



**Newsletter**

**Volume 32:9 December 2021**

## *Message from the President*

Merry Christmas Friends,

Our personal journals are filled with episodes of unusual challenges and triumphs that we and our loved ones experienced this last year. However determined and strong we have been, there are moments when we sigh with weariness from adapting almost daily to wild and unpredictable changes. Sadness and compassion have become prevalent emotions; both cohesiveness and divisions have formed among us. Thankfully though, from these periods of separation we have recognized how we miss one another – how valuable friendship, camaraderie, and face-to-face contact is to personal well-being.



These days are coming; continued patience and strength will see us there. In fact, the Executive is currently planning two in-person events for the new year. The first, is

*Continued on Page 2*

### **CVRS February Meeting**

**Wednesday  
February 2, 2022  
7pm**

#### **EXPERT PANEL**

**More Info Will Follow**

#### **Special Presentation**

**January 15, 2022  
SEAMUS O'BRIEN**

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. . . our very popular Expert Panel for the CVRS February Meeting. What a great “reunion” that could be. No one who has ever attended this event in the past, would want to miss this evening!

Thank-you to all of you who attended the Christmas Zoom Party. We recognize that many of us are a touch, or even a lot, weary of Zoom connections. Feedback also mentioned that the event was indeed most enjoyable but too long. Yes, we could have saved one activity for another day.

The Tall-Tale Contest was again a highlight with contributions from Janice Moseley, Sue Grant and Janice MacLean, all stylistically very different and all enjoyable.

Door prizes went to Catrona, Carrie, and Candice. Change your name?



During these Holidays, once again, we continue or recommit to safe practices so as to ensure that we will soon be back to normal celebrations and meetings.

In the meantime, let's be sure to enjoy some of the frosty sunny days that add spectacular beauty to our gardens.

Merry Christmas and Warmest Holiday Wishes!

*Verna Buhler*



# COX'S DWARF RHODODENDRONS

## *The 'Glendoick Bird Series'*

Over the last several decades, Peter Cox, and his son Ken, owners of the world famous Glendoick Rhododendron Nursery in Scotland, noted the increasing demand for small-garden rhododendrons. So began their 'Bird Series' of dwarf lepidote hybrids.

Plant hunters Ludlow and Sheriff returned to Britain in the 1950's where they introduced a number of plants, one being a species *Rhododendron ludowii*. When Sherriff and his wife developed their property only 50 kilometers from Glendoik, their common interest led to a friendship. During an early visit, Peter Cox spotted a dwarf yellow-flowered rhododendron species with "enormous bowl-shaped flowers for the size of the plant" (glendoick.com). With permission, Peter Cox collected pollen and applied it to *R. chryseum* (later *R. rupicola* var. *chryseum*). From this cross, Cox selected and named the F1 hybrid, ***Rhododendron* 'Chikor'**. In time, *R. 'Chikor'* won the *Award of Merit* and, later, a *First Class Certificate* from the Royal Horticultural Society.



***R. 'Chikor'***  
Photo: Ken Cox

### ***Rhododendron* 'Chikor'**

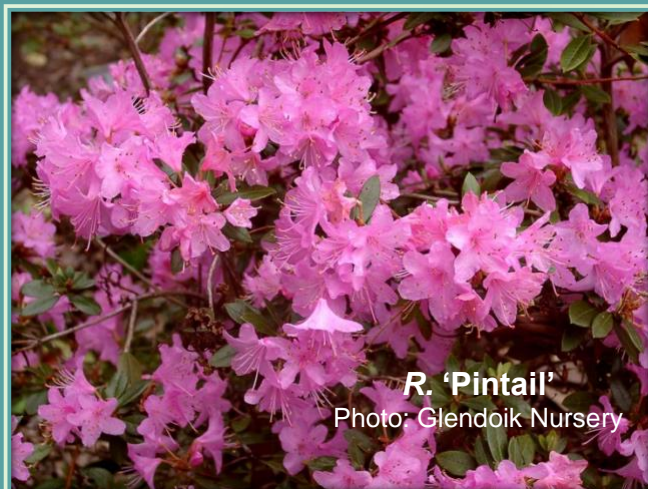
A chikor is a game bird in the partridge family, and as birds were another prime interest of Peter's, this began the theme of naming all dwarf lepidote hybrids after birds. He made several crosses each year, and in the early 1980's, Ken Cox also began creating these hybrids.

Currently, there are approximately 25 Glendoick rhododendron 'bird' hybrids known to gardeners and rhododendron collectors around the world.

***Rhododendron* 'Pintail'**, one of these hybrids, is an early bloomer, late March to April in the Pacific Northwest. It displays spectacular, brightest clear pink flowers in multiple trusses.

*R. 'Pintail'* is vigorous but tidy -- a show-stopper! It grows to about 2 feet in 10 years. Due to *R. racemosum* influence it enjoys sun and can tolerate a fair amount of heat.

The brilliant blooms reveal its *Rhododendron racemosum* parentage crossed with 'Snipe', another of Cox's bird series hybrids.



***R. 'Pintail'***  
Photo: Glendoick Nursery



***Rhododendron* 'Snipe'**, the pollen parent of *R. 'Pintail'* is an F1 hybrid\* with its own elegant parentage of *R. pemakoense* x *R. davidsonianum*.

It appears mauve, flowering white with variously suffused light purple, peripheral shading a strong reddish-purple, light spotting a purplish-red, and a reverse flushed a strong reddish-purple.

*\*F1 hybrid means it is a cross between two species*



Photo: uk.whatbird.com

The *chikor (chukar)* is a game bird in the partridge family.

The *pintail* is a beautiful grey and white dabbling duck with a chestnut coloured head, a long graceful neck, and notably long pointed tail feathers.

The *snipe* is a small wetland wading bird. Snipe feathers are different shades of white, black, and brown. What they lack in vibrancy they more than make up for in pattern with a beautiful marble looking effect to their feathers.

The common *crane* is UK's tallest bird, up to 4 feet tall, and is celebrated for its loud trumpeting calls and elegant courtship displays. It became extinct in UK for 400 years but began breeding again in Scotland in 2012.



Photo: creativecommons.org



Photo: thescotsman.com



Photo: exclusivelyscottish.com



**R. 'Crane'**  
Photo: Ashwoodnurseries.com

**Rhododendron 'Crane'** is one of few pure creamy-white dwarf rhododendrons. In April this neat 2 to 3 feet mound is smothered with lovely flowers, energizing any plants around it.

It is another F1 hybrid as its parents are *R. keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy' x *R. racemosum* 'White Lace'.

It too has acquired sun and heat tolerance from *R. racemosum* and is very hardy to -20C.



R. 'Egret'



R. 'Egret'  
Photos: Ken Cox

**Rhododendron 'Egret'** is a compact, dwarf, evergreen shrub with glossy, dark green leaves and in late spring, open trusses, to 7cm long, of dainty funnel-shaped flowers, white tinged green and 2cm in width.

These delicate little white bell flowers, nodding down and in masses make this rhododendron truly unique. The plant is bushy and will grow to about 1 ft. in ten years. Due to its parentage, *campylogynum* x *racemosum* 'White Lace', it is tough, hardy to -21C,



Photo: Matt Wilkinson

**Egrets** are types of heron. They are long-legged wading birds, with long necks and beaks which enable them to fish. They all have bright white feathers.

**Razorbills** are the closest living relative to the flightless great auk, which went extinct in 1844. Razorbills are both resident and migrant in Scotland. Large colonies are seen in the Northern Isles, Outer and Inner Hebrides, and the mainland in breeding season.



Photo: Audubon.org





Photo: rhododendrons.co.uk

***Rhododendron* 'Razorbill'** has unusual light rose-pink tubular flowers held in upright clusters on a dome-shaped bush flowering in May. This is a very striking and free-flowering plant with attractive crinkled leaves on a sturdy plant that is vigorous.

It is relatively drought tolerant, so although it prefers moisture, it will tolerate being planted on drier soils or near to trees. It grows to 60-80cm, about 1½ - 3 feet in 10 years.

It is a *R. spinuliferum* seedling and known to be hardy to -15C.

***Rhododendron* 'Wren'** would be an excellent choice for a yellow flower collector. Its flowers are a rich yellow color and are borne against glossy foliage. In early May, 'Wren' is completely smothered in widely campanulate, yellow flowers.

It is a particularly small grower, reaching 10 inches wide in 10 years, so therefore perfect for a rock garden as it will fit beautifully in between rocks.

It is a cross of two species *R. ludlowii* x *R. keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy'.

In 2013, *R. 'Wren'* earned the RHS Award of Merit

Hardiness: H5 (to -23C)



Photo: Peter Cox

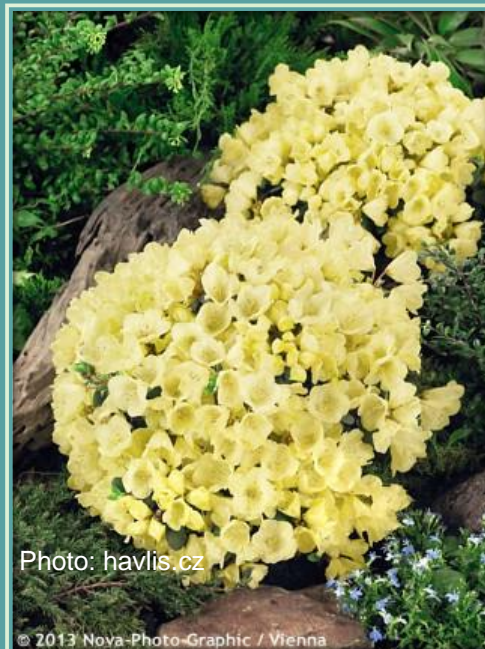


Photo: havlis.cz

© 2013 Nova-Photo-Graphic / Vienna



Photo: Mike Pennington

What the diminutive **wren** lacks in size it makes up for in sound. Its song is particularly loud and vibrant, including a strident and characteristic trill and, most notably, its angry "churr". Being small brings vulnerability to cold, especially during the night-time when birds can't feed and move around. They are known for communal roosting; as many as 60 wrens have been recorded in one nest box, clustered tightly to minimize heat loss.





Photo: rhodygarden.com



Photo: singtree.com

***Rhododendron 'Waxbill'*** has distinctive two-toned, pink and white, tubular flowers and bronzy new growth. It grows strongly but remains compact, growing wider than high to about 3 feet. In late March and early April, the flowers completely cover the dwarf plant.

For a number of years this hybrid was only known as *R. keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy' x *R. spinuliferum*; later it was registered as 'Waxbill'.



Photo: rhodygarden.org

***Rhododendron 'Plover'*** has been described as "[t]he first deep pink dwarf with significant scent suitable for growing outdoors at Glendoick".

It has smallish, hairy and bullate foliage with beautiful fragrant flowers in mid-spring. It owes its charming fragrance to its parent *R. edgeworthii*, and its size and colour of flowers due to *R. dendrocharis*.

Both parents are epiphytes in the wild so the perfect place to grow *R. 'Plover'* is in a stump.



Photo: J Pfeleiderer



Photo: birdwatchireland.ie

The Waxbill, a tiny finch of grasslands, forest clearings, and thickets features a brown back, red rump, orange face, and bright

During the summer, golden Plovers spend their time in the high moorlands of Scotland before flying in tight formations to agricultural lowlands or estuaries in the winter. They are very social birds, exhibiting lifelong monogamous pair bonding and forming large flocks to forage for food in winter.



# GARDEN FERNS

## COMPANION PLANT FOR DECEMBER

~ Ali Morris ~



To quote my garden mentor, Christopher Lloyd  
***“Green is the colour of life; no green, no life”***

Ferns are some of the oldest plants on our planet; they predate the ice ages and dinosaurs. Nearly all ferns grow best in moist, but well-drained soils. Most prefer slightly acidic soil and semi-shade, which make ferns ideal companion plants for rhododendron gardens.

The best food for ferns is a good mulch, as mulch will break down slowly to provide rich organic matter while at the same time offering shade for roots and retention of moisture.

Ferns come in many different shapes and colours offering many design options to a gardener. Some spread as rich ground carpets and others as luxurious clumps of distinctive form. Upright ferns create proud statements whether situated individually or in mass. Funnel-shaped fern plants soften the garden and offer unique patterns from a perspective above.

Here on Vancouver Island the climate is ideal for many garden-worthy native ferns. Another bonus quality that ferns offer in gardens is that deer, slugs, and rabbits do not touch them!



“I have favourite ferns that I would not wish to garden without”



### ***Adiantum pedatum*** (Maidenhair Fern)

When I moved to Vancouver Island 25 years ago, I was delighted to see that this graceful fern had begun to naturalize in my garden. Most of you know this native fern with its delicate finger-leaved fronds. The wire-thin stems are black making for dramatic contrast with the pale green leaflets.

I like to grow this much-loved British Columbia native fern in front or between large rhododendrons. The fronds form strong clumps, growing 50 – 60 cm tall that die back in winter. They emerge and unfurl brightly in spring, ideally juxtaposed with stocky rhododendron plants.

This fern is hardy to Zone 3

Photos: Ali Morris, unless otherwise indicated

### ***Adiantum venustum*** (Himalayan Maidenhair)

This species fern is native to -- you guessed it -- the Himalayan Mountains. On our West Coast, it can serve as an evergreen groundcover as it is hardy to Zone 5. It grows well under trees.

This species has a very delicate appearance, but don't let that fool you; it forms a very thick carpet that is not invasive, but the weeds do not stand a chance.



***A. venustum*** has earned the RHS Award of Garden Merit (1993) and the Great Plant Picks Award for Pacific North West gardens

### ***Polystichum setiferum*** (Soft Shield Fern)

On my first garden tour to England, I returned with a long list of plants on my Wish List; thus, began my plant list addiction. *Polystichum setiferum* was high on that list.

It is native to Western Europe, an evergreen, and a “clumper” that grows 50 to 60cm tall. It is a beautiful fern for all seasons.

In Spring, I prune back the old fronds, and watch the beautiful new fronds unfurl. It's a real show; every day it offers a new look. I always try to pass by it on my way into the garden to admire the wonders of nature.

***Polystichum setiferum*** has also been awarded the AGM from the Royal Horticultural Society at Wisely and the GPP from Elisabeth C. Miller Botanical Gardens Seattle.



### ***Polystichum setiferum*** ‘Pulcherrimum Bevis’

Many ferns are burdened with long Latin names; they are botanical descriptors of the plant. Don't let that deter you from adding these beauties to your garden.

‘Bevis’, as I like to call it, was on my wish list for 5 years before I found it. Although it was discovered in England during the Victorian era, it is slow to propagate because it is sterile. However, with modern technology, it is becoming more readily available.



This is an arching form with interesting brown scales. The segments have enough separation to give a light lacy appearance and point slightly towards the tip of the frond.

This tropical looking fern is a cut above the rest, and well worth the hunt.



*Okay, I did leave the best for the last!*

***Dryopteris wallichiana*** (Alpine Wood Fern)

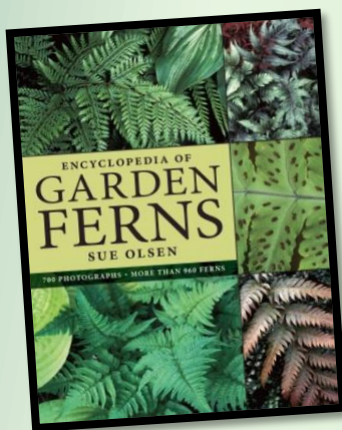
This is the most striking fern in my garden. Funnel-shaped and with a height of almost four feet, it has a lush tropical appearance. Some of this tropical appearance is the effect of fronds backed with large scales developing slowly from a large crown.

This exotic looking fern will look good well into winter, until the first snow. It is completely hardy here as it is listed as suitable for Zone 6.



***Dryopteris wallichiana*** has a wide distribution from Central to South American, to Hawaii and the Indies, even into Africa.

It has won the RHF Award of Garden Merit and the Great Plant Pick Award for the Pacific North West



*There are many good books on ferns available.*

*My favourite is *The Encyclopedia of Garden Ferns*\* by Sue Olsen.*

*She has gardened in the Seattle area for decades.*

*The majority of photos are from her garden.*

\*This book is available from the CVRS Library



# BOOKS - BOOKS - BOOKS

THE CVRS LIBRARY HAS BOOKS FOR YOUR READING PLEASURE

WORTH EVERY MINUTE OF YOUR TIME SPENT

## The Rhododendron Story

Cynthia Postan

I was looking up some information in the *Hardy Rhododendron Species* book by James Cullen. On page 11, he stated, "The history of rhododendrons in gardens is dealt with in considerable detail in Cynthia Postan's *The Rhododendron Story*, published by the Royal Horticultural Society in 1996.

When researching areas to purchase this book, I discovered it is no longer in print. However, it is a download that is free of charge to any persons interested.

I agree with James Cullen, each chapter is filled with historical detail, compiled by many Rhododendron experts' contributions to this publication. The chapters are filled with botanical and historical information. Basically, *The Rhododendron Story* is the evolution of this Genus from leaving its' natural habitat, its' journey over the past few hundred years, to its' current existence as our garden gems.

Many Rhododendron Chapters may have this book in their libraries; yes, the CVRS does. Since we are not gathering, however, to access these libraries, it is nice to have this opportunity to have this book at our fingertips. To access, search, "download *The Rhododendron Story*". Alternatively, you can access the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Society website where you will find access to the download as well.

You will not be disappointed.

**Sandra Stevenson**

To access the CVRS Library to sign out this book, contact Verna Buhler



# SPECIAL PRESENTATION

## ARS DISTRICT 1



### Seamus O'Brien

National Botanic Gardens of Ireland

Saturday, January 15, 2022 11am

Zoom Presentation

## *In the Shadow of the Mighty Kangchenjunga*

*A Botanical Expedition to the Bhutan and Sikkim Himalaya*

Seamus O'Brien manages the National Botanic Gardens of Ireland Kilmacurragh. He is a veteran of many plant expeditions, author of ***In the Footsteps of Augustine Henry*** and ***In the Footsteps of Joseph Dalton Hooker***.

In 2014, he led an expedition of Irish horticulturists and tree enthusiasts to the mountains of Bhutan and Sikkim, following the routes of early botanical explorers such as William Griffith, Joseph Hooker, Frank Ludlow and George Sheriff. His travels took him from tropical valleys to icy glaciers, to woodlands and mountain tops. Seamus will entertain us with his recollections of these adventures at this talk.



Campsite at Dzongri, north Sikkim

**2021 – 2022**  
**Calendar of Events**

Contact CVRS:

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

**Saturday, January 15, 2022 11am**

**District 1 Special Presentation**

**Speaker: Seamus O'Brien – *In the Shadow of the Mighty Kangchenjunga***

**Wednesday, February 2, 2022 7pm**

**CVRS Monthly Meeting**

**Expert Panel (tentative – TBA)**

**NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY EVENTS**

**May 4 - 8, 2022**

**ARS Annual Convention, Portland, Oregon More information <https://ars2022.org/>**

**2022:**

**ARS Fall Eastern Regional Conference, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Dates to be determined.**

**2023:**

**ARS Fall Western Regional Conference, Florence, Oregon. Dates to be determined.**

**2023:**

**ARS Annual Convention, Atlanta, Georgia. Joint ARS/ASA meeting. Dates to be determined.**



## 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>

### 2020-21 Executive

**President:** Verna Buhler  
**Vice-President:** Ali Morris  
**Treasurer:** Wendy Willson  
**Secretary:** Diane Allen  
**Director-at-Large:** Barrie Agar  
**Director-at-Large:** Candice Feeney  
**Director-at-Large:** Carrie Nelson  
**Director-at Large:** Mary Pike  
**Membership Chairperson:** David Annis

### Convenors

**Sunshine:** Mary Gale  
**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