

Newsletter

Volume 30:5 June 2019

President's Message

This past week I attended two of the garden shows in the Valley (for the first time, incredibly). There were some beautiful flowers and plants there, but it also demonstrated how many talented gardeners there are in the valley.

One of the shows had demonstrations from an elementary school, and it brought home how important it is to encourage younger people to garden. Many today do not have the large vegetable garden our parents or grandparents kept, where the children filled the roles of harvesters and reluctant weeders. My earliest horticultural memory is special time spent with my great grandmother and



Fragrant *R.* 'Newcomb's Sweetheart' poses in front of gently fading, fragrant *R.* 'Loderi Pink Diamond'

SUMMER PICNIC

Saturday, June 15, 2019; 12 pm Hosted by Elisabeth Zoffman (More details on page 18)

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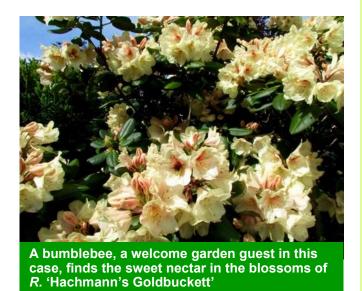
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her salt cellar, and wandering among the roses salting the slugs as we came upon them. I entered in to the spirit of this chore with the gruesome fascination that a child demonstrates on such an occasion. A more genteel activity was finding the faces in the pansies, or discovering how snapdragons came by their name.

I was an expert apple thief by the age of ten, and with my equally larcenous friends and compatriots would raid vegetable gardens under the cover of darkness. This from children who choked at the sight of a vegetable on the plate! I realize now that our activities were not as clandestine as we believed, and the neighbours across the road pushed the raspberry canes through the fence, and allowed the strawberries to escape under the fence; the peas too straggled between the loose boards.

Forbidden fruit is truly the sweetest.

Barrie Agar, President



"Putting Down Roots" Propagation Club Work Party Saturday, June 23, 2019; 1pm 3908 Cowichan Lake Road

(Verna and George's)

Your cuttings want to be potted up so that they can continue to put down stronger and stronger roots!!

Bring 4 inch pots if you have extra:

We will pot this years rooted cuttings into smaller than the onegallon pots that we used over the last several years, to determine whether the growth and survival rates improve with that practice.

Hope to see you there!!



Propagation Club 2018 cuttings



Cuttings from 2016, planted in one gallon pots

Letter from the Editor



Dear Friends.

It is Summer Picnic time already!

I am looking forward to seeing all of you, and I do hope you are ALL able to come and celebrate the year that we have had.

The gardens have been absolutely stunning this year despite our concerns when the cold weather struck in February. Thank you so much Randy and Dorothy, Al and Liz, Don and Louise, Alan and Sandy, Carrie and Rick, Tricia, and Rose for sharing your gardens with fellow club members. (My sincere apologies to anyone I missed; I was away for part of May)



In this newsletter, the last until September, the

focus is on several Island gardens outside of our Cowichan Valley of which members in our club have spoken and some of us have never seen. Snapshots of several of these gardens are included in the newsletter while others are not. I did not have photos of Ken Webb's garden, the Horticultural Center of the Pacific, Finnerty Garden, nor Abkahazi Garden to share, but these are definitely gardens to add to the list of "must visit" as well.



Some of you are familiar with these reputable gardens and know them well; others have only heard about them and longed to see them; some of you have not yet heard about these special places and the gardeners who lovingly and passionately created them. At the picnic, let's discuss these gardens over plates of delicious food in a lovely garden setting and perhaps make plans, and even commitments, to visit them next season.

Hopefully the photos will stimulate such conversations.

Verna

Elisabeth Zoffman's Creation

"Most of all, I like to share my garden."

"This is the fifth garden I have built. The outcome has improved with practice but I still have too many plants."

Before, the upper back of the yard in 2017 shows a lumpy, weedy lawn, but now . . .





Before the sunroom addition, the yard was almost barren. Now it is healthy and colourful, and invites Nature's guests

"I like to plant with contrasts of leaf form, shape and colour to provide interest when there are no blooms to see. I also try to keep birds and bees in mind by planting early blooming plants to keep mason bees and hummingbirds happy."





Before and after---the variegated dogwood provides the contrast Elisabeth aims for in her design.





It is Elisabeth's vision, and to get it right during construction, she sometimes has to manoeuver the equipment herself.

Really, for Elisabeth, it's another enjoyable and satisfying aspect of creating.



One year later, the plants are responding to their new home and special care.



"My love of plants and flowers is mildly obsessive. I can't resist a plant I've never seen before. This past winter has taught me to cover my eyes when tempted by anything that has Zone 8 written on the tag."

"Most of all, I like to share my garden."

Elisabeth

Note:

If you haven't met Elisabeth yet, nor visited her beautiful garden, here is your perfect opportunity!

Elisabeth is hosting the CVRS Summer Picnic on Saturday, June 15, 2019 1595 Westlock Place, off Maple Bay Road

As well, Elisabeth has agreed to be the CVRS Guest Speaker at our first meeting in September.

The Weesjes/Larson Connection

by Alan Campbell

This article was first published in the November 2006 Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society Newsletter. It is reprinted by permission.

The photos were taken in Evelyn Weesjes' garden in May 2019, by Verna Buhler.



Evelyn Weesjes with her ever enthusiastic smile in her garden, Towner Crest, in Saanich in May 2019

The University of British Columbia knew talent when they saw it. Evelyn Jack received her degree in horticulture in 1954 and was immediately hired by the university into its horticultural program. Three years earlier, the university had hired a young man newly emigrated from Holland and employed him in its burgeoning Botanical Garden. The young man was Nick Weesjes, and he was elevated to head gardener in 1955. The next 25 years saw Evelyn Jack and Nick Weesjes increase the prominence of the genus Rhododendron in western Canada and the Pacific Northwest area of the United States, and, as well, the breadth and depth of the UBC campus gardens. During the ensuing 25 years, three relationships developed which would enhance the gardening pleasures of the growing number of rhododendron enthusiasts in British Columbia.

Though I have mentioned in an earlier article the relationship that grew between UBC and the newly formed Rhododendron Species Foundation at Federal Way, Washington, I would like to expand slightly on that subject. In 1964, Dr. Milton Walker of the Foundation and Mary Greig approached UBC concerning U.S. import regulations, which disallowed the Foundation to bring plant material directly from Britain to the U.S. I should clarify here that even though plant material could not go

directly from Britain to the States without being fumigated, effectively destroying the plant material as well as any parasites, British material could enter Canada and, by agreement, the States and Canada would allow plant material to cross the 49th parallel. It was another case of foreign elements using Canada as a stepping-stone into the United States.

Dr. Walker had amassed a large amount of seed and cutting material from the best of British gardens, so much that UBC had to dedicate the task of propagating this material to a proficient individual. Evelyn Jack was that person. The agreement with the Foundation allowed UBC to keep for itself an example of each species that Evelyn propagated. These in turn were handed over to Nick Weesjes to add to the botanical garden on the campus grounds. It was from these introductions that Evelyn began to propagate additional plants to begin her own collection of rhododendron species.

The second relationship, which developed, fortunately for rhododendron growers, was also with a fellow from the Lower 48. Hjalmar Larson, a nurseryman in the Tacoma area, was no stranger to our province. During his annual fishing trips to Campbell River, he became acquainted with the Royston Nursery and established a friendship with

Ted and Mary Greig. In 1954, Larson was invited to give a lecture on grafting at UBC, and through this event came to the attention of Evelyn Jack and Nick Weesies. Sometime later, Ed Trayling, rhododendron grower and hybridizer on the Lower Mainland, also a friend of Larson's, closed the loop by arranging a visit to the Tacoma nursery for Evelyn and Nick. From as early as the late 1940s, Larson had been receiving seeds of rhododendron species and cuttings of English hybrids from Britain. He had somehow managed to do this despite the import restrictions.

Not only was Hjalmar a nurseryman, he also entered the realm of hybridizer. Here again, the problems of too much product and not enough time and space became an issue. He needed the help of other competent growers and Evelyn was high on his list. Over time, she received the product of 40 hybrid crosses and grew on more than 1000 seedlings from them. Growing these seedlings on, painfully evaluating every single plant, and registering those deemed best deemed the best has resulted in some

apparent by now. Few people can claim to be employed at an occupation that is also their source of enjoyment and their hobby. Nick and Evelyn were two of these, and while working alongside it was natural that their working relationship should evolve beyond the platonic. The Weesjes, upon reaching retirement age and leaving the employ of UBC in 1981, now directed their energies to their own dreams. Other than the four years between 1938 and 1942 when, as a young girl, she lived in Scotland, Evelyn had grown up in Victoria, her birthplace, so acquiring land and moving to the north end of the Saanich Peninsula was not an unexpected relocation. Here were 4 hectares of raw land, a diamond in the rough, and ready to be shaped and polished to reflect a dream.

Towner Crest began in 1982, and it took several years for the planting beds to take shape. The results of 20 years of collecting the best to come out of British gardens while working at UBC quickly filled beds with mature plants, while the assessing of hybrid seedlings filled even more. The main feature of the cultivated 3 hectares is rhododendrons in the natural setting of native conifers, but hardly the only feature. [Please keep in mind while you read, that this new undertaking was being done by a retired couple.] Other than the driveway and the house site, all work was done by hand. A few large-leaf maples and any dead or diseased conifers were removed; the remaining native flora was retained. This native flora included Douglas fir, grand fir, big-leaf maple, red alder, cascara, arbutus, and yew, as well as Oregon grape and sword fern for ground cover.

Nick also dug, by hand, a drainage ditch 60 cm deep

by 30 cm wide to reroute excess water around the 4 hectares or toward a small creek running through the property, in effect making the property as a whole a raised bed. A maze-like watering system runs through the garden,

giving each plant its own drip feed or micro spray,



of the finest plants that we can grow in our gardens.

Being the astute readers that you are,

the third relationship that I alluded to should be

not just to the rhododendrons, but also to the hundreds of other trees, shrubs, hostas, and candelabra primulas that make up the more than 3000 plants currently planted out.

It will have become apparent to you that in designating Vancouver Island hybrids I am being liberal, geographically The speaking. 'Malahat' ('Gill's Triumph' × R. strigillosum) I can't include. is a Larson hvbrid produced and grown in his nursery at Tacoma; he just happened to name the plant after one of his favourite drives. The same goes for 'Qualicum's Pride' ('Anna' × 'Cotton Candy'), a hybrid produced and raised by Lloyd Newcomb at his garden in Snohomish, Washington State. The plant was chosen from his





be its marguee plant at the ARS Western Regional Conference held in 1995 at the mid-Island community. But when a stalwart of the local rhododendron community, Dave Dougan, raves about an unnamed hybrid that the Weesjes have grown from Larson seed and Evelyn names that hybrid 'Dave Dougan' {R. yakushimanum × (R. calophytum × 'Grisette')} registered 1993, that plant I just have to include. Evelyn says she can see very little of calophytum in it, but that it is a nice, well-behaved yak hybrid. Evelyn honoured another wellknown Island rhododendron grower and historian by naming another of her Larson seedlings 'Bill Dale' (R. yakushimanum × R. strigillosum) (1993). A sister seedling, 'Elze Weesjes', named for one of Nick's sisters, was registered in 1996. Two more of his sisters had rhododendrons named for them in 1994. appropriately enough, sister seedlings yakushimanum × 'Mrs. Horace Fogg'. A well-known plantsman and member of the Victoria Chapter lent his 'John name to yet another Larson seedling,

garden and named by the Mount Arrowsmith Chapter to

Trelawny' ('Jutland × 'Fusilier') (1994). The next hybrid evaluated and found worthy of registering in 1995 was 'Gretha Rijksen' ('Kluis Sensation' × 'Fusilier'), once again named for a sister of Nick's. After much prodding from Evelyn, an excellent red strigillosum hybrid was named and registered by Ken and Dot Gibson of Tofino as 'Clayoquot Warrior' ('Essex Scarlet' × R. strigillosum) (1995). The latest Larson seedling from the Weesjes garden to be evaluated and chosen is 'Lies Weesjes' (R. yakushimanum × 'Belvedere') (1998), named for yet another of Nick's sisters. Of all the Larson/Weesjes hybrids listed above, 'Clayoquot Warrior' is perhaps the one most available. The others have not been propagated as much, but I'm working on that.

Building a new garden from scratch, growing on and evaluating 1000+ seedlings of Hjalmar Larson's crossings must have kept Evelyn busy, but she did find the time to demonstrate her own aesthetic nature. Her keen eye and artistry are evident in the hybrids 'Nick's Choice' and 'Towner Crest', sister seedlings of 'Van Nes Sensation' × 'Mrs. Horace Fogg', both registered in 1995. Both of these plants growing in our garden have set buds and will bloom next spring. **Herman Vaartnou** of Victoria, of whom I will speak more next month,



[Editor's Note: in December 2006] was honoured by Evelyn with the naming of her hybrid 'Dr. Herman Vaartnou' (R. macabeanum × unnamed R. lacteum hybrid) (1996). Originally the lacteum was received by Evelyn in one of the seed shipments from Britain as species seed, but as the seed grew and matured it just didn't seem to key out to the true species. She expects the seed was the product of naturally-occurring hybridization, which is why she calls the cross as being from "an unnamed R. lacteum hybrid". I have yet to get cutting material of 'Dr. Herman Vaartnou', but I have managed to obtain cuttings of the *lacteum* hybrid as it is also a fine plant. Evelyn has intimated that there are many more unnamed hybrids planted out amongst her gems. That teaser intrigues me to no end!

The locals, as well as informed others, seem to use the Weesjes garden as a semi private park, coming and going as whimsy takes them, and Nick and Evelyn are more than generous in sharing their Eden with those who take pleasure from it. [Editor's Note: Although Nick has passed, Evelyn has continued this open garden practice] In conversation with Evelyn, she asked that I mention her and Nick less and their garden more, but the garden is them. The garden expresses their expectations, knowledge, drive and commitment much more than any conversation would draw from this quiet and self-effacing couple.

What the garden cannot tell you is that in 1970 the ARS proudly awarded Evelyn the Gold medal, its highest award, for her work on the genus rhododendron and in 1990 the Victoria Chapter was very pleased to present her with the Bronze Medal for her work at the Chapter level. Towner Crest, the garden overlooking Towner Bay from the crest of the hill, is a jewel in the crown of gardens encircling the Garden City of Victoria.

A Magical Moment in Time By Jim Barlup, May 25, 2019

Jim Barlup has asked to share his email with the members of the VRS and the Parks and Facilities, of the Township of Esquimalt.

We wish to share this with the members of the CVRS as well.



"April 27, 2019 was a beautiful Saturday at Esquimalt Gorge Park. As I watched, magic took place right in front of my eyes. Over 40 eager volunteers from the Victoria Rhododendron Society and the Esquimalt City Parks Department converted a plot of green grass into a lovely rhododendron garden in just over six hours. Each participant gave according to his/her area of expertise. Contributions ranged from introducing the idea to the city, to following through with the administrative details, to rooting cuttings, to nurturing them on to maturity, to transporting the plants to the site, to preparing the soil, to placing the plants, to digging the holes and putting the Barlup hybrids



into the soil. Even members who were not able to attend offered their moral support from their homes.



It all started some years ago when Lois Blackmore purchased an unknown plant named R. 'Windsong' created by a relatively unknown hybridizer named Jim Barlup. Lois's enthusiasm for the Barlup hybrids grew and quickly spread to the rest of the club. An international collaboration was born whereby Jim provided the club with cuttings and stock plants for plant sales. The club, in turn, contributed to the research and preservation of the Barlup hybrids.

This garden is an acknowledgement of the combined efforts of all of us,

especially the small group who shared my dreams of possibilities from the very beginning. The magic spans the borders of two countries and will continue to do so as long as my work here is perpetuated. Judy and I will move to a retirement community this summer and I will be withdrawing from my life's passion. The pain of withdrawal is lessened knowing that this garden will live on for future generations to enjoy.



Thanks to the Victoria Rhododendron Society and Township of Esquimalt for the magic!"

(Jim Barlup, jimbarlup@earthlink.net; Judy Barlup judy.barlup@icloud.com; 425-885-5296)

Note: These rhododendrons, *R.* 'North Wind', *R.* 'Judy's Choice', *R.* 'Rose Tango' and many other hybrids created and registered by Jim Barlup may be found on the website: www.hirsutum.info

OUR BLOOMING ISLAND GARDENS!





In Ladysmith

"About a week ago I was in Ladysmith and took a drive by the Cynthia Rhodo on Kitchener St. I had heard that it had been damaged over the winter but was pleased to see a substantial portion has been saved.

The first photo was from a few years ago before the damage. The second one is from mid-May 2019 as the blooms are fading."

Regards, Bernie Dinter

In Sooke

Sean and Brenda's garden displays a vast collection of unique species rhododendrons overlooking the vast Pacific Ocean in the tiny community of Shirley.





In Tofino:

Just a tiny snapshot of Ken Gibson's Garden in Tofino, looking up, at, and over.

















CVRS AGM

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

CVRS - 2019 Annual General Meeting and Picnic: June 15, 2019; 12pm start

LOCATION: Elisabeth Zoffmann's; 1595 Westlock Place (off Maple Bay Road)

"Hear Ye, Hear Ye"

BELOW IS THE SLATE OF CANDIDATES FOR THE CVRS BOARD THUS RECEIVED AS OF MAY 31, 2019

Anyone wishing to stand for a position, or nominate candidates (CVRS member in good standing) to the Board, please do so prior to the AGM by contacting Barrie Agar at (250) 748-2308, or you may nominate someone on the day of the AGM. See table for specifics on positions.

Positions of the Board:

Position	Term	Status	Comments:
President	1 year	Open for Nominations	OPEN
Vice President	1 year	Open for Nominations	Diane Allen, willing to stand for election
Treasurer	1 year	Open for Nominations	Incumbent, Elaine Kitchen, willing to stand for re-election
Secretary	1 year	Open for Nominations	Incumbent, Verna Buhler, willing to stand for re-election
Member at Large	2 year	Alan Campbell	Incumbent, willing to stand
Member at Large	2 year	Open for Nominations	Ali Morris, willing to stand for election
Member at Large	2 year	Open for Nominations	Candace Feeney, willing to stand for election
Member at Large	2 year	Open for Nominations	Rhoda Taylor, willing to stand for election

Reference: CVRS Constitution & BC Society's Act.

SUMMER PICNIC

Saturday, June 15, 2019; 12 pm Hosted by Elisabeth Zoffman 1595 Westlock Road, Duncan, BC

Directions:

Coming from Duncan on Maple Bay Road, turn left onto Westlock Road, left again onto Westlock Place, and then left into the cul de sac. The house is the yellow house off of a small road from the cul de sac. There is parking on Westlock Place, on the cul de sac, and on Shoreview Drive.



Elisabeth's home is on a bit of a hill. Go around the left of the house, and there are gentle stairs to the garden behind. Contact Barrie Agar, or Elisabeth for more information.

Potluck Meal:

Provided: Salmon and BBQ Chicken will be provided

Punch, some spirits

Bring: Your favourite picnic dishes to share---Savoury, Sweet, Salads, or Bread

Personal Drinks

Seating and Eating:

Bring: Lawn Chairs (there is seating already available for about 20 people)

Personal Plates and Cutlery

OFFICIAL ELECTIONS

for the 2019 - 2020

CVRS Executive Committee

Will take place at the June CVRS Meeting at the Summer Picnic, kindly hosted by Elisabeth Zoffman



VOLUNTEER FOR A POSITION FULL OF FUN!!

Have a great time next year by becoming FULLY involved in the more enjoyable aspects of club membership.

The CVRS offers growing opportunities and a medium for propagating your great ideas!

BE THAT GROWTH AND CHANGE THAT YOU WOULD LOVE TO SEE!

Calendar of Upcoming Events



NRS Wind-Up Party, (Lightburn home, Nanoose) (See Notice Page 19 for more info)

THURSDAY, JUNE 13, 2019; 2 pm

CVRS Book Club Meeting

Verna and George's: 3908 Cowichan Lake Road, Duncan, BC

SATURDAY, JUNE 15, 2019; 12/noon

CVRS SUMMER PICNIC and AGM

Elisabeth Zoffman's (See Notice Page 17)

SUNDAY, JUNE 23, 2019; 12/Noon

VRS Summer Picnic (Blackmore home, Victoria)

SEPTEMBER 4, 2019; 7:30 pm

CVRS MONTHLY MEETING

Speaker: Elisabeth Zoffman - "Companion Plantings"

SATURDAY, JUNE 22, 2019; 1 pm

PROPAGATING CLUB WORK PARTY (potting up cuttings)
Verna and George's: 3908 Cowichan Lake Road, Duncan, BC

SEPTEMBER 27-29, 2019

ARS FALL CONFERENCE, Parksville, BC

APRIL 30 - MAY 3, 2020

ARS ANNUAL CONVENTION (75th Anniversary) Portland, Oregon

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You may find Fairy Houses have magically appeared throughout the Gardens!

Garden Admission 10am to 4:30pm

ADMISSION PRICES:

\$12 Adult \$7 Youth

FREE | Children 12 and under,





Fairy Tea Time June 20 - 23 12 noon to 4 pm

Tea and Fairy Cupcake \$7 per person

Fairy Tea Time served in the Queen's Room and at the Milner House patio

Sorry, no Full Afternoon High Tea or reservations while Fairy Houses are in the Gardens.

2179 West Island Highway Qualicum Beach, BC I 250.752.6153 | milinergardens.viu.ca

Nanaimo Rhododendron Society WIND-UP PARTY

Hi Rhodo Fans – Just a quick reminder that our

NRS Potluck Wind-up Party is coming soon.

Saturday, June 8 - 4:00 pm **Home of Art & Susan Lightburn** 1489 Bay Dr, Nanoose Bay

Don't forget to bring: cutlery, plates, cup or glass; a potluck dish that you love to make and share; a chair to relax on; beverage of your choice

Pork tenderloin, coffee, tea and punch will be provided

We will be having a draw for plants or garden tools and accessories (no lawnmowers or rototillers). So would everyone please bring a plant or item that some other member would appreciate.**Bring your friends, neighbours, or visiting relatives to help celebrate our year

Please car pool if you can - limited parking.

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

Nanoose Bay Garden Club:

nanoosegardenclub.ca/

Linda Gilkeson's website:

lindagilkeson.ca/

Vancouver Island Rock and Garden Society:

virags.com

Linda Chalker-Scott

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

2018-19 Executive

President: Barrie Agar

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Vice President: Ali Morris

Past President:

Secretary: Verna Buhler

Vlbuhler@shaw.ca 250-748-8889

Treasurer: Elaine Kitchen

y1880@yahoo.ca 250-746-6419

Membership Chair: David Annis

Directors at Large:

Diane Allen, Alan Campbell, Ron Martin,

Elizabeth Zoffman

Convenors

Sunshine: Mary Gale

Tea: Judeen Hendricksen

Raffle: Hilda Gerrits

Club Liaison: Alan Campbell

Library: Verna Buhler

Membership Recruitment: Peter Lewis

Program Committee Co-ordinator: Alan Campbell

History: Ian Efford

Garden Tours/Trips: Al Murray CV Garden Fair: The Team Facility Liaison: Roy Elvins Christmas Party: The Team

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Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

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

http://cowichanrhodos.ca



Date TBA http://cowichanvalleygardenfair.com



www.facebook.com/ CowichanValleyGardenFair