear under ivy and blackberry. Fortunately, a citizens group created a volunteer non-profit society called "Friends of Dominion Brook Park Society" in 2000 which now has over 200 members. In July, 2009, the District of North Saanich negotiated a stewardship agreement with the Federal Government and the Friends with a 25 year lease with an option for a further 25 years.

This cooperative effort between citizens, municipal and federal governments has led to an extraordinary rebirth of the old Park. Since field work began in 2001, volunteers have contributed over 7000 hours of clean up and rehabilitation work along with the input of the District of North Saanich and Centre for Plant Health (formerly Dominion Experimental Farm). The volunteer work has progressed to the point of allowing the Society to begin a planting program to enhance the remaining material. We have in the last three years planted over 100 trees or



shrubs. Many of which were donated. Our biggest undertaking which would be of the most interest to CVRS members is the restoration and rehabilitation of the Rhodo Ravine. This once magnificent site has been overrun by noxious growth with the deterioration of the brook and pathways to the detriment of the rhododendron collection. We are having the 1950-60s planted rhododendrons professional pruned in anticipation of further engineering/hardscaping work and re-establishment of the Rhodo Ravine.

The first phase of the Rhodo Ravine Project with the conceptual landscape and engineering design and preliminary construction cost estimates has been completed. We are going forward with Phase 2, detail design, specification and tender document preparation as monies allow.



Dominion Brook Park has been part of Peninsula history from its inception when the B.C. Electric Railway stopped at the bottom of the Park and brought large groups for outings. It has a marvellous collection of plant material and mature specimens seen only in this Park. Today, the Park's popularity continues to grow with increasing numbers of visitors enjoying its unique character.

This park is very close to Victoria Airport and can be visited before or after meeting visitors. The park is alongside the federal Centre for Plant Health, 8801 Saanich Rd E, North Saanich, BC V8L 1H3 just south of the airport. In addition, individuals or groups tour available by contacting [contactus@dominionbrookpark.ca](mailto:contactus@dominionbrookpark.ca) or Joan Gibbs at [ibbjb@shaw.ca](mailto:ibbjb@shaw.ca) or 250-656-4185.

<http://houseoforange.biz/dominionbrookpark.ca/newsletter26.pdf>







Mrs. G. W. Leak

## Mulch - Another View

The Telegraph had an interesting article on mulch which support view expressed by Linda Chandler-Scott in the last issue of the newsletter. It is well worth reading. All-in-all, the conclusion that can be drawn from a number of articles is that rather than spend money on fertilizers, weed control chemicals, etc. it is far better for your pocket and for the plants if on focuses on heavy mulching of our gardens always remembering to keep a space around the actual stem of the rhododendrons.

[http://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/gardeningadvice/8390418/Mulch-the-great-cover-story.html?sms\\_ss=email&at\\_xt=4d8a1e8ca182ac2c%2C0](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/gardeningadvice/8390418/Mulch-the-great-cover-story.html?sms_ss=email&at_xt=4d8a1e8ca182ac2c%2C0)

## Rhododendron orbiculare

*Alan Kepert*

This is quite an attractive species, free-flowering and with nice rounded leaves. We have had some trouble in keeping this species alive in the Victoria, Australia, and 3 old plants in the centre of the Maddenia walk at the Australian National Rhododendron Garden have gradually died over the last 5 years or so. Peter Cox in “The Larger Rhododendron Species” notes that these plants are quite hardy to severe cold, but not very heat resistant. We have no control over summer temperatures, but fortunately we have several. plants in sheltered positions which seem to be doing well.

**Name:** Named after the circular or orbicular leaves.

**Distribution:** Western Sichuan at 2000 – 4000 metres in woodlands, thickets and rocks.

**Characteristics:** This is a compact shrub up to 3 metres high, but usually much lower in open positions. The leaves are bright green above, and pale glaucous green below. The flowers appear in trusses of 7 to 10 and are pale pink, rose, to purplish pink, with a corolla of 7 lobes and 14 stamens. The species has been placed in the Fortunea series due to its 7 lobed flowers whereas the smaller *williamsianum* has 5-lobed flowers and is placed in the Thompsonia Series.

**Hybrids:** There have been at least a dozen hybrids of *orbiculare* raised overseas but I only know of one available in Australia.: Temple Belle – (*orbiculare* x *williamsianum*). Attractive pink flowers on a compact plant.

[Editor: from The Rhododendron Newsletter, April 2011, of the Australian Rhododendron Society, Victorian Branch Inc. *R. orbiculare* is grown in the Cowichan Valley. It has beautiful foliage.]



*R orbiculare*

Alan Kepert Photo November 2010



# Playfair Park, Victoria

*Photographs by David Annis, 2009*





## Cowichan Valley Garden Club Annual Spring Flower Show and Plant Sale



Saturday May 14, 2011 – 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

St. Peter's Anglican Church Hall

5800 Church Road (off Maple Bay Road)

Duncan, BC.

Admission: Adults/Seniors: \$2.00, Children: \$1.00

Admission to Afternoon Tea: Adults/Seniors: \$3.00, Children: \$2.00

Flower Show Entries from the public welcome.

**Please email Diane McAmmond to enter [diane@skirrow.org](mailto:diane@skirrow.org)**

## The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Nanaimo Rhododendron Society Bus Tour

Saturday, May 14th, 2011

Continuing our tradition of visiting a great mixture of gardens, nurseries, and special places, this year we're heading north through Nanoose, Qualicum, the Comox Valley and Campbell River.

Cost: \$40 per person

(includes tours/tastings at Little Qualicum Cheeseworks and Mooberry Winery; does not include Milner Gardens admission of \$7.50 as many NRS members are also Milner members; free admission for Milner members)

Where do we meet?

At the Chapters parking lot near Woodgrove Mall – the bus will be leaving at **7:00 am**.

Don't forget to bring a picnic lunch and appropriate clothing. Bring a friend...



Call John to reserve a seat 390-3605

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