



# Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

Newsletter

Volume 32: 3 April 2021

## *Message from the President*

Hi Friends,

I think we would all agree that the future appears brighter this month than it did last month. Some of our family members have received their vaccinations, others have appointments for theirs, and so we begin to allow ourselves reasonable hope for a return to visiting and spending time with one another. Not yet, but soon.

What we do see all around us are the signs of nature's cyclical and trustworthy life forces. Hellebores have been starring for a month or more and sunny daffodils and Forsythia buds are breaking open. Red peony tips are stretching above the mulch,

and a few flowers of hyacinths offer muted hints of the intoxicating fragrance of fully open racemes.

Can anything be added to the messages conveyed by *Rhododendrons* 'Christmas Cheer', *Cilpinense*, *moupinense*, 'Snow Sprite', 'Airy Fairy', 'Snow Lady', and 'Rosa Mundi'?

Thanks to the incredible Zoom presentations we have attended during the last few months, we have



Photo: Diane Allen

**CVRS MEETING**  
April 7, 2021 7pm

**Guest Speaker: Chris Jennings - *Shade and Woodland Gardening***  
See page 3

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**Banner image:**

*Prunus x yedoensis* 'Akebono' flowers in late March to early April, producing shell-pink fading to nearly white blooms It is appreciated for its essentially rainproof flowers and freedom from disease. Autumn colour is yellow to pumpkin orange

much more information to work with as we step out to encourage our plants to flourish.

I have set out confidently to apply what I have learned only to stop short, recalling some warnings from another presenter. Wasn't it Linda Chalker-Scott who pointed out that commonly high levels of phosphorous in soil is often the cause of yellowing of leaves? What was that about magnesium shortages? The yellow leaves that display darker veins in the leaves suggest iron deficiency -- wasn't that it? Furthermore, research has shown that Epsom salts have no impact on the greening of rhododendrons? But some growers swear by the practice; their claim, that the only difference in practice last season was the application of Epsom salts, and the plants were a deeper green than ever before. And there is more to consider -- the many exceptions to all that general advice as well.

Decisions. Why did I not have this much difficulty making choices in the past? This awareness of multiple variables and possibilities should be helpful. What I realize, and ought to accept, is that gardening is a lifelong learning experience.

It is a challenging task to understand how scientific information and experiential knowledge combine in the varied practices of propagating rhododendrons. I learn more at every propagation presentation I attend, and then deal with the disequilibrium each causes. How nice it would be to find all these tips in one easily accessible package, such as a simple table, that I could use so that I don't have to experience so much failure. *Wait -- that statement jars me with its similarity to claims of "entitlement" that I dislike.*

"Humph" -- what comes to mind next is a concept I lifted during Rosemary Prufer's presentation. All those special and specific requirements for propagating various rhododendrons is not written down; but it is right there inside the practitioners' heads -- understanding and expertise gathered over years of trial and error. Individuals working hard without secretaries and data entry personnel; passionate and alert creators who collapse into well-earned sleep at night. They prepared to rise early, to experiment, to change strategies, and then to wait to note success or failure as they carried on with all their numerous other tasks.

So, there were no grants to make this easy for me, I suppose. Perhaps I should be the one to do it instead of expecting it done. Well, humbly I admit, I don't have time right now either.

Advice from Ian Efford comes to mind: "Instead of complaining or whining about what others do or aren't doing, or haven't done, just get on with it."

Such good advice, Ian, thank-you. The positive attitude -- get in there; do the work and the learning, just as others have, and even better, consider yourself fortunate and admit you enjoy it!

Verna Buhler

## Earth Day - April 22<sup>nd</sup>

### WATCH FOR EARTH WEEK EVENTS IN OUR VALLEY

Celebrations honouring Mother Earth will be happening all across our Island. It's just too big of an occasion to limit to one day, though, so you'll find all kinds of wonderful activities happening throughout mid-April.

Visit: <https://www.harbourliving.ca> to find events in area



## GUEST SPEAKER

Wednesday, April 7, 2021 7 pm  
Zoom Meeting

**Chris Jennings**

### *"Shade and Woodland Gardening"*



**Chris Jennings is President of the Shade Gardening Society in Vancouver**

Chris Jennings founded the Vancouver Shade Garden Society in 2003 and has been its President for most of the time since then. The Society has focussed on learning all about shade-loving plants and how to grow them well.

"My interest in gardening was first piqued when I went to a summer garden show shortly after moving to Vancouver from Ontario and saw some magnificent fuchsia standards. Back in Ontario, I was one of those people who regularly killed every plant they touched, even easy ones like African violets. But something about fuchsias intrigued me, and from that point I was hooked.

I joined up with the BC Fuchsia and Begonia Society and for the next seven years learned all I could about these fascinating plants. Then I decided it was time to broaden my horizons and struck out on my own, along with a few other gardening friends, to create the Vancouver Shade Garden Society in 2003, a more broadly based garden club.

Our mission was to explore and learn all about plants that can grow in full or partial shade, and it's been an educational learning curve for me and our members since then. There's more to learn about than what most people think when they hear the term "shade plants". It's not just ferns and hostas, but so many other outdoor hardy perennials and annuals, and even indoor tropical plants that fall under our purview.



I'm always happy to "spread the word" on shade gardening to other gardeners and look forward to the opportunity to do so for your club's members."

*Chris*



Tricia Guiguet submitted this photo of an *Epimedium* that she found as it grew over the years, had crowded her rhododendron causing it to suffer.

*Epimedium* are rhizomatous, although clumping slowly, so should be planted where they have room to clump slowly and steadily.

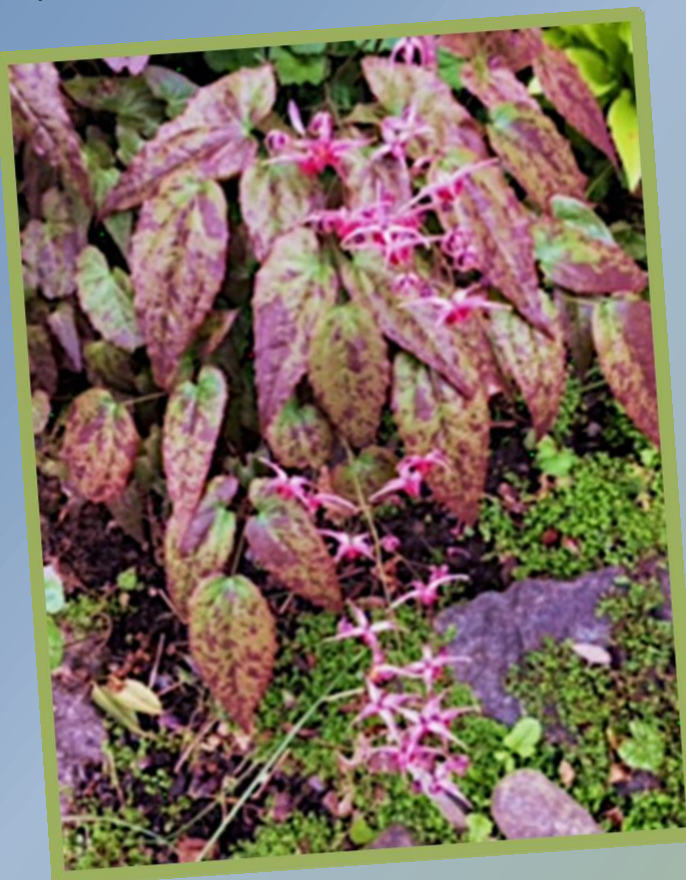


# Companion Plant of the Month

## *EPIMEDIUM*

By Ali Morris

*Epimediums* are highly valued woodland plants; many of them adding garden interest on a year-round basis. Many fascinating new varieties have become available in recent years. Needless to say, I am in love with this group of plants. Since diversity in foliage is foremost for me in my garden, purchasing *Epimediums* can be a nearly irresistible force when I spot a new plant.



*Epimedium* 'Pink Champagne'

*Epimedium stellulatum*  
(aka *Epimedium* 'White Star')





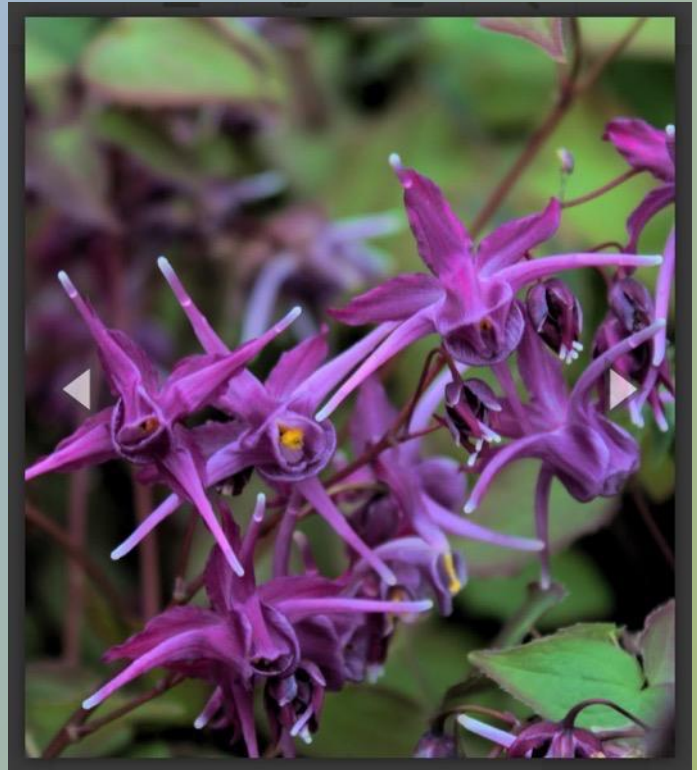


***Epimedium* 'Sweetheart' displays its lovely burgundy-edged, heart-shaped leaves**

***Epimedium grandiflorum* 'Lilafee' nods its lilac and purple winged flowers.**

*Epimedium grandiflorum* is a deciduous form with leaflets that are small; however, the flowers are big, as its name indicates.

*Epimedium grandiflorum* 'Lilafee' is the best in my collection; I often get a second flush of foliage after it's finished blooming. Its foliage emerges bronze, turns green with bronze-red edges, and brick red in fall. Although touted as rabbit and deer resistant, I share the love of this plant with my bunnies 🐰; grrr!



*Epimediums* are happiest in part to full shade and in average to acidic, dry to medium moist, well-drained soils. Once established, they become drought tolerant as well. With these naturally preferred conditions, *Epimediums* make great companion plants between Rhododendrons; they are rhizomatous but are slow clumping. At the front of the border, they invite a gentle pause.

Taking care of *Epimedium* plants is easy. All the care they need is to have the old foliage cut back in late winter to reveal the delicate sprays of flowers that perch on tall wiry stems. It is best to do it before the flower shoots start to push up, such as in late February. Slugs have never been a problem for me either. *Epimediums* appear to be trouble free in our climate.

Find a like-minded friend and enjoy the hunt!

## Hairy Leaves, Slightly Hairy Leaves, or Hairless?

Your lovely early blooming soft rosy-pink to white small rhododendron is blooming and as you point to it and say, "I love my *Rhododendron* 'Cilpinense'," your friend raises an eyebrow.

Okay, you know immediately that you mixed them up again. So, it must be *Rhododendron moupinense*. How does your learned friend know so easily that you slipped up? The foliage tells her. Your *R.* 'Cilpinense' should have slightly hairy leaves. It inherited that from one of its parents, *R. ciliatum*. Its other parent, *R. moupinense* lost the dominance battle between hairy foliage or smooth and shiny foliage. *Rhododendron ciliatum* is also one parent of the currently-blooming *Rhododendron* 'Snow Lady'. No fierce battle happened there, as both of its/her parents have hairy leaves.

Quickly you add, "Oh yes, so *cily* of me; because of course I know that *moupinense* is **glabrous**, and that 'Cilpinense' is **ciliate**."



Photos: *Rhododendron ciliatum*  
JARS V36n2



With Your Help  
There Will Be!

## Plants for Sale

CVRS Members' Special and Unusual Plants  
are what make the CVRS Garden Sale so Special

Again, we are asking for your generous donations as you divide your plants this spring. If you feel you have too many plants that could be divided than your energy allows, contact the Executive Team to set up a lively propagating event.

WE CAN DO THIS SWIFTLY AND SAFELY



# DWARF RHODODENDRONS

## *Rhododendron primuliflorum* 'Doker La'

*Those of you who enjoyed Mike Stewart's presentation on dwarf rhododendrons may have realized, as did I, that you have overlooked the dainty, and often intricate, stars in a garden when you selected plants and built structures; you may have developed your garden rooms for immediate impact with bold statements. Dwarf rhododendrons and companion plants will slow us down as we wander in our gardens in gentle evening light offering an entirely new level of appreciation and wonder.*

By Verna Buhler

This dwarf lepidote is an excellent clone with gorgeous pink daphne like flowers in May; it may be one of the best clones available. The Royal Horticultural Society awarded this plant an Award of Garden Merit in 2013.

Its dwarf habit, a height of approximately 40cm in 10 years, makes it ideal for rock gardens and front of borders. It has an upright habit and aromatic narrow lanceolate leaves.

Its flowers are tubular with spreading lobes, small, and may be white, white flushed pink, or pink.

It may be considered tricky to grow in that it requires careful site selection. An ideal position offers good drainage and cool roots in summer. It dislikes fertilizer and prefers moist neutral soil (a pH4.5 to 6.0).

RHS hardiness rating: H5

The geographical origin of the species, *Rhododendron primuliflorum* is Yunnan, Tibet, Sichuan, Gansu, and Siberia, generally at approximate altitudes of 3,050-5200m.



Photo source: Kenneth Cox



Dwarf rhododendrons don't mind the sun, but they suffer in too much heat. Avoid planting them in areas of reflected heat from South facing walls and patios.



# Blooming in CVRS Members Gardens



***Rhododendron* 'Christmas Cheer' with another pink rhododendron (possibly *R. 'Cilpinense'*) brightens Diane Allen's garden**  
Photos (3): Diane Allen



**Young *Rhododendron* 'Cilpinense' already promising cheerful masses in the future**  
Photo: Candice Feeney





A cheerful orchid blooms in a pot for Mary Pike at Easter  
Photo: Mary Pike

*Rhododendron monsoonum* in Tofino.

"The rhododendrons certainly enjoy the rains."  
Photo submitted by Ken Gibson.

(This rhododendron may be not be registered under that name!)



*Rhododendron* 'Snow Lady' blooms amidst a collection of *Hellebores*.  
Photo: Verna Buhler

**NOTE:** If your soil lacks nutritional value, now is the time to fertilize your *Hellebores*; adding compost or an equal value fertilizer will help your plants re-establish after their heavy blooming season is over.



***Rhododendron calophytum*,  
stunning in bud and open truss,  
bold in its corolla with a dark  
blotch and spots, and identifiable  
by its prominent stigma**

Photo: Tricia Guiguet (blooming in her Mill  
Bay garden)





# ***Garden Salvage Project***

**March 2021**

Thanks to a lovely neighbour of Ali and Diane's in the Satellite residential area, the CVRS Propagating Club was able to dig and remove many plants from a property that required renovating.

Lauren and her husband recently purchased the property and the young family's lifestyle required different spaces than the beautiful garden offered. However, over the months, Lauren had come to love the plants and managed to arrange to retain several of her favourite garden beds. She would rather none be destroyed by excavation, so she invited a CVRS weekend raiding party.

Diane Allen arranged and coordinated the dig. Ali Morris identified and selected the plants and shrubs, and the CVRS volunteers spent Saturday morning digging. The plants were then trucked to Ali's home, where for the next several hours the rescues were potted up.



**Elsie Sands provided the perfect spot on her property in the Maple Bay area for one of the larger re-homed rhododendrons.**



**Such care in planting may even encourage the plant's anticipated white blooms to light up the dappled shade of Elsie's developing rhododendron garden later this spring.**

The large rhododendrons were left for the next day, when George, Verna and Diane returned to try to dig and move them. George determined a Kubota was required and thus Part 2 of the project was successful.

That same day, the potted plants waiting at Ali's were loaded into a van, a truck, and alongside faithful Kubota in the trailer, and were moved to grow on with other plants in the current location of the CVRS nursery.

**Thank-you to all of the CVRS volunteers and members who already responded to the published plant list and purchased a fair percentage of these plants.**



***Rhododendron***  
**'Princess Abkhazi'**

**A Most Spectacular Early Blooming  
*Rhododendron* Hybrid**

Photos: Tricia Guiguet



*Rhododendron* 'Princess Abkhazi'  
(*Rhododendron irroratum* ssp *irroratum* x?)  
was developed by British Columbian  
hybridizer Dr. Herman Vaartnou in 1970.



This *Rhododendron* has, like its species parent, dramatic bell shaped pink flowers heavily speckled with red. It is a sister seedling of *Rhododendron* 'Prince Abkhazi' which has the speckles just on the top half of the flower.

These beautiful rhododendrons were named for Princess Peggy and Prince Nicolas Abkhazi who developed a stunning small garden in Victoria, BC.



After their deaths, the garden was saved from the bulldozers and is now cared for by volunteers and open to the public as *Abkhazi Gardens* in Victoria, B.C., a destination for a garden tour in the future.



# Azaleodendrons

By Verna Buhler

***As you shop for uncommon plants this season, you may wish to keep your eyes open for Azaleodendrons.***



The genus *Rhododendron* is divided into subgenera, with different subgenera for deciduous azaleas, evergreen azaleas, lepidote rhododendrons and elepidote rhododendrons.

***Rhododendron 'Martha Isaacson'* in my garden has become one of my favourite plants. Its rich maroon-bronze azalea-like foliage remains on the plant throughout the winter, and when it flowers, the contrasts are spectacular.**

Photos: Verna Buhler

Most *Rhododendron* hybrids are between plants in the same subgenus.

**Azaleodendrons** are hybrids between plants in different subgenera.

Kenneth Cox observed in his book, *Rhododendrons & Azaleas - A Colour Guide*, that Azaleodendrons are crosses between elepidote rhododendrons and deciduous azaleas except the Hardijzer's, which are crosses of the lepidote, *R. racemosum*, with evergreen azaleas.

Since few crosses between different subgenera are successful, there are relatively few Azaleodendrons.





## Some *Azaleodendrons* you may recognize

### ***Rhododendron* 'Glory of Littleworth'**

Unknown parentage; raised by Henry Mangles

A stunning azaleodendron with fragrant funnel-shaped flowers, opening cream, becoming milky white with conspicuous coppery orange blotch. Flowering in May, this is a superb semi-evergreen azalea-like shrub. It can look a little untidy in the winter, but the flowers are wonderful.

Photo: Rinus Manders (Hirsutum)



### ***Rhododendron* 'Fragrans' and *R.* 'Fragrans Affinity'**

My research of the parentage and the photos of these two azaleodendrons provided inconsistent information:

*R. catawbiense* x *R. viscosum* and *R. ponticum* x *R. viscosum*.

Photos and Information: Hirsutum, Hennings

### ***Rhododendron* 'Hardijzer Beauty'**

*R. racemosum* x Kurume Hybrid, 1965.

Strong purplish pink, lightly flushed purplish red, with darker spotting.

Photos and Information: Henning



# The Spring ARS Virtual & Live Convention 2021

## Rhododendrons Down East: Exploring the North Atlantic Region

June 3 – 6, 2021

Registration for the Virtual Convention is Now Open!

The Atlantic Rhododendron & Horticultural Society (ARHS) will be hosting this four day event. Visit the [All Events](#) page on the ARHS website for more information.



All presentations, garden tours and networking opportunities will be available online. Early Bird registration for virtual convention is now open! Prices will go up on April 1, 2021. Deadline to register for the convention will be May 1, 2021.

**Visit the convention website for full details on programming, deadlines and cost:**

<https://ars2021.org/>

**Visit the [Canadian Registration Link](#) (Eventbrite) to register.**

The convention events will take place in Wolfville, Nova Scotia between 1 pm to 5 pm ADT (9 am to 1 pm PDT). The virtual presentations will be available to convention participants for a period of time following the Convention. Programming presented at the Old Orchard Inn will be a combination of live and virtual presentations depending upon the Public Health travel restrictions at the time. Schedule is subject to change in speakers and times.

**With thanks to the NIRS for this submission by Garth Wedemire, who hopes to attend the Convention virtually, with his computer.**





## **ARS ~ Next Gen Program\* Rhododendron Through Your Lens Photo Competition**

**This virtual Competition is open to all.**

**Three monetary awards are offered in the student category, and a variety of recognition for ARS members and other contestants.**

**Up to five photos may be entered in any of these three categories:**

- **Your rhododendron lens: a close-up shot of a rhododendron flower, leaf or bud**
- **Our rhododendron community: people working together with rhododendrons**
- **Rhododendrons gone wild: photo of a rhododendron in nature**

**Complete information on the competition rules, eligibility and the sponsored cash awards can be found on the ARS website at**

**<https://www.rhododendron.org/index.htm>**

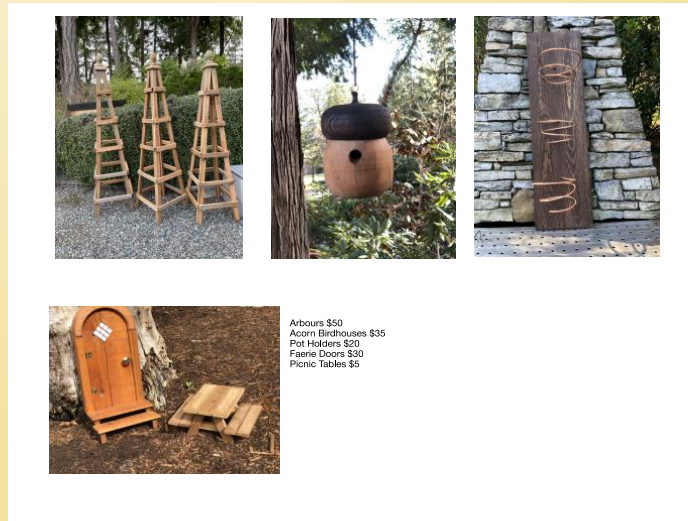
**Competition winners will be announced during the [2021 ARS Convention in Nova Scotia](#), Canada.**

\* ARS ~ Next Generation is a new program of the American Rhododendron Society aimed at making ARS resources more visible and accessible to students, early career professionals and youth who love plants.



## MILL BAY PLANTAHOLICS PLANT SALE

- Orders will be filled in the order they arrive
- First pick-up April 17 and 18th; make arrangements, as limited numbers are allowed in area; masks and distancing mandatory
- One gallon \$6; 2-gallon \$8; 4-inch \$3; annuals such as medium and giant sunflowers in 4-inch pots with 3-4 seedlings per pot are also available
- Garden Ornaments:



- Plant List is available from Elaine Scott, as is the address for plant pickup

[thescottrogers@aol.com](mailto:thescottrogers@aol.com)

### JOE HUDAK offers a tip on making labels for your Rhododendrons

...by re-purposing Venetian blinds that were on their way to the dump. With household scissors you can cut up blind slats into 3", 4", or 5" lengths. They are made of very thin aluminum with a baked-on finish that you can write on with felt pen or soft pencil. Each end has a drilled hole which gives 2 tags that are ideal to wire the tag to a growing bush. Being aluminum, they do not deteriorate, so hang one tag on your plant and bury a second tag at the base of the plant with a copper wire attached to it and you will always be able to ID your plant. You will get 100 to 300 tags per blind.

I have 4 blinds available - FREE.

Contact Joe Hudak 250 246 3585 Barepointgardener@[gmail.com](mailto:Barepointgardener@gmail.com)



# 2020 – 2021 Calendar of Events

Contact CVRS:

[cowichanvalleyrhododendron@gmail.com](mailto:cowichanvalleyrhododendron@gmail.com)



*Rhododendron 'Muncaster Mist'*

**Wednesday, April 7, 2021 7 pm:**

**Chris Jennings**

***"Shade and Woodland Gardening"***

(Organized by Barrie, CVRS)

**Friday, April 9; Saturday, April 10, 2021:**

***Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden  
Species Symposium***

(Via Zoom)

**Wednesday, April 14, 2021 7 pm:**

**Nancy Moore**

***"All Seasons Interest in the Garden"***

(Will not be recorded) Social time at 6:30 pm

**Thursday, April 15, 2021 7 pm:**

**Kathy Lintault**

***"Ireland, a Garden Paradise"***

(Organized by ARS Portland Chapter)

**Thursday, April 22, 2021 7 pm:**

**Atsuko Gibson**

***"Four Seasons at the Rhododendron  
Species Botanical Garden"***

(Organized by ARS Eureka Chapter)

**Thursday, April 29, 2021 7 pm:**

**Brian White**

***"Treasures of the Cloud Forests of Vietnam"***

(Organized by Barrie Agar and Glen Jamieson, District 1)

**Wednesday, May 5, 2021 7 pm:**

**John Brimcombe, President of the Hardy Palm  
Society**

***"Subtropical Gardening Using  
Rhododendrons and Associated Plants"***

(Organized by Barrie, CVRS)

**May 27, 2021 7 pm:**

**Mike Stewart**

***"Dwarf Rhododendrons – Nature's Carpet"***

(Organized by ARS Eureka Chapter)

**May – Date, Time - TBA**

**Marion Mackay, Massey University, New  
Zealand:**

***"The New Zealand ex situ Rhododendron  
Conservation Project"***

(Organized by Glen Jamieson, District 1)



## CVRS PLANT SALE

*Plant List for Member Plant Orders Coming Soon*

**In Person Plant Sale will depend on upcoming COVID Guidelines**



When AGNES LYNN presented *Ericaceous Plants of Vancouver Island* at the February CVRS meeting, she extended an invitation for club members to visit her garden:

May 2, 2021 1 – 4 pm

“We should be able to let folks go one way around the garden and keep their social distancing. All must wear masks as well.”

The link to see last year's *Virtual Garden Tour*:

<https://thelynnteam.ca/virtual-open-garden.html>

ADDRESS: 3913 Woodhaven Terrace, off Tudor Rd in Ten Mile Point

DOUG KITTS is inviting you to his Plant Sale and his Open Garden

Plant Sale: April 25-30, 2021 by appointment – (250) 752-7552

Doug will be selling his 'Senator Jackson' x *decorum* hybrids in various sizes.  
He will distribute a plant list of other rhododendrons for sale via email

Open Garden: May 1, 2021 10 am to 3 pm

509 Temple Street  
Parksville, BC

KEN GIBSON

Invitation to  
CVRS Members

Note directions:



*Rhododendron* 'Double Winner'

“Any members visiting Tofino, who may wish to visit the old garden, please note that it's still open, but is lacking attention. Bring pruners to cut protruding branches or the odd creeping blackberry from your path.

South on fourth and turn around in Gibson St. intersection. Park on Garden side; enter garden at the Burl Sign and proceed North toward the Spruce tree on corner. Cross the driveway on angle, climbing the hill on North side. On the lone cone corner is a Dr Holland of Victoria, *R. thompsonii* about 15 ft tall now with smooth bark. This garden has many *Rhododendron strigillosum* crosses. The one pictured is the best, if you want my opinion.

Please visit my Mum's old garden, my guess—best at the end of April. I will inform Val about parking. A new business is starting, but if alone put your name on a sign on dashboard in the parking lot & walk down as not much room at bottom. Thanks for putting my name on your list”

-- Ken



## USEFUL LINKS

Cowichan Rhododendron Society:

[cowichanrhodos.ca/](http://cowichanrhodos.ca/)

Victoria Rhododendron Society:

[victoriarhodo.ca/index.html](http://victoriarhodo.ca/index.html)

Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society:

[marsrhodos.ca/](http://marsrhodos.ca/)

North Island Rhododendron Society:

[nirsrhodos.ca/ws/](http://nirsrhodos.ca/ws/)

The American Rhododendron Society:

[rhododendron.org/](http://rhododendron.org/)

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society:

[nanaimorhodos.ca](http://nanaimorhodos.ca)

Nanoose Garden Club:

[nanoosegardenclub.ca/](http://nanoosegardenclub.ca/)

Linda Gilkeson's website:

[lindagilkeson.ca/](http://lindagilkeson.ca/)

Vancouver Island Rock and Garden Society:

[virags.com](http://virags.com)

Linda Chalker-Scott:

<https://puyallup.wsu.edu/lcs/>

Steve Henning:

[rhodyman.net](http://rhodyman.net)

Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group  
of the RHS:

<https://www.rhodogroup-rhs.org/>



**Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society**

**A Chapter of the American  
Rhododendron Society P.O. Box 904  
Duncan, British Columbia V9L 3Y2**

**<http://cowichanrhodos.ca>**

### 2020-21 Executive

**President:** Verna Buhler  
**Vice-President:** Ali Morris  
**Treasurer:** Randy Bouchard  
**Secretary:** Diane Allen  
**Director-at-Large:** Candice Feeney  
**Director-at-Large:** Wendy Wilson  
**Director-at-Large:** Barrie Agar  
**Director-at Large:** Dorothy Kennedy  
**Membership Chairperson:** David Annis

### Convenors

**Sunshine:** Mary Gale  
**Tea:** Judeen Hendrickson  
**Raffle:** Hilda Gerrits  
**Program Planning:** The ExecutiveTeam  
**Fundraising:** The Executive Team  
**Garden Tours:** TBA  
**Library:** Verna Buhler