



Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

Newsletter

Volume 35:9

December 2024

Message from the President

Merry Christmas Friends,



The frost has crept over the garden several mornings now, causing me to catch my breath, pause, and stare. Every single edge of every single leaf is sparkling. Every berry, dusted with powdered sugar, looks candy delicious.

I am attempting to convince myself to keep this festive season simple, and I just may be able to do that. I feel a peacefulness this season, having had the honor of spending three sets of special times with siblings who have visited us in the last few weeks.

My family live in Manitoba and in Ontario and therefore spending time with my own family at Christmas happens rarely. I fondly recall and miss the family festivities of the past.

Large festive gatherings that included aunts, uncles and cousins were the highly anticipated norms of the season in our rural farming community.

Families hosted the gatherings on a rotating basis, irrespective of the size and space in a home. The events were rarely

Continued on Page 2

CVRS Christmas Event

Saturday
December 14, 2024
1 - 5pm (Page 4)

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|                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Fresh Greens Workshop             | 3  |
| CVRS Christmas Event              | 4  |
| <i>Rhododendron kuisianum</i>     | 6  |
| <i>Callicarpa bodiniera</i>       | 7  |
| <i>Rhododendron</i> 'Janet Blair' | 8  |
| Trees for Small Gardens           | 13 |
| Verticillium Wilt                 | 14 |
| Books                             | 15 |
| December Garden Tasks             | 16 |
| <i>Rhododendron dauricum</i>      | 17 |
| Milner Gardens News               | 18 |
| "Mad Honey" News                  | 20 |
| <b>Upcoming Events</b>            | 21 |
| <b>Useful Links</b>               | 22 |

Banner Photo:

*Hoar frost in the garden in early morning light*

Photo: Verna Buhler

postponed due to inclement weather. Climate change hadn't yet presented its extremes.

Winter added a dimension of fun for Prairie folk. Blasts of cold wind and flurries of snow swept in with the stomping entrance of the families. Boisterous greetings flew about along with chunks of snow off boots and heavy jackets. Containers of traditional food wafting rich aromas were handed to waiting hands. Coats and snowsuits were whisked away to the nearest bedroom. They were piled high on the bed promising a chaotic *clothing scramble* at the end of the day.

All our homes were small, but families were large. Most often this meant that meals were served in three settings; children ate first and then were sent outdoors, haylofts, or basements to play. Men were next, and hearty laughter filled the crowded kitchen or dining room. Finally, after strenuous efforts of the previous days and hours, the women sat down at the table to relax over what remained of the healthy meal their hands had jointly prepared; they would soon be resuming more tasks of washing dishes, packing up any left-over food, and gathering tired children for the snow-packed country roads home. I am truly grateful for these nostalgic memories. It seems that extended family gatherings occur less frequently now; I do hope that younger generations will be able to build fond memories of their own.

For our upcoming Christmas event, we will participate in vigorous activities of another kind. Al Campbell has in mind to test our *Rhododendron* species knowledge, so I am considering studying the night before, although I recognize the risk of studying that early. If I am late for the party, you will know I am engaged in *last-minute* cramming. Barrie is planning another hilarious Pub Quiz. I have no chance in those contests – they are all Irish to me! At our last club meeting it was decided that the Tall Tale Contest needed a rest. Perhaps next year Janice! We will miss your tales. Or write one anyway! I will send you some rhododendron names!

The photo contest is always a favourite. Do participate - judge or be judged in this event! Bring your photos or your four quarters and have fun.

Bring a small gift for the gift table. Names will be drawn for the order in which individuals step forward to select what they have always had on their Santa's Wish List.

Please remember some food items or an envelope of cash for the Christmas Hamper. Our bounties are more enjoyable knowing we are sharing with those less fortunate.

I am truly looking forward to this event! Diane is such an extraordinary hostess, that this almost feels too easy. . .

*Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year to you all!*

*Verna*

### *Letters to the Editor*

To the Editor...

Your newsletters are amazing. As a prairie dweller/gardener I enjoy looking at the *rhodo* sections, but then you amaze me with all the descriptions of companion plants, seasonal interest and other adventures and finds such as the lobster fungi this month [November].

You must put an incredible amount of time into each stunning newsletter!

Your SiS

# Festive Swags and Centre Pieces

## WORKSHOP

Thursday, December 12, 2024  
1pm



Hosted by Verna Buhler  
3908 Cowichan Lake Road

### Creative Artists on site:

- Ali Morris
- Sandra Stevenson



### Provided:

- Hot drinks and snacks
- Table space for crafting
- Unlimited greens for cutting your own favourites in the garden
- Twine and wire
- **Some** recycled items: containers, decorative supplies, chicken wire, moss, pinecones



### Please Bring:

- Your pruners and snips
- Floral oasis, if you choose to use one
- Containers of choice
- Decorative supplies such as ribbons, ornaments, and candles

### \*Centre Pieces. . .

Can be created now and easily refreshed nearer Holiday gatherings by replacing a few greens and even adding fresh flowers!



# CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION



Saturday, December 14, 2024,  
1 – 5pm

Hosted by  
**Diane Allen**

695 White Cap Road, Cobble Hill

## WHAT TO BRING:

- Your biggest smile and enthusiasm
- Snacking wonders – savory or sweet
- Preferred drinks if you choose.  
Wine, punch and bubbly water will be provided
- A small, unwrapped gift to share for the gift draw
- Your finest *Rhododendron* photos for the photo contest (see guidelines below)
- Four (4) quarters to participate in judging the photo contest
- Items or envelopes of money for the Christmas Hamper



**Our generous hostess, Diane, will provide:**

- All plates, cutlery, drink glasses, mugs, and wine glasses
- A stunning view, and a festive setting and atmosphere

Continued Page 5

## PARTICIPATE IN FUN ACTIVITIES!

### QUIZES

Pub Quiz: [Barrie Agar](#)

Rhododendron Species Quiz: [Al Campbell](#)

(Do study! Al is offering plant prizes!)



### GIFT EXCHANGE

- Bring an unwrapped gift for the gift exchange
- Select a gift when your turn comes up

### PHOTO CONTEST

- Select a rhododendron photo that you have taken
- Print it in 4X6, 6X8, 8x10 (larger seems more effective)
- Use mattes, if you like, but no frames

#### Judging Method:

- All attendees may judge – limit 4 quarters per person
- Place quarters in the bowl beneath your favourite photos
- Most quarters win - winners collect their quarters!



Join In and Have Fun!



## *Rhododendron kiusianum* 'Komo Kulshan'

Text and Photos submitted by Alan Campbell

The genus rhododendron covers a wide and diverse selection of plants. At present approximately 1200 species are recognized. The genus is categorized into sub-genus, sections and subsections which then list the different species. My focus here will be within the sub-genus Tsutsusi, loosely called *evergreen azaleas*.

Reportedly the sub-genus Tsutsusi has seen more hybridization than the other sub-genera combined. The sub-genus is further categorized into sections which again show diversification. Some being evergreen while others are deciduous; some are monomorphic (one type of leaf) while others are dimorphic (two types of leaves). This diversification is spread over a wide area, from Burma, parts of China, Taiwan and Japan.

Section Tsutsusi lists a species called *Rhododendron kiusianum*. This compact slow growing species is quite hardy as it grows around the 4000-foot level on the mountains of Kyushu, the most southern island of Japan. The plant is monomorphic (single leaf type) and can be evergreen or semi-deciduous depending on the temperatures that Winter brings.

*Rhododendron kiusianum* is very floriferous with flower colours ranging from white, shades of pink, rose or purple. The flowers being over an inch wide can easily hide the small leaves of the plant. Many forms of this azalea have been selected and named, with their names being registered.

One of my favourite named forms of *R. kiusianum* is 'Komo Kulshan', true to type in that it is a compact dwarf plant though the flowers are bi-coloured with pink tips and a white center. It is easily grown in a container, takes pruning graciously, is easily rooted from cuttings and is an excellent choice for a bonsai specimen. This selection was chosen and named by Harold Greer a long-time rhododendron grower, hybridizer, and enthusiast who had a large nursery in Eugene Oregon.



Now, one could be forgiven of wondering why an azalea from Japan has been given a name of a mountain in China. Mountains in China are given the suffix 'Shan' as in Wutai Shan or Laojun Shan. So why 'Komo Kulshan'?

Actually, this brings us back to Northwestern Washington State and the indigenous Lummi Nation and their native language. In the Lummi tongue Mount Baker is called Komo Kulshan.

Harold Grier brilliantly chose a name most suitable for a selection made by a West Coast rhododendron guru.

## Companion Plant for December



### *Callicarpa bodiniera*



*Callicarpa bodiniera*, also known as Beautyberry, is an upright growing shrub that can grow three metres tall by two and one-half metres wide. Although it is not particularly noticeable during the spring and early summer, it stars in late summer, fall and winter.

In summer, June to August, lilac flowers bloom in dense sprays along the stems of new growth. Following flowering, glossy violet-purple fruit begins to appear, ripening and remaining even after the leaves have dropped in fall. The foliage turns golden yellow to red-purple, then drops, leaving the lovely violet berries on bare stems.





The genus, *Callicarpa*, is Greek and means beautiful fruit. The species name, *bodinieri*, is named after Emile Maire Bodinier. She was a French missionary and botanist in China in the 19th century.

It grows best in well-drained soil, in part to full sun, but flowers best in full sun and when planted in groups, cross-pollination results in more abundant fruit. It is hardy in USDA Zones 6 to 8 but can be grown as an herbaceous perennial in Zone 5, by pruning back stems to about 6 inches in late winter, as it flowers on new wood.

A cultivar, *Callicarpa bodinieri* 'Profusion' (photo above), has an upward arching growth habit and can produce 30 to 40 violet fruits per cluster. It earned the prestigious **RHS Award of Garden Merit**.

**Your acquisition of this brilliant winter shrub is one you are unlikely to regret.**



## *How Well Do You Know Rhododendron 'Janet Blair'?*

I recently read in a *Lois Scheinfeld* blog, about a controversy surrounding the award-winning *Rhododendron* 'Janet Blair' and another rhododendron that I had not heard of before.

**Is *Rhododendron* 'Janet Blair' identical to *Rhododendron* John Wister?**

(Continued next page)



*Rhododendron* 'Janet Blair' is one of my favourite rhododendrons, so I decided to find out. Immediately, I turned to several of the thick books in the CVRS Library.

I first turned to Cox and Cox, ***Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Hybrids***, 1988 and searched for 'Janet Blair'. The comment: *syn. John Wister. Some people say it is not the same.* I searched for 'John Wister', but that rhododendron name was not listed in Cox and Cox.

Okay, that was interesting but not conclusive.

When I looked up R. 'John Wister' in ***Rhododendron Hybrids, A Guide to Their Origins*** by Shelley and Greer, 1986, I read a note to see *Rhododendron* 'Janet Blair'. Under 'Janet Blair' was the same comment: *Synonym 'John Wister' Hybridized by D. G. Leach in 1962.*

Well, there did not appear to be much controversy about the matter, but I wanted to know where the *idea* of controversy came from, so I did what I too often do first. I turned to *Mrs. Google*.

Of course, the information was there, in an article printed in our very own reliable Journal of the **American Rhododendron Society (JARS QBARS – v34n4)**. It was very interesting to me, and I decided that you might enjoy it as well.

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THE STRANGE AFFAIR OF 'JANET BLAIR' AND JOHN WISTER

James S. Wells, Red Bank, N.J.

Most keen growers and collectors of rhododendrons will know that there are two plants, one a seedling produced and named by David Leach and the other a Dexter seedling, which for all practical purposes appear to be identical. One is called 'Janet Blair', the other John Wister. Are these two plants the same? Is there any way of sorting things out, and if so, what is the correct name for the plant? Is it 'Janet Blair' or is it John Wister?

Under the international rules of nomenclature, the earliest recorded use of a name must take precedence, and if the plants are indeed the same, then the name 'Janet Blair' must prevail. But are they indeed the same plant which has somehow been named twice? I believe that they are not. Let us trace what is known of these two plants and see where it leads. 'Janet Blair' is a seedling produced by David Leach. He stated in a letter written in 1972 that he had sent "years ago a number of small plants of promising seedlings under number to the University of Washington" at Seattle, which I assume included the plant - although he does not say so - which he later named 'Janet Blair'. Apparently, David Leach officially registered his plant as 'Janet Blair' in 1958 and continued to disseminate it as plants all vegetatively produced, from the original seedling, under that name. A number of nurseries, particularly in Ohio, began to grow the plant and offer it under that name. We can with reason assume therefore that all the people who acquired plants under the name 'Janet Blair' at this time and began to grow it, were growing the same plant which had originated and been introduced by David Leach.

Now we come to a second plant which appeared as Dexter #201, the original number given to it by C. O. Dexter. The first record of this plant being disseminated is in 1939. Brian Mulligan, Director Emeritus of the University of Washington Arboretum at Seattle reports that their records show that two plants - both grafts - were received by the arboretum direct from the Dexter estate under the number 201. One of these original plants is still alive and well in the arboretum. Brian Mulligan also

also says that all the Dexters which they have received over the years have come direct from the Dexter estate. Their records are accurate and well maintained and a close scrutiny of these records indicate that they did not receive any material under number from David Leach.

Following the death of C. O. Dexter, his estate was ultimately purchased by Col. Roy Brown, who moved some of the better plants from there to a nearby piece of land which he owned. In 1950 the Dexter Evaluation Committee visited Col. Brown and were impressed with one of his plants which they designated "Brown-Dexter #6". It was noted at the time that this plant was also tagged with what was presumed to be an original Dexter label showing the number 201. Col. Brown later sold the Dexter Estate, upon which still remained many fine specimen plants, a number of which were then dug and sold by the new owners to customers in nearby New England and New York. A number of these plants were purchased by Mr. Beinecke for his garden in Greenwich, Conn., and among them was a plant labeled #201 - it may well have been the original plant so numbered.

As always, the plant impressed people who saw it, and people visiting the Beinicke garden asked for cuttings which were willingly given. Most of these people, believing the plant to be still unnamed gave their stock a name. One called his 'Smoky Pink' while another called his 'Tony Manitell'.

We now come to my part in the saga of Dexter #201. Soon after my arrival in this country in late 1946 I came to know John Wister. His help and advice was of great value to me in my task of rebuilding the Koster Nursery, at Bridgeton, New Jersey, and I made frequent visits to Swarthmore to see the plant material in the arboretum there. Learning of the Dexter hybrid group of rhododendrons from Mr. Wister we offered the propagation facilities at Koster Nursery to assist the Arthur Hoyt Scot Foundation, and the Tyler Arboretum widen their collection of Dexter plants known to exist elsewhere, but which they did not have.

John Wister knew of the group of original Dexters growing at the University of Washington Arboretum, and he therefore requested scions from Brian Mulligan. The records show that a group of scions all under number, were shipped to Koster Nursery in January 1952. All the scions were grafted, and as complete a collection as possible was sent to John Wister, some being retained by us as agreed. Among those retained were two grafts of a plant numbered #201. I felt that many of these plants in this group would prove to be of value and would ultimately be named and introduced. In 1955 I was working for the Bobbink Nurseries at East Rutherford, and remembering the group of plants received in 1952 I now wished to obtain the group again and wrote to Mr. Mulligan asking if the shipment could be duplicated. This he very kindly consented to do, and a group of scions was duly received at Bobbinks and grafted. Among this group was again Number 201. In 1956 I commenced my own nursery at Red Bank, New Jersey, and Mr. George White of Bobbink Nursery very kindly and generously gave me the group of Dexter Hybrids which we had grafted earlier. This group became some of the first plants set out on the nursery, and a year or two later they were planted in a permanent position in the garden around my home where they still are. Two plants of the number 201 grafted from material received from Seattle are still alive and well.

As time passed the quality and sound commercial value of #201 as a really good plant became clear and I wrote to Mr. Mulligan suggesting that it be named, and that as the original material had come from him, that he name it. He suggested that if it was as good as we all seemed to think, how about naming it after John Mister. I agreed. However, Mr. Mulligan is correct in saying that he did not name it. By this I presume he means that he did not register the name because he believed I would do so, and I must regretfully report that I did not do so either.

The name therefore was not registered. However, we began to propagate the plant in earnest and shortly thereafter it was offered by us in our wholesale catalog under the name 'John Wister' and has been so listed for nearly 20 years. As time passed it became apparent that there were two plants, very similar to each other, one called 'Janet Blair' and the other John Wister. Which brings us to the present position and what to do about it.

David Leach assumes that his plant has somehow become confused at the Washington Arboretum with their Dexter group, and that propagation material sent out by them to me at both Kesters Nursery and Bobbink Nursery was in fact 'Janet Blair' and not Dexter #201. This suggestion is rather hard to accept because it is clear that the arboretum keeps very detailed and exact records. This is a possibility - because mistakes can and do happen - but I do not think that this properly and completely answers all the questions. If we look at the long and well documented history of the plant known as Dexter #201 there are three lines which this plant has taken.

First, to Seattle. Grafts were received directly from Dexter and an original plant whose history is well documented is still there. Scions from this plant came to me and through me to Swarthmore where plants known as Dexter #201 are still growing. Scions from Seattle also came to me again at Bobbinks - clearly the same plant - were grafted and are growing happily in my garden.

Second. A plant was removed direct from the Dexter estate to Col. Roy Brown where it was renumbered Brown-Dexter #6 (BD #6) and was so propagated. This plant had an original Dexter label #201.

Third. John Wister recognized a plant at the Beinicke garden which had also come direct from the Dexter estate which he now knew as BD #6. It seems reasonably clear therefore that all these plants are from the original source, namely #201 on the Dexter estate. 'Janet Blair' on the other hand has apparently always been grown under that name from material which originated in the beginning from David Leach's seedling. Although this plant has been widely grown, both Seattle and Swarthmore report that they have no record of receiving a numbered plant from David Leach as a "Dexter" or in fact receiving any seedling from him under number. Seattle says "Our Dexters all came from the original source" and the Tyler Arboretum says that they have received numbered Nearing-Reid hybrids and also Bosley Dexter plants under number, but no numbered plants of Leach's own production.

To further confuse matters, as the apparent duplication became apparent a number of growers who had obtained plants from us under the name John Wister decided to change the name to 'Janet Blair'. However, we have never done this, and all plants produced and sold by us came from the original plants received from Seattle under the number 201.

It seems reasonably clear that there are indeed two plants very similar to each other. However, the history of Dexter #201 goes back a long way and is clearly known and documented. I think that it can be assumed that Dexter #201, and or BD #6 all stem from the original source plant on the Dexter estate numbered by Mr. Dexter #201. This is the plant that we named John Wister. Although it may closely resemble 'Janet Blair' we do not think it can possibly be the same plant.

If these arguments seem reasonable then we can assume that all the plants grown and disseminated as John Wister - no matter what they may now be called - are the same plant, and that for various reasons the name has not yet been validated.

(Continued next page)

(continued from page 11)

In an effort to clear up this matter I recently visited John Wister - who at well over 90 is still alert and actively engaged in horticulture - to find out what he would wish. He likes the plant known as Dexter #201 and would welcome a firm and legal attachment of his name to it. As this plant has never been officially registered it would seem to me that there is nothing to prevent the registration of the name John Wister for the plant previously known and grown under the Number Dexter #201 and this is what I propose to do. If this registration is accepted for this plant then the name will be officially recognised as correct for all plants vegetatively propagated from the various sources of #201.



Note: The Registrar, Ed Parker, reports that Herbert Racoff, D. V. M., with the Dexter Study Group of the Southeastern Chapter, A.R.S., has been collecting verified material of the clone(s) in question for some time. These plants will be grown side by side for eventual in bloom comparison by competent scientists. Their conclusions will be duly reported in the Quarterly.

Editor's Note:

I attempted to determine whether the registration of John Wister did happen, but my research did not produce an answer to that.



*I might be an
old man, but
I am a young
gardener -
Thomas
Jefferson*

PART 1 of 4

Fall into Gardening

Planning for the Future

*Gardeners are
lifelong students.*

Held in Qualicum Beach - October 27, 2024

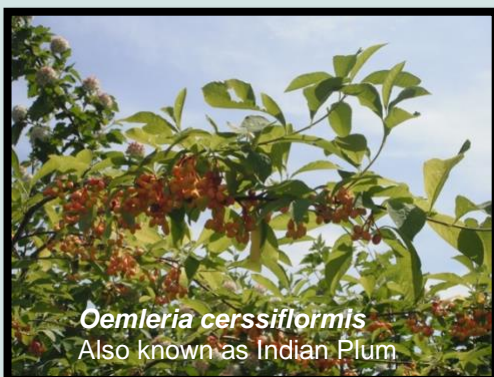
Notes from this excellent Conference are submitted by **Bernie Dinter**

Part 1

Tree Selection for Small Gardens – Nancy Moore

Gardens should offer biodiversity in trees

- *Heptacodium miconoides* - a tree with many useful features. Very attractive to late season pollinators
- *Acer griseum* – Paperbark Maple
- *Amelanchier alnifolia* – shrub-like, that can be trained to a small single or multi-trunk tree
- *Acer palmatum* – Japanese Maple
- *Cercis canadensis* ‘Forest Pansy’ and other varieties
- *Syringa reticulata* - super drought tolerant
- *Malus*, crabapple varieties
- *Acer circinatum* - grows upright in full sun, single or multi trunk
- *Oemleria cerssiformis* – Indian Plum, a large native shrub, early blooming for hummingbirds
- *Parrotia persica* – stunning in fall season
- *Cotinus coggygria* - single or multi trunk
- *Styrax japonicus* - white and pink blooming varieties, needs a little more water to thrive
- *Rosa glauca* - can be trained upright for an unusual larger plant
- *Hamamelis x intermedia* ‘Arnold’s Promise’



Hamamelis x intermedia ‘Arnold’s Promise’

Additional Notes from Nancy Moore:

- Verticillium wilt: prune out dead branches and the tree may come back; keep watered; shade helps
- *Rosa glauca* is prone to galls that may look attractive, caused by a native wasp. Scrape off galls when they look unattractive
- Need flowering plants in Fall, like *Abelia*, for pollinators to feed on,
- *Hebe* and *Grevillea* can be too tender in our climate
- *Nothofagus* works here, but is a forest tree



Next Newsletter: Part 2

Using Science to Inform Gardening Decisions

Daniel Mosquin of UBC Botanical Garden



VERTICILLIUM WILT

Verticillium wilt is caused by two similar fungal pathogens, *Verticillium albo-artrum* and *Verticillium dahliae* and can infect over 300 kinds of annual, perennial and woody ornamental plants worldwide. Maple, ash, and elm trees are most susceptible.

Both are soil-borne fungi that generally infect wounded roots of the plant. Fungal spores spread by mycelium growth or are transported in the sap to other parts of the plant, restricting water movement and causing dieback of branches. The tree may die rapidly or gradually over a period of years depending on the size of the tree.

Unfortunately, there is no chemical cure for Verticillium. Fungal spores can survive in the roots, trunk, or soil for long periods of time. Trees with severe infections should be removed and wood burned or buried deeply.

Plants are known to survive the fungus if proper care is given. Keeping trees and plants as stress-free as possible can help to fight Verticillium wilt.

- Prune trees and plants to remove dead or dying branches.
- Sterilize tools after pruning an infected plant.
- Both leaves and mulches can carry verticillium disease; therefore, burn these
- Try to minimize injury to plants from lawn mowers or other gardening tools
- Apply fertilizer treatments regularly to encourage proper soil and nutrient balance.

Some trees are resistant to verticillium wilt:

- Crabapple, White Oak, Hawthorn, Beech and Poplar

~ Information from Agriculture Canada, Davey Trees, Wisconsin Horticulture

BOOKS - BOOKS - BOOKS

THE CVRS LIBRARY HAS BOOKS FOR YOUR READING PLEASURE

Worth Every Minute of Your Time Spent

West Coast Gardening Natural Insect, Weed, and Disease Control Linda A. Gilkeson, Ph.D.

Author, Linda Gilkeson, is a keen entomologist who is fascinated with and knowledgeable about insects. She is a popular speaker, teacher, writer and trainer in the BC Master Gardener program.

This spiral-bound, 2nd edition resource manual includes everything a Pacific Northwest organic gardener needs to know how to manage pests, diseases and weeds for vegetable and fruit gardens, lawns, roses and other ornamentals.

This edition is revised and expanded with 35 new entries for insects and diseases, and has updated information on safe, effective methods. An excellent resource includes over 200 helpful photographs.

Overdue Library Books

Barrie Agar: (2 books)*

- Adams, Peter, *Bonsai with Japanese Maples:*
- Swindells, Philip, *Cavendish Encyclopedia of the Water Garden*

Joan Coleman: (1 book)*

- Cox, Kenneth, *Rhododendrons, A Care Manual*

Tricia Guignet: (2 books)*

- Cadwaladr, Margaret, *In Veronica's Garden*
- Whittle, Tyler, *The Plant Hunters*

Joyce Rodgers: (1 book)*

- Colston, C., Knott, Burrell and Judith, *Hellebores, A Comprehensive Guide*

Return overdue books to Verna Buhler as soon as possible

DECEMBER GARDENING TASKS

“Seriously?”

You might be asking how fanatical some gardeners are to think that they will, or should, continue with gardening tasks in December. That is a fair question. Days are short, nights are long. It is time to relax, congratulate oneself on a successful gardening season.

The following list is only for those days when you experience cabin fever, a need for fresh air, or some vigorous movement. Perhaps, like me, you sit and stare through the window at some of the vulnerable plants that could use a little more protection, the many trees and shrubs that need pruning, and the garden beds that haven't yet been tidied up, and you know the snow may be coming. The mountains nearby are already dazzling with pure white snow. At least the December list is not as long as those in other months of the year. Ticking off a small task is quite satisfying.

Perennials and Bulbs:

- Protect crowns of tender plants such as *Gunnera* by piling its large leaves over the crown
- Continue to divide and replant perennials, weather permitting
- Push down and cover exposed, frost-heaved roots
- Check stored bulbs and tubers and remove any infected ones

Trees and Shrubs:

- Continue planting trees, shrubs and roses as long as ground can be dug
- Lightly prune evergreens; use clippings for festive season decor

Fruit, Vegetables and Herbs:

- Plant fruit and berry bushes on milder days
- Mulch herb shrubs
- Check stored fruit and vegetables and discard rotting ones

General Garden Activities:

- Turn off irrigation systems and drain water lines prior to frost
- Drain and store hoses and sprinklers
- Move remaining tender potted plants to sheltered areas
- Rake leaves and avoid compacting soil in garden beds
- Clean and sharpen tools before storing

Or just. . .





Photo: Garth Wedemire

Rhododendron dauricum is a semi-evergreen thicket-forming shrub native to northeast Asia from Mongolia and northern China east into Siberia, Korea, and Japan.

Its natural habitat is in one of the most bitterly cold places on earth. **Therefore, it is one of the hardiest of all rhododendrons, to -32C.**

Rhododendron dauricum

Rhododendron dauricum grows in the margins of forest, happiest when sited in sheltered part-sun, part-shade locations. It blooms very early, adding bright rosy-purple blossoms as early as January or February in some areas. These early flowers glow vibrantly in the slanted rays of sun when very few other colours can be seen in gardens.

Anna's hummingbirds flock to this rich, natural source of nectar in winter that appears just when they need it most. The small scaly leaves of the rhododendron are highly aromatic. Brushing the leaves releases a sweet, spicy scent of cloves into the air. The essential oils are a complex mixture of chemicals, with a high concentration of trans-Caryophyllene, also prevalent in plants like cloves, cinnamon, basil, and hops. In fall, the deciduous leaves turn a rich shade of yellow bronze, remaining on the plant for several weeks, while branch tips of the floral and leaf buds are dark green and persist through the winter.

As one parent of the popular *Rhododendron* 'PJM Group', it has passed both its hardiness and aromatic qualities to the hybrid.



Photo: Garth Wedemire

Continued page 16

Anna's hummingbird delights in the nectar factory of this extremely early blooming rhododendron.

Only a very perceptive eye can spot the hummingbird hidden in the charming rhododendron.

***Rhododendron dauricum* is a species delivering broad benefits to a garden.**



MILNER GARDENS and WOODLAND UPDATE

Approximately 230 species of rhododendrons can be observed seasonally at Milner Gardens

Thank you to Dorothy Kennedy for forwarding this article, written by Jessica Durling, about the special recognition that Milner Gardens recently received

**Vancouver Island University's Milner Gardens receives five-bloom rating
Communities in Bloom recognizes gardens as a special attraction**

Vancouver Island University's Milner Gardens received a coveted five-bloom rating from Communities in Bloom, plus a special mention for its rhododendron garden. . .

Located in Qualicum Beach, the garden boasts about 230 species of rhododendrons, some endangered, as well as a small orchard and food garden, blue-green Hostas, honeysuckle, and lace-cape hydrangeas, among other species. Next to it is the woodland, with 24 hectares of a coastal Douglas fir old-growth forest visitors can explore.

"The rhododendron species garden at Milner Gardens and Woodland stands as the only one of its kind in Canada and among the rare few globally," noted judges Tina Liu and Leslie Cornell. "Since the site being gifted to Vancouver Island University in 1996, it has served as an invaluable educational resource."

To score *five blooms* as a special attraction, the garden had to score well on a 100-point scale. In a detailed report submitted to the garden, the judges also included ways the attraction could be improved with educational resources.

"Mostly what they want us to do is give more on the education front of many of the categories they talk about – conservation and land restoration. That seems to be one general theme - to talk more and show more about some of the things we're doing," said Geoff Ball, Milner Gardens and Woodland's executive director. "As far as the general visitation experience, there wasn't a lot of extra add-ons; they seem quite content with what we've got."

The *Greig Rhododendron Species Garden* first opened in 2018, organized into six global geographic areas including Szechuan, Yunnan, Himalayas, Northeast Asia, Europe and North America.

According to Ball, that was only the first phase. A second phase is underway, which will include the addition of leafed specimens that can grow 18 metres high to show the visiting public "*how big rhododendrons can be in the wild.*" Current species can be viewed growing over nine metres, as noted by Communities in Bloom.

"It was an excellent opportunity to just have people objectively come through and look at the whole operation, and they look at everything from your service area, your compost pile, your storage for how you store your sand and gravel, to how you interact with the community and the education programs, conservation programs and sustainability as well as the sheer beauty and attractiveness and how well the gardens are kept."

Moving forward, Ball said the comments around education has been something VIU has been working into the garden's strategic plan as part of its mandate, and courses may be offered at some point.

"We are looking at launching that end of things very soon; we're just wrapping up our strategic plan and it's going to make sure we keep offering all we do for the community but play a bigger role for VIU in terms of offering the community educational opportunities, and support student and experiential learning on-site," he said. "So, we're very excited with that, and it seems like it's aligning with what the judges said we should be doing."

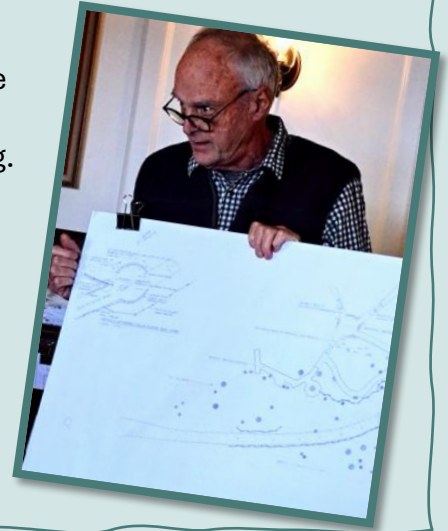
The rhododendrons are best viewed at their peak in April and May.

Greig Rhododendron Species Garden Advisory Meeting



Alan Campbell and Verna Buhler attended the last GRSG Advisory Meeting in October, and Alan gave a full report on the development progress at our November Meeting.

Volunteer landscape architect, **Jim Cadwaladr** presents the progress and next steps for Phase II of the garden.



Nepal's 'mad honey' harvest threatened by climate change

Information and Photo from AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE - AFP JUL 09, 2024



Honey hunters of the Gurung ethnic community harvest honeycomb at a cliff in the Lamjung in Nepal

- Ten years ago, the village of Taap could harvest 1000 litres a season. Now they are lucky to get 250 litres.
- Shifting weather patterns and environmental threats are impacting the *mad honey* hunters' livelihood in the remote forest 100 kilometres northwest of Kathmandu.

In the remote cliffs of Nepal's Lamjung district, skilled honey hunters risk their lives to gather prized hallucinogenic honey from giant bees, a tradition threatened by climate change.

The high-altitude honey comes from the world's largest honeybee species *Apis laboriosa*, which gather rhododendron nectar producing a honey with mild psychoactive properties.

Bees are highly susceptible to changing temperatures. With each passing year it is becoming harder to find bees.

2024 – 2025

Calendar of Events

Contact CVRS:

cowichanvalleyrhododendron@gmail.com

Thursday, December 12, 2024, 1pm

Fresh Greens Festive Workshop (See Page 3 in this issue)

Saturday, December 14, 2024

Christmas Event – See the notice in this newsletter

Saturday, February 1, 2025, 9am to 4:30pm

The Master Gardeners Association of BC at Mary Winspear Centre, Sidney, BC Five Speakers: *Beyond Beauty: How adding biodiversity creates healthy and beautiful gardens*

Wednesday, February 5, 2025, 7pm

**CVRS February Meeting at The Hub
Alan Campbell: *Yakkity-Yak***

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY EVENTS

June 5 – 8, 2025

ARS 2025 Spring Convention Wolfville, Nova Scotia



USEFUL LINKS

Cowichan Rhododendron Society:

cowichanrhodos.ca/

Victoria Rhododendron Society:

victoriarhodo.ca/index.html

Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society:

marsrhodos.ca/

North Island Rhododendron Society:

nirsrhodos.ca/ws/

The American Rhododendron Society:

rhododendron.org/

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society:

nanaimorhodos.ca

Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden:

rhodygarden.org

Nanoose Garden Club:

nanoosegardenclub.ca/

Linda Gilkeson:

lindagilkeson.ca/

Vancouver Island Rock and Garden Society:

virags.com

Linda Chalker-Scott:

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

Steve Henning:

rodyman.net

Rhododendron, Camellia, Magnolia:

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

Office of the American Rhododendron Society:

member@arsoffice.org



Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

(A Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society)

Duncan, B.C.

Email:

cowichanvalleyrhododendron@gmail.com

2020-21 Executive

President: Verna Buhler

Vice-President: Alan Campbell

Secretary/Treasurer: Diane Allen

Director-at-Large: Janice Moseley

Director-at-Large: Laurie Moseley

Director-at-Large: Elisabeth Zoffman

Director-at Large: Tricia Guiguet

Convenors

Sunshine: Carrie Nelson

Tea: Sandy Campbell, Joyce Rodgers

Raffle: Hilda Gerrits

Speaker Planning: Sandra Stevenson

Fundraising: The Executive Team

CVRS Garden Tours: TBA

CVRS Bus Tours: TBA

Library: Verna Buhler

Membership Chairperson: David Annis