



Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

Newsletter

Volume 34:3 April 2023

Message from the President

Dear Friends,

Spring seems to have arrived, albeit with a few false starts. I have been up in the interior, surrounded by ice and snow, and not a Rhododendron to be seen, although I am sure there are some varieties other than deciduous azaleas that would flourish there. It's probably more an issue of summer heat and water than anything.

The idea of spring it turns out is relative, along with what constitutes a warm day, and let me tell you, my standards have slipped. The Island seemed incredibly lush, and with the crocus, hellebores and snowdrops in full cry it seems almost tropical. Like I said, it is relative, and I am sure I will get over it shortly.



Rhododendron 'Lem's Monarch'

CVRS
April Meeting

Wednesday, April 5, 2023
7:30 pm

Putting Down Roots

Bernie Dinter / Barrie Agar

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Banner Photo:

Rhododendron augustinii, a lovely species rhododendron that blooms in a variety of shades of blue, violet, and mauve.

Now will be the time to check for cold damaged shoots and remove them, watch for bark splitting on the tree trunks – usually caused by the sun hitting frozen bark and thawing it out too quickly - and a general clean-up of winter debris and damage. This is of course easier to do before the bulbs come up. You may find many branches are quite a bit lower than they were last autumn, and you will have to decide if some “orthopedic pruning” is in order, or in the spirit of inclusiveness the botanical equivalent of middle age spread is quite acceptable.

If, like most ardent and enthusiastic plant people you have a number of pots lurking around the premises waiting for a new home, it would behoove you to check the roots on the more tender of them. “I’ll find a place for it!” you cried when you spied it at the garden centre or plant sale and dragged it home, only for it to take up residence beside the garage or ornamenting the woodpile. Many plants are frost hardy on top, but not so much when it comes to the roots.

For now, I will enjoy the sunny days, be thankful for rainy ones because I can’t remember where I put the hose and look forward to the succession of blossoms and birds over the next few months.

I wish you a joyful spring.

Barrie Agar



Brave R. ‘Harry Carter’
Submitted by Ken Gibson

~~~~~

## A FEW MORE *Pacific Northwest Place-Name Rhododendrons*

**R. ‘Seymour Narrows’, R. ‘Pacific Sunset’, R. ‘Qualicum’s Pride’**



R. ‘Qualicum’s Pride’



The fragrant pink rhododendron at the head of the “At A Glance” column in the MARS website is R. ‘Qualicum’s Pride’ (‘Anna’ × ‘Cotton Candy’), a hybrid produced and raised by Lloyd Newcomb at his garden in Snohomish, Washington State.



# *Special Learning Opportunity*

## **CVRS APRIL Meeting**

**Wednesday, April 5, 2023, 7:30pm**

### **‘PUTTING DOWN NEW ROOTS’**

**~ Successfully ~**

***Everything You Wanted to Know About  
Seed Sowing. . .  
But Were Afraid to Ask***

**Bernie Dinter and Barrie Agar**



Have you ever tried to grow plants from seed, had lovely sprouts appear, became proud and excited, posted photos on Facebook, and eventually -- humbly -- admitted they had all disappeared?

Bernie and Barrie team up to help us overcome those frustrations by teaching us what we need to do to be SUCCESSFUL!

***BRING YOUR QUESTIONS***



*“Why do I need  
a blender?”*



Coarse grit, marble chips, chicken grit can be used for covering.



# HAPPY EASTER

Easter is the most important feast day in the Christian church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The feast day is “moveable” and always falls on the first Sunday after the first full Moon after the spring equinox.

Whether religious or not, Easter calls forth traditions practiced in our homes. The history of Easter symbols, pagan or Christian, is a ‘rich. . . tapestry woven through the ages.’

(almanac.com)



It is interesting to take a quick look at the history behind the Easter symbols and how cultures adopted the same symbols, but they represented different meanings specific to their individual cultures. We have Easter Eggs, Easter Bunnies, Easter Lamb, Easter Ham, Easter Breads, Easter Hot Cross Buns, and the Easter Lily.

The magnificent Easter Lily, with its sheer white petals, symbolizes life, purity, innocence, joy, and peace. The Lily was connected with these traits well before Jesus Christ. Ancient allegories connect lilies with motherhood; fables tell that the lilies sprang from the milk of Hera, the mythological Queen of Heaven; in early paintings the Angel Gabriel is extending a bouquet of white lilies to the Virgin Mary; and in other paintings, saints are presenting armloads of lilies to Mary and the baby Jesus. It is told that white lilies sprang up in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus wept in the hours before being betrayed by Judas, and, also, where drops of Jesus sweat fell in his final hours of sorrow.

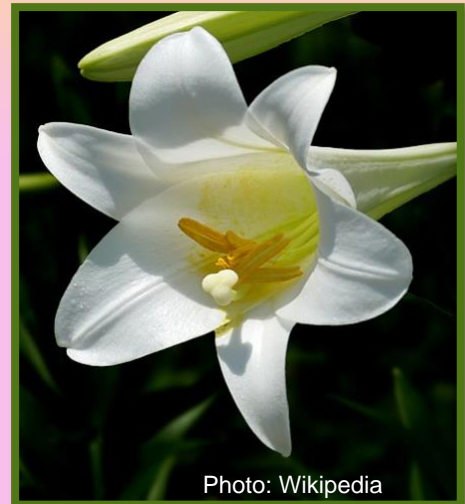


Photo: Wikipedia



Photo: the Spruce

The lilies from Christ's time were wild lilies of the valleys and fields, not the Easter lily, *Lilium longiflorum*, that we commonly associate with Easter today. *Lilium longiflorum* is a native of the southern islands of Japan, and generally cultivated in California and Oregon.

We can grow *Lilium longiflorum* in our gardens, by planting bulbs in fall. It will emerge in spring, but will not bloom during the Easter season, but rather in summer along with other lilies.





Milner Gardens and Woodland

[milnergardens.viu.ca](http://milnergardens.viu.ca)

## Easter High Tea In the Camelia Room

Offering a specialty High Tea experience  
Sunday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023



For \$39.99 per person, you will receive a decadent, Spring inspired, three-tiered tray of sweets and savouries, plus a pot of tea or coffee.

There will be two seating times to select from:

12pm - 1:15pm

1:45pm - 3pm

## The Wonderful 'Promise of Spring'

### Early Blooming Rhododendrons

In Ken and Madeleine Webb's garden in Saanich:

Clockwise from left:

*R.* 'Promise of Spring'  
*R. coelononueron*,  
*R.* 'Lucy Lou'  
*R.* 'Fine Feathers'  
*R. mucronulatum*  
'Mahogany Red'





# Letter from the Editor

Dear Friends!

What really refreshes my spirit during the chilly days of Spring is the chorus of frog songs. The power in the voices of such tiny green vocalists astounds me. How can they project their throaty, harmonious, orchestral strains throughout the long nights without tiring? Hope fills me because Nature confirms that dormant life is stirring once again, and much more will follow.

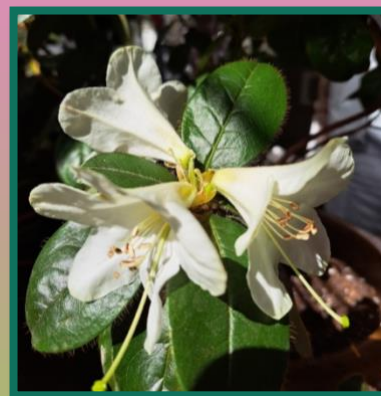
Lately, I have been able to spend four to six hours outside without my hands freezing. And that feels so good. Since Winter dropped unexpectedly into my garden while plants and flowers were still showy, I did not have time for the usual Fall cleanup of perennials. This is apparently good for wildlife, so I have comfortably justified the messy appearance of my garden beds. Because of the valuable information I gathered at the *Fall into Gardening Conference* last fall, when I cut perennial stalks that have hollow stems, I loosely pile them in my open compost bin. That way, hibernating insects such as bees can still find their way out to stay in the garden where they had chosen to waken in spring. I was delighted to first hear, then see, a large bumblebee buzz through the garden this week. It seemed early, but it was another nod of new life.

There are brave rhododendrons and bulbs attempting to bloom despite frosty droplets on them each morning. *Rhododendron* 'Coral Glow' blooms daintily in a pot beside the front door. In the back garden, *R. mucronulatum* 'Winterset' makes a brave effort. For the last two weeks, the blossoms of two *R. Bodega Crystal Pink* have been repeatedly softened by frost, but stubbornly open from new buds, day after day, and *R. moupinense* offers its cheer beside the back deck.



*Letter from the Editor continued on Page 7*

*Rhododendron* 'Lucy Lou' is beginning, but promises more to come, and *R.* 'Snow Sprite' lives up to her name. Indoors, due to her *Maddenia* classification, *Rhododendron johnstoneanum*, graceful and emitting a light fragrance. I do enjoy white rhododendrons. Amid these, the *Helleborus* expand into brilliant mounds, and *Hyacinthus* raise their bundles of stars.

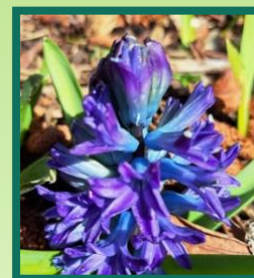
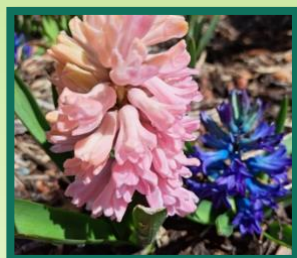


These indicators are so welcome this month, because once again, we are shocked and deeply saddened by the sudden loss of someone very special and dear to us. Sharon Tillie left us mid-March to dance forever in magical gardens. I was honored to be asked to create a tribute to our dear friend Sharon from information and expressions drawn from her family, and several members in our club. The truth is simply difficult to accept, and perhaps we won't really do so until our CVRS Plant Sale and our summer picnic when our cheerful and naturally humorous Sharon does not appear at the tea, coffee, or cash table, nor lead us through a hilarious election process, and slap-stick performance with Carrie.

The CVRS Plant Sale is fast approaching. We truly need you, our generous volunteers, to sign up for several hours on Friday or Saturday, May 12 and 13, to help with our important fundraiser. And as you know, because we continually prompt and "harass" you, we do need your plant donations. I am attaching the same request that you already found in our March newsletter about ideas for plant donations. Sometimes it seems that we don't have the most desirable plants for the sale, but often it is because we have enjoyed them for years and they are no longer novel to us. If we pause to think about where we picked up these stalwarts for our gardens, we must consider that new gardeners would like to find such plants at Plant Sales just as we did in the past.

Thank you for your generous support!

Verna





## CVRS PLANT SALE – WANTED! PLANTS!

It's that time again, when we encourage all our members to pot up divisions of their favourite plants to donate to the **CVRS Plant Sale**.

The earlier the plants are potted, the more well-rooted they become; they will then look wonderful by mid-May!

If everyone contributes 5 plants, we will once again be able to fill our sales tables with the special plants that our community appreciates.

At this time of the year, you may think you don't have those interesting plants, but in a short while, those plants will excite you as they do every year. No doubt, they would excite others as well.

*Gentian, Ferns, Hellebores, Epimediums, Dwarf Irises, Heuchera, Lilies, Hostas, Peonies, Primulas, Euphorbia, Anemones, are just a few among so many more!*

*Please check to make sure your varieties are well behaved rather than invasive.*



**THANK-YOU SO MUCH FOR ALL YOUR GENEROSITY AND SUPPORT!**



## *A Tribute*

With Much Gratitude and Respect,  
Great Sadness  
and a  
Deep Sense of Loss

# *Sharon Ann Tillie*



*Dearest Sharon,*

*May you dance forever in magical Gardens of Love.  
We love you and miss you,*

~ Your Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society Friends



***Rhododendron 'Horizon Monarch', Sharon's favourite rhododendron***

Sadly, our dear friend Sharon left us on March 18, 2023. In February, she had been diagnosed with a debilitating terminal cancer. With gratitude for MAID, she *"died as she lived her life, on her own terms"*, courageously, with her family surrounding her with love and strength.

Sharon Ann Tillie was born in Edmonton on May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1946, to immigrant parents, Herb and Lyn Polinski. She was the first in her family to go to university and earned her BA in Recreation at the University of Alberta, and then her MEd at Simon Fraser University. *"She was a lifelong learner academically and of the world and people around her."*

In 1969, Sharon and John married, and after several years, moved to Duncan where they could pursue the lifestyle of their preference: *"be proper hippies; building a few houses, growing a garden, and raising their children Devon and Johnathan."*

Her family describes her as *"an unconventional mother, [who] didn't care for cooking or household chores but was always up for a swim at the river, an animal rescue, a camping trip, a bonfire, or a long conversation of your choosing."*

Sharon's family beautifully expressed what those of us who met and grew to know Sharon came to experience when in her company. She had an extraordinary gift for making a person feel special and important. Time spent with her meant feeling better about oneself and the greater world.



*Sharon "marched to the beat of her own drum, with little concern for what others thought of her, but with lots of concern and interest in others."*

*She was "open to the mysteries of the universe and the person sitting next to her".*

*Sharon "was the biggest fan of whomever she was in the company of, especially her grandchildren, Ethan, Violet, and Loesje. Grand adventures happened with Gee, from fairy paths to storytelling and art."*



*Sharon was an intelligent, capable, high achiever.  
Whatever she did, she did very well.*

While Carrie Nelson, Donna Wilson, Ruth Kroek, and Sharon Tillie (lower right in photo, 1996) worked together at Malaspina University College, they studied to earn their Master of Education titles on weekends. They also shared a condominium at Simon Fraser University for two summers of study.

While the four friends worked at Malaspina University and studied together, they created volumes of stories and lasting memories.



There was never a shortage of humour in the events that they shared at their workplace. For Sharon's retirement from Malaspina University College following her 20-year career, she was adorned in a shiny red crown. She sported a well-earned pin on her lapel, "Make Way For The Queen"

*Sharon was a woman of action, initiative, and persuasion. She transformed her philosophies of education and convictions into meaningful Cowichan Valley "legacies".*



Photo: Mark Moffat/Minden Pictures

***"See the oak in the acorn, and help the acorn become a great oak"*** (Author Unknown)

Before she settled into her career at the university, Sharon transformed her philosophy on education into action by opening the Red Balloon Toy Shop with two dear friends. It continues to be the finest children's store in the valley offering quality educational games and toys.

She was also a founding parent of Sunrise Waldorf School and continued to serve important roles on the board for many years. *Waldorf education is inspired learning at its best -- developmentally appropriate, experiential, and academically rigorous* -- reflective of Sharon Ann Tillie herself.

*As a member of the Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society, Sharon shared her knowledge as a Master Gardener; she brought infectious humour and positive energy to all club events.*

Monthly meetings, garden and bus tours, plant sales and summer picnics were always that extra bit sunnier once Sharon arrived. Her "giggle-laugh and kind manner" drew smiles from those around her.





Sharon was an eager participant and great sport. She would arrive at plant shows and sales with lovely trusses for the display tables. On Theme days she sported creative attire and offered witty stances and comments to enhance her ensemble. At the Christmas parties, she entered both the popular Photo and the Tall-Tale Contests.

**Sharon – Winner of the People's Choice Award with her truss of *Rhododendron* 'Horizon Monarch' (2015)**



**Sharon - Winner of Best in Show Award with her truss 'Naselle'**

**Sharon – Winner of the Silver Bowl Award, presented by Mary Gale**



Sharon enjoyed witty word play. When she rose to speak, whether as a presenter of an award or as the recipient of an award, her audience prepared to be entertained.



Summer Picnic, 2015



Crazy Floral Hat - Summer Picnic 2016

Sharon's delivery was naturally comical. When composing her Tall-Tale tales, Sharon would play with the "*must-use*" Rhododendron names by running some of their syllables into her sentences. If her audience didn't catch her witty usage, she moved into exaggeration by repeating her sentence slowly and adding, "*Get it?*" followed by a mildly self-deprecating comment. Her Tall-Tales won her a prized bottle of wine or a red poinsettia more than once.



Among many other roles, Sharon took on the role of a winning photographer. For many years her photos graced the banner photos of the CVRS Newsletters and supported the feature stories of club activities. She was often a winner of the photo contest at the CVRS Christmas Parties.



*Sharon's outstanding gift of persuasion combined with spontaneous injections of humour led her to become the popular CVRS parliamentarian.*

A simple phone call or a casual chat with Sharon would leave one feeling renewed, as if *"injected with positive energy."*

She was the right person to help fill bus seats for tours, task sheets with volunteers, and the Executive with board members.

How many of us who served on positions of the CVRS Executive got there because we received a cheerful call from Sharon Tillie? Perceptive as she was, she recognized both an individual's strengths and hesitations.

Many of us ventured forward because Sharon persuaded us that we were needed and were possibly the best for the job at that time; she believed we could handle the tasks.

And who but Sharon could make Annual General Meetings a blast? We see her comical posturing and hear her commanding call, *"Hear Ye, Hear Ye!"*



Summer Picnic, 2018



Summer Picnic 2015



"Bring-Your-Own" Summer Picnic COVID-style, 2020

*Sharon was a great sport,  
a modest comedian, and a slap-stick performer*

Thinking of Sharon brings smiles to our faces and chuckles from our chests. As CVRS members we looked forward to our Summer Picnics and Annual General Meetings.

One of the main attractions was the slap-stick performances presented by Sharon Tillie and Carrie Nelson.

Who can forget the production of ***Out with the Old; In with the New***, the coup d'état by two picnic crashers at the summer picnic at Bill Dumont's in 2021, when we all believed that COVID was behind us?



The Darkness. . .  
the Struggle. . .  
and the Triumph!





Nor will we forget the age-challenged pair who acted-out right in front of the partiers at Janice and Laurie's summer picnic in 2022. In ***Friends with Dreary Spirits***, the months of ghastly cold and dreary spring weather had overwhelmed the old friends. They admitted their fatigue and, perhaps, Heaven forbid, even an onset of depression.



Stooped over by the dark, heavy dreariness of cold, rain, and overwhelming blues; the total absence of hope. . .



By sharing honestly with a friend, mutually conveying true empathy and support, and encouragement to look beyond the umbrella, the two old girls realized the sun was shining again, and they broke into song and dance!

*"It is difficult to capture the essence of Sharon in words. But in a nutshell, it felt so good to be in the company of this kind-hearted woman. She is one of few people I have met in life who could make you feel you were someone of some great importance."*

*"Following a visit, you were left with an injection of positive energy. The richness of knowledge and spiritual enlightenment she shared always inspired one in so many ways."*

She gifted her strength, inspired energy, and calming spirit to all who were fortunate enough to spend time with her.

*"Over the years you have provided your family with the strength and power to navigate this, the softest of good-byes, with you. Perhaps unknowingly, you have paved the way for our future decisions by bravely choosing this gentlest of ways of passing for both you and your family."*

*"Garden walks with you were always rich, leaving me with positive energy and knowledge in many ways including spiritually. The Meconopsis reminds me of you, and with thoughts of you, I will resurrect a "Blue Poppy Garden".*



*"Dance forever in the Garden of Love, Sharon."*

# Understanding Rhododendrons' Parentage

## HOW IT CAN WORK FOR YOU IN YOUR GARDEN

A walk through my garden this spring shows that I lost several special rhododendrons. I am always disappointed with myself. Obviously, I failed to provide the growing conditions suitable for that rhododendron. I am a criminal of sorts. How guilty am I?

*To prove negligence or malpractice, the following elements must be established:*

- Duty owed the 'patient' (In this case, the plant)
- Breach of duty owed the plant
- Injury
- Damages
- Foreseeability

*No question about it:*

- I purchased and planted these rhododendrons in my garden, on my property.
- The rhododendrons were living when I planted them; they suffered, and some died while in my care.
- The rhododendrons suffered obvious injuries. Some looked weak and demonstrated very little new growth. On others, the leaves drooped for long periods of time; some turned brown and dropped from the branches. On some plants branches were splintered, and in some cases the plants were entirely flattened with roots exposed on one side.
- Some of the damages caused lengthy setbacks. Some plants dropped most of their leaves. Other rhododendrons died.
- **Foreseeability is the big question.** Around these suffering, damaged rhododendrons are other rhododendrons that are perfectly healthy and robust.

**Thank goodness I am not as criminal as I thought I was!**

**Wait a minute though. . .why do some plants struggle more than others?  
Should I not have answers to that question?**

**YES, I SHOULD. . .and COULD!**



## WHAT SHOULD I UNDERSTAND THAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND AT THIS POINT?

**Very few rhododendrons are native plants of Vancouver Island, Canada.**

Therefore, expecting them to grow happily in any soil in my garden may be too much to ask. I learned over time, that rhododendrons need loose friable soil with room for air particles to reach the roots, and they require good drainage. I have actively amended the soil in my garden beds. Bark mulch is piled high above the hardpan clay soil to ensure roots do not choke in dense mediums nor sit in water.

I have learned that rhododendrons do not require much fertilization, if any, if planted in appropriate soil. They can be quite happy growing in high ratios of bark mulch. So, I give them that, and at times when the mulch breaks down too much and clay 'rises', I jack up the plants, inch by inch, and stuff looser, coarser mediums beneath them.

Furthermore, rhododendrons roots are shallow, and they love moist soil. Water slips readily between loose particles such as bark mulch, so watering frequently rather than for lengthy periods of time can be important depending on how much moisture the growing medium absorbs.

**So, I guess I was sold some poor-quality plants.**

**Wait another minute. . .these rhododendrons were just fine for several years. What am I missing? There must be more explanations out there.**

**. . .AND THERE ARE!**

**Not all rhododendrons have been collected from the same region in the world.**

Very clearly, it is important to understand the growing conditions of the plants in their natural habitats. We hear special speakers, plant-hunters, describe where they have found various rhododendrons growing. But they are collecting species, not the hybrids that most of us grow in our gardens.

True. However, the species matter a great deal. If I invite some of our rhododendron gurus to look at my failing plants, one of the first questions they would ask is 'What is it?'

If I answered, 'Trewithan Orange', they would nod, knowingly. They have met its parents -- its species parents, and that tells them a lot.

Yes, meeting the parents helps understand the progeny. I would learn that *Rhododendron* 'Trewithan Orange' is one of the best ***maddenii/cinnabarinum*** hybrids.

*Really? What a negligent oversight - I am criminal! I would never plant my other **R. cinnabarinum** species or hybrid crosses in my back yard. I know it is too cold there.*

There is also another word in Steve Hootman's description of *Rhododendron* 'Trewithan Orange' that I wish I had read earlier. That word is ***maddenii***. It is a big clue. I have several *Rhododendron maddenii*, and they stay in a hoop house or a glass house in winter!

The hybrids I have that have *R. cinnabarinum* parentage are planted in the most sheltered areas of my yard and I still worry about those “kids” in stormy frigid weather.

**The more varieties of rhododendron I try to plant,  
the more I find myself researching their parentage.**

You may wish to research the parentage of your hybrids as well. You may also wish to examine and understand the small ecosystems that exist on your property.

If you purchase any of the following and you have experienced freezing temperatures during the last few winters, you may wish to locate them carefully in your yard. This is merely a partial list of sensitive rhododendrons that I grow or have attempted to grow in my gardens.

***R. “Alison Johnstone”, R. ‘Biskra’, R. cinnabarinum, R. cinnabarinum var. xanthocodon, R. ‘Cinnkeys’, R. ‘Conroy’, R. ‘Trewithan Orange’.***

## ***Rhododendron ‘Trewithan Orange’***



Photo: RSBG

Dear sensitive *Rhododendron* ‘Trewithan Orange’,

I sincerely apologize for not understanding your need for protection. The parents of your mother, ‘Full House’ are *R. cinnabarinum* Blandfordiiflorum Group x *R. maddenii*. I will move you this week to a place where you will be much happier.

Verna

According to Steve Hootman, plant hunter, and Executive Director and Curator at Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden in Federal Way, Washington, “*Rhododendron* ‘Trewithan Orange’ is a fine hybrid with clear orange, “cinnabar-like” flowers and blue-green foliage. It is considered one of the best of the *maddenii/cinnabarinum* hybrids (‘Full House’ x *concatenans*). It seems to be much less susceptible to powdery mildew than most of the other clones in this group and blooms quite a bit earlier in the season, often in early April.”

It is one of Steve’s Picks in the Spring Catalogue of plants available at RSBG, always a good indicator as to the special quality of the rhododendron.



Because ***Rhododendron* 'Alison Johnstone'** had waxy bluish-green toned foliage that looked a bit like *R. 'Conroy'* and I was told at some point that *R. 'Conroy'* needed protection, I chose to plant 'her' in a warmer area on my yard. I am glad I did. Her pollen parent is *R. cinnabarinum ssp xanthocodon* and her seed parent is *R. yunnanense*.

I have found that *R. yunnanense* does well enough in my back yard, but when I planted one of my two *R. cinnabarinum ssp xanthocodon* in the back yard, it died. The one in my front yard is alive and has bloomed a little in the last few years.

**I have found that depending on the Hardiness rating does not provide all the information that I need for success with some plants.  
I learn constantly, but I would rather not learn the hard way.**

### ***Rhododendron* 'Alison Johnstone'**



Photo: New York Chapter



Photo: rockyknollfarm

The hardiness descriptor of this rhododendron is -18C. Further research adds a comment about it requiring shelter from winds.

Understanding her parentage can be key to growing this pastel apricot-peach beauty.

I learned the hard way with ***Rhododendron* 'Biskra'** as well. I received two *R. 'Biskra'* from Joe and Irene Hudak because the deer on their property were stripping their leaves. The plants were struggling, semi unclothed as they were, so I planted them where I found some spaces. One, I planted near the back of a bed against the wall of my propagating shed, and the other in a more open location. I knew a few things: *R. 'Biskra'* grows tall and lanky, and it has a -18C hardiness rating. I always check that.

The one in the open died, and the one in a sheltered location produces stunning displays of red trusses. So, I accidentally offered one a happy life and failed the other because of negligence.

## ***Rhododendron* 'Biskra'**



Photo: RSBG

*Rhododendron* 'Biskra' happens to be another of Steve Hootman's picks.

It is an original Rothschild hybrid: *R. cinnabarinum* Roylei Group crossed with *R. ambiguum*.

Steve explains that because of its *R. ambiguum* parent, it is considered one of the hardiest of the *R. cinnabarinum* hybrids.

He describes *Rhododendron* 'Biskra' as a "beautiful plant bearing clusters of large, hanging and waxy, vermillion bells in late spring."

It too, should be hardy to -18C, but not in all locations in my garden.

Often researching the parentage of a hybrid rhododendron to better understand its specific growing needs can be time consuming. If it has two hybrid parents that you are familiar with, you can plant it in conditions like the ones you know. Sometimes, however, it is worth the extra time to work your way back to the species parents.

You may hear knowledgeable Rhododendron growers make comments such as:

*'It looks like a williamsianum, so it could be. . .'*

*'You're growing a triflorum in a pot?'*

*'I am thinking that is a strigillosum cross so it may like more protection from the hot sun.'*

*'It's obviously a yak, so it should be fine right there in a bit more sun.'*

Because it is a "yak"? The experienced rhododendron gardener is referring to the species, *R. degronianum* ssp *yakushmanum*. He or she has recognized certain identifiable characteristics in the rhododendron such as its foliage and growth habit and understands the rhododendron's significant qualities and growing requirements.

**You will become a lifelong learner once you try to understand the complexities of the genus *Rhododendron***



## ***Rhododendron cinnabarinum ssp xanthocodon***



Photo: Eleanor Philp

*Rhododendron cinnabarinum ssp xanthocodon* is similar to *R. cinnabarinum ssp cinnabarinum* but has shorter more bell-shaped flowers and broader leaves.

The *Rhododendron cinnabarinum ssp xanthocodon* 'Copper' with its coral-colour, suffused with orange and red flowers, has won the Award of Merit

## ***Rhododendron* 'Cinnkeys'**



Photo: Chris Klapwijk

*Rhododendron* 'Cinnkeys' is a most unusual rhododendron with dense clumps of waxy, orange and yellow bells appearing in mid to late April.

Its parents are *R. cinnabarinum ssp cinnabarinum* x *keysii*.

Both parents would require carefully selected locations in my garden on Vancouver Island

*By Verna Buhler*

# *Spectacular Tree*

## *Toona sinensis* 'Flamingo'

### Chinese Cedar or Chinese Mahogany

*Toona sinensis* is a deciduous tree in the mahogany family that grows quickly up to 65 feet tall and 30 feet wide with an oval spreading form. It is native to Asia.



'Flamingo' is a selection of this species with bright salmon pink spring foliage, paling to creamy yellow, then rich green in summer.

Old bark peels off in long strips; fragrant flowers are whitish, born in dense panicles in mid-summer, and fruits are winged capsules.

Chinese toon adapts to various soil types, but prefers moist, well-drained soil in full sun to partial shade.

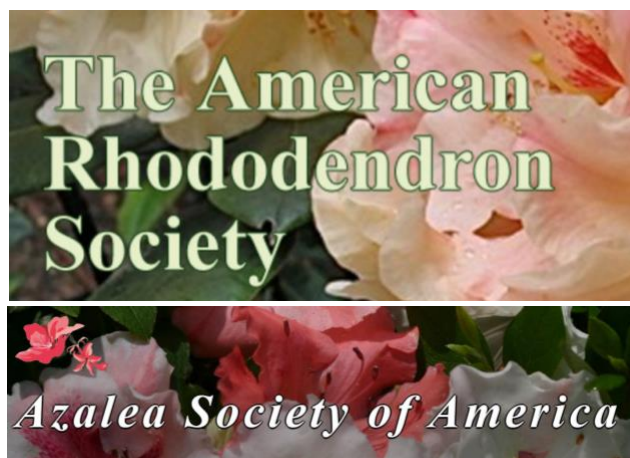
It is used as a shade, specimen, and street tree; sometimes it is cut back to grow to a shorter shrub shape.

All parts of the tree are aromatic, and flowers are attractive to insects.

In China, young leaves are used as a vegetable, reddish leaves tasting best. They have a floral, onion-like flavour. Timber is hard and reddish and used for furniture and guitars.

Before rushing out to buy this stunning tree, consider where you would plant it in your yard. *Toona sinensis* 'Flamingo' is a suckering tree, that will form stands if let be. It also spreads by seeds. Its roots are very long and should be planted far away from pipes, foundations, and pavement. Consider whether it will stress your favourite plantings in the area. In a very short time, it would be a difficult tree to move or eliminate.





It's time for the **annual ARS convention**,  
this year held jointly with the Azalea Society.

***Come to Atlanta!***

...for spectacular public and private blooming gardens, banquets, keynote speakers, and supporting sessions! This is a once-a-year chance to mingle with fellow rhododendron members while making new friends and lasting memories.

**April 19-23**

**Information and registration [HERE](#)**

(deadline for discount hotel rates: March 31!)



## VISIT THE GREIG RHODODENDRON SPECIES GARDEN

Tuesday, April 11, 1-3pm

Free Admission for District 1 Chapter Members

### A Special Invitation: Greig Rhododendron Species Garden



Rhododendron season is back and heating up. Milner Gardens and Woodlands is inviting members of all District One chapters to a celebration of the Greig Species Garden on Tuesday, April 11, 1 to 3 pm. Milner will be open only to ARS members at that time (free admission); it's a low-key affair with refreshments and

few speeches, giving everyone a chance to wander the paths while recognizing and appreciating how it has progressed.

This garden opened five years ago; since then, many more trees and rhododendrons have been planted, bulbs and drifts of companion plant added. A few more are still being planted, replacing any that have died and filling in unused areas. You will also be able to survey the hillside site where plans for the second phase have already begun.



PHOTOS: John Deniseger



# COWICHAN VALLEY RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

## PLANT SALE

**Saturday, MAY 13, 2023, 10am – 2pm**

**St John's Anglican Church Parking Lot  
486 Jubilee Street  
Duncan, BC**



**Hundreds of rhododendrons; a wide variety of perennials,  
grasses, ferns, tubers, bulbs, and edibles**



### **Volunteers and Plants Deeply Appreciated**

- Come early Saturday: help with set-up of tables and tents
- Bring rhodo trusses and help set up the Truss Display table
- Offer your truck and muscle to transport plants to venue
- Bring plants, and help with labelling and pricing
- Throw on a red apron and be a priceless cashier!
- Answer customers questions or direct to the Master Gardeners
- Assist customers with purchases and filling the trolleys
- Assist customers with transporting their purchases to vehicles
- Manage flow of customers to avoid congestion
- Monitor plants and people to keep correct tags on plants
- Assist with take-down of tents and tables



**Mt. Arrowsmith  
Rhododendron  
Society  
presents**



## **Rhododendron Show & Plant Sale**

**Saturday, April 22**

**9 am - 1 pm**

**Qualicum Beach Curling Club**  
(Next to the Farmers' Market)

**Admission FREE**

\*Come for the Blooms, Coffee, Snacks, Door Prizes

\*Shop the vendors for rhododendrons, perennials

\*Talk to the experts

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

Announcing . . .

## **Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Garden Society's Annual Spring Show and Sale, 2023**



*Erythronium tuolumnense* - Beacon Hill Park

Photo - Sue Lee

April 21 and 22  
Lambrick Park Church  
1780 Feltham Road  
Victoria, BC

Watch for more details, or visit our website [www.virags.com](http://www.virags.com)  
On Facebook: @vancouver island rock and alpine garden society  
Instagram: @virags\_pics



Present **Don MacWatt**



To speak on  
**Cyclamen, Fritillaries & Peonies**

**Monday, April 24, 1-3 p.m.**  
(doors open 12:30),  
**PARKSVILLE COMMUNITY CENTRE,**  
Room 109  
223 Mills St., Parksville

**\$5 at door includes entry in prize draw &  
coffee/tea & goodies.**

Don MacWatt is well known to the gardening community in the Ladysmith area. He has a passion for cyclamen, peonies & fritillaries. He will be bringing a sampling of plants for sale.



Info? Valerie: 250-937-7143 or [Melanson.valerie@gmail.com](mailto:Melanson.valerie@gmail.com)

## **The Cairnsmore/Hospice Volunteer Gardeners Annual Plant Sale**



**Come In Person!**

**Saturday, May 6th**  
**Starting at 10:00 AM**

**Cairnsmore Place**  
(End of Cairnsmore St)

This is our main fundraiser which allows us to keep the Cairnsmore and Hospice gardens as beautiful as ever!

We will have a large selection of plants available for sale to suit every garden.

If you are on our email list you will be receiving a listing of plants that will be available.

To get on our list, please email [plantsale2022@gmail.com](mailto:plantsale2022@gmail.com)



**2022 – 2023**  
**Calendar of Events**

Contact CVRS:

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

Wednesday, April 5, 7:30 pm  
CVRS Monthly Meeting  
Bernie Dinter and Barrie Agar: *Successful Seed Sowing*

Wednesday, April 12 7:30pm  
MARS Monthly Meeting (QB Civic Center)  
Paul Spriggs: *The Art of Rock and Crevice Gardening*

Thursday, April 13, 7:30pm  
NRS Monthly Meeting (Beban Park Social Center)  
John Deniseger: *Why I Grow Rhododendrons*

April 19 – 23, 2023:  
American Rhododendron Society Spring Convention, Atlanta, Georgia.

April 21 – 22, 2023:  
Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Garden Society  
Annual Spring Show and Sale  
(Lambrick Park Church, Victoria)

Saturday, April 22, 10am – 2pm  
MARS Rhododendron Show and Plant Sale  
(Qualicum Beach Curling Club)

Sunday, April 30, 10am – 1pm  
NIRS Rhododendron Sale and Truss Show  
(K'omoks First Nation Band Hall, Comox)

Saturday, May 6 10am  
Cairnsmore Hospice/Volunteer Gardeners Plant Sale  
(Cairnsmore Place, Cairnsmore Street)

Wednesday, May 10, 7:30pm  
MARS Monthly Meeting (QB Civic Center)  
Margot Moser: *Ferns*

Thursday, May 11, 7:30pm  
NRS Monthly Meeting (Beban Park Social Center)  
Garth Wedemire: *Finnerty Gardens Gems Over the Last Decade*

**SATURDAY, MAY 13, 2023, 10 AM – 2PM**

**COWICHAN VALLEY RHODODENDRON SOCIETY  
ANNUAL PLANT SALE**  
Venue: St John's Anglican Church



May 13 & 14, 2023 10am – 4pm on Sat and Sun  
MARS Mothers' Day Garden Tour

Sunday, June 4, 2023  
Cowichan Family Life Association Garden Tour

June 9 – 10, 2023  
Rhododendron Species Symposium at the RSBG

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## **NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY EVENTS**

April 19 – 23, 2023:  
American Rhododendron Society Spring Convention, Atlanta, Georgia.



**If you build a pond,  
they will come.**

Photo: Verna Buhler



## 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)

Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden:

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

Nanoose Garden Club:

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

Linda Gilkeson:

[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, Magnolia

<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>

### 2022-2023 Executive

President: Barrie Agar  
Vice-President: Dorothy Kennedy  
Treasurer: Diane Allen  
Secretary: Mary Pike  
Director-at-Large: Wendy Willson  
Director-at-Large: Candice Feeney  
Director-at-Large: Sandy Campbell  
Director-at-Large: Ali Morris  
Membership Chairperson: David Annis

### Convenors

Sunshine: Vacant  
Tea: Judeen Hendrickson  
Raffle: Hilda Gerrits  
Program Planning: The Executive Team  
Fundraising: The Executive Team  
CVRS Garden Tours: Candice Feeney  
CVRS Bus Tours: TBA  
Library: Verna Buhler  
Newsletter: Verna Buhler