



Newsletter



Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

Volume 29:2 March 2018

President's Message

Just as we thought we had made it through winter, she threw another blast at us, just to make sure we were not taking her for granted. It can take a while to assess damage - it often doesn't show until the weather warms up in earnest. The most likely damage is to the flower buds, especially of the early bloomers, which were already starting to swell, and were soft and susceptible. If you live in an area that regularly gets frost in early spring, it might be better to grow the rhododendrons flowering later, from April onwards, and save yourself the heartbreak.



R. riiei: very early bloomer, originally from S. Central Sichuan at 1200 – 2200 m

Guest Speaker

Maedythe Martin

Primulas & Rhododendrons

Wed, March 7 @ 7:30pm

(More details on page 3)

In This Issue:

Primula Resources 4

Letter from the Editor 5

From Our Members ...
Planting Mix/Nutrients 6

Rhododendron 'Lee's
Scarlet' 7

Preparing Plant Donations for
the CVRS Plant and Garden
Fair 8

The Species Garden at
Milner 10

Cairnsmore Place Plant
Sale 12

Sharing Your Garden 13

Calendar of Events 16

2017-18 Executive 17

If it is only the flowers that have been damaged you can breathe a sigh of relief and carry on. However in cases of sharp cold, and dry conditions, it is common for leaves to be “scorched” especially around the margins. This is as a result of frigid winds blasting the leaves and removing moisture, and the frozen ground not allowing the uptake of water. The leaf rolling often seen in rhododendrons in adverse conditions is an attempt by the plant to conserve moisture. The leaf forming a cigar tube shape protects the stomata, microscopic openings for air exchange on the underside of the leaf. As the temperature rises and soil water becomes available, the leaves unroll to their normal position.

It is a poor day when you don’t learn something, and I have had my innocence shattered on the subject of rhododendron geographic origins and culinary preferences of deer. My common and apparently blatantly untrue belief that deer don’t eat rhododendrons has been cruelly laid open as a falsehood. Due to circumstances I won’t go into here, the Gardens at Hatley Park have been home to a herd of five or so deer for the past while, and they have laid waste to our Woodland Garden. *R. rirei* is a skeleton. *R. mallosum* is a



R. mallosum: early bloomer, originally from NE Upper Burma, W. Yunnan



R. sino-grande: Upper Burma, SE Tibet Arunachal Pradesh, N & W Yunnan at 2100 – 3400 m.

trace-work of stems and petioles, and the *R. sino-grande* relations are a shadow of their former selves. All were rhododendrons I had thought would be somewhat unpalatable, although, admittedly, they are newly planted, and at optimum deer browsing height. However, according to Brian White, the Asian rhododendrons are more susceptible, having evolved with less predation than the American species which have co-existed with deer from time immemorial.

There are several morals to this story.

- Never trust a deer.
- I should have paid more attention to geography in school.
- It might pay to protect newly planted rhododendrons, especially if they are of an Asian pedigree, and if the venison is wandering at will.

Barrie Agar, President

Guest Speaker: March 7, 2018

“Primula and Rhododendrons, Can They Be Friends?”

“This presentation provides a survey of the Primula and auricular currently grown with a bit of their history. We will then explore how one might incorporate some Primula into a rhododendron garden.”

Maedythe Martin

Primula Specialist, Auricula Fancier

Editor of the American Primrose Society Journal

“Ever since I found a purple garden auricula at a Horticultural Society sale in the 1970’s I have been a slave to auriculas. Since the mid 1990’s, I have been hybridizing my own. I am fascinated by the history of the plant, especially the re-introduction of the striped auricular from Elizabethan times.

My daughter and I currently edit the American Primrose Society quarterly and I am in charge of finding the content for each issue. But, luckily, there is always something to say about Primula and auricular.”

Primula auricula 'Cornmeal'

A Fancy auricula with a black body raised by Cy Happy, an American grower in the 1970s. It is unique in that it has creamy yellow meal and although it hasn't got a very good form for exhibiting, it is considered somewhat of an interesting curiosity. Maedythe Martin, who has been an auricula grower and prominent member of the American Primrose Society for many years, gave this plant to Val Woolley.



Primula auricula 'John Kerridge'

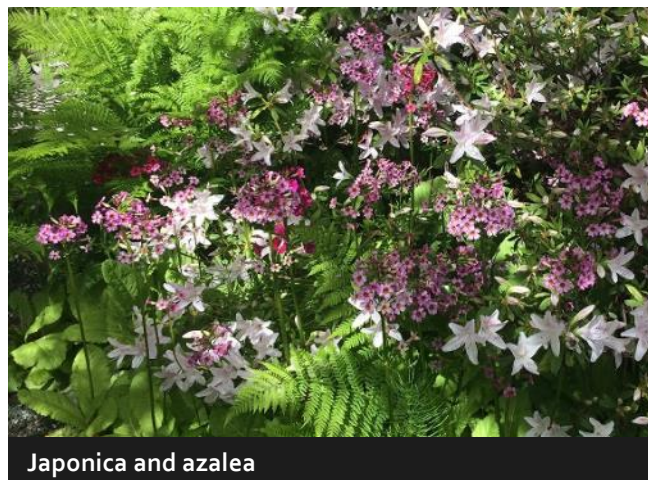
Stunning flowers - deep purple petals with illuminating light blue edges and a full pale yet sunny yellow centre. This plant is a Maedythe Martin selection from John Kerridge's seed.

Primula Resources

Primula World

<http://www.primulaworld.com/pwwweb/photogallery.htm>

This website is often better than any book. Pam has compiled a picture gallery of almost all the species of Primula. Many of the photos were taken in the wild. There are also references to herbarium specimen and any other pertinent information on some species. Pam also has a Primula World Blog that is interesting.



Japanica and azalea

Lawson, Lynne and Mitchell, Jodie **The Plant Lover's Guide to Primulas** Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, 2016

The most recently published book on Primula is by the owners of the Barnhaven Nursery in France, a mother and daughter team. Very useful pictures and information about each of the plants included.

The website for Barnhaven Nursery is full of gorgeous pictures of their plants and lots of information as well.

Guest, Allan **The Auricula**, Garden Art Press, 2009

This is the most recent book on the auricular, which includes a good selection of plant pictures and useful cultural information.

Robinson, Mary **Primulas, the Complete Guide**, Crowood Press, 1990

It is not new, but it has good information on starting and growing primroses and groups them into manageable chapters that make an easy way to think about primulas that grow in similar conditions.

Join the Society:

American Primula Society, or
AmericanPrimulaSociety.com

News of the Society, all the old quarterlies are here on the website, and the seed exchange each December is a way to get Primula seed. You can join on the website or print a form to mail.



APS Show in Victoria

Letter *from the Editor*



What a wonderful event the Panel of Experts evening turned out to be! Participation of the members was active, excellent questions were raised, and responses from the Panel were clear and thorough. Members became involved in the discussions, providing additional responses, and so much helpful information was shared. Perhaps the new format with Al Campbell acting as moderator and initiating the discussions encouraged comfortable participation.

This newsletter supports some of the points raised during the panel discussion. This includes the requests for early spring care of rhododendrons such as fertilizing and soil requirements. You will find these wisdoms on a single page so that they may readily be printed and posted in your greenhouses. The mini lesson that Glen Jamieson pre-

sented at the meeting is also in this newsletter in case you wished that you had taken notes.

You will also be encouraged to pot up those extra plants in your gardens, and an article by Brenda Burch offers some tips as to how to do this so that they become purchaser temptations.

Hopefully you will enjoy the report on the species garden and will make plans to attend the opening. And even better, perhaps it will encourage Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society members to make a point of going up to assist with the work that needs to be done before the garden can officially open to the public.

Verna Buhler



***Acer palmatum* 'Osakasuki'** has brilliant fall colour and loves to hang out with rhododendrons at Milner Gardens and Woodland

Photo: MARS

From Our Members

Rose Rogan's Rhododendron Planting Mix

Rose Rogan, owner of Perennial Ridge Farms, usually prepares an 8-yard mix, but has broken her recipe down into a 1-yard quantity to make it easier for all.

- 1 yard fine bark mulch
- 1 1/2 bales of peat
- 8 pound nutricote (14-14-14)
- 1 pound superphosphate
- 1 pound trace elements
- 1 pound dolomite lime.

"When I make my big 8-yard mix, I spread the bark and peat out on a big cement slab. Next, I apply all the fertilizers on top. Then I rototill it 3 times over, until fully mixed; so with the one yard mix, it could be done by hand on a driveway slab or such."

Rose Rogan

On Nutrients

Both Al Campbell and Sean Rafferty offer their rhododendrons a mixture of $MgSO_4$, magnesium sulphate, (Epsom salts), at this time of the year.

Then, a little later in March, Al adds a little fertilizer, using 'Al Murray's Mix'.

Early Season Plant Nutrients

Sean Rafferty mixes a handful of **Epsom salts** and a tablespoon (approx.) of **chelated iron** (*chelated* meaning that it will dissolve in water) into a two-gallon watering can and applies this at this time of the year.

The Epsom salts will increase the pH level of the soil and help roots absorb nutrients more easily.

The Mg ion helps leaves create chlorophyll for photosynthesis.

If you prefer organic fertilizer to chemical:

Alan Murray has the answer for you with his special formula, which one can see has proven to be very effective in his mountain-side garden in the Duncan area.

Al Murray's Mix:

- 4 parts each of alfalfa meal, canola meal, and blood meal. . .plus
- 2 parts dolomite lime. . .and
- 1 part each of rock phosphate, bone meal, kelp meal, and greens

Apply this mixture only ONCE A YEAR!!

Rhododendron 'Lee's Scarlet'

R. caucasicum x unknown

Hybridizer: J&C Lee, 1900

Hardiness H4 (-18 C)



At our February CVRS meeting, during member discussions as to possible recipients of the annual \$500 plant donation to a community site, Joe mentioned that one of the former gardens was doing very well, and that *Rhododendron* 'Lee's Scarlet' was blooming that week.

The first four photos were taken on February 3rd, and the other three on February 10th.

This beautiful garden is situated at the roundabout at the end of Henry Road leading into Chemainus, and has been well maintained.

There did not appear to be a plaque acknowledging that the rhododendrons had been donated by the CVRS.





Preparing Plant Donations for the CVRS Plant and Garden Fair

Brenda Burch

Every year at the Cowichan Valley Garden Fair I have had the pleasure of working the Member Plant Donation table with “plant-person-extraordinaire”, Ali Morris. We have done this together for perhaps four to five years. It’s fun to see the donations, ensure they are properly identified, price them accordingly, and then speak with the customers about where these plants would be happiest in their garden. (Note – Ali is MUCH more knowledgeable than I am, but I hold my own in most of the basic plant categories)

Last year, the CVRS didn’t receive as many donations as in most other years. Some donations



had no labels, and other plants were barely established, perhaps hurriedly dug out of the garden the morning of the show and planted in clay. The thought behind these donations is genuinely appreciated, of course, and the horrendous winter last year made that totally understandable.

However, this year is much better weather-wise! We would respectfully request **donations that are in clean pots in good soil**, and plants that **are labelled**. If you aren’t certain about the specifics of the plant, please try to provide the name of the basic species, or common name. Many of us can’t accurately label ‘*Persicaria virginiana*’ ‘Painter’s

Palette', but many of us know Knotweed with beautiful splashy foliage. I will be bringing some Siberian Iris and may, or may not, provide a label with 'Dirigio Black Velvet' or 'Shaker's Prayer', but will definitely write Dark Purple for one and Veined Purple and Cream for the other.

A final request is that the donations be somewhat **grown on, or established**. Even Ali, who could sell ice to Eskimos, can't sell something that is barely rising from the soil. If it is too early for the plant to be in bloom in late April, a picture of the parent plant in bloom, would be awesome.



And finally, we respectfully request donations! Plants that grow particularly well are **hostas, iris, hydrangeas, shrubs, vegetable starts (particularly tomatoes) rhododendrons (of course), and perennials of all sorts. Deer proof plants** are sought after; almost everyone asks us about how deer proof the plant is.

Thanks so much! We look forward to YOUR donations this year!

From: Arthur & Susan Lightburn <slightbu@shaw.ca>

Subject: Milner Species Garden

To: Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society members:

If you can spare some time, there are many jobs to be done this spring in preparation for the official opening: mulch spreading, fence building, plant digging, moving and re-planting, etc.



Please send me an email or phone (250) 468-7516, and we will put you on our volunteer list and keep you informed of the help requirements.

The Species Garden at Milner...

...And the Work Goes On...

The most recent Species Advisory Committee Meeting was held at Milner Gardens and Woodland on February 16, 2018

Attending were representatives from the various Island Chapters: Geoff Ball, Tony Ansdell, Art Lightburn, John Denisege, John England, Marilyn Dawson, Glen Jamieson, Craig Clarke, Chris Southwick, Calvin Parsons, Ken Webb, Alan Campbell, and Verna Buhler.

The meeting began with a walkabout and members were greeted with a vastly changed garden since the last meeting in September due to the very hard volunteer work of the members from Mt. Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society, Nanaimo Rhododendron Society and North Island Rhododendron Society.



Members of MARS and Nanaimo RS get ready to spring into action.

The large rhododendrons were donated by Art Lightburn and planted in December.

The new fence still under construction at the rear of the property seemed to make the difference.

As well, new stone construction at the entrance, when finished, will allow group leaders to stand above the crowd and explain the garden.

The Rhododendron Species Garden has progressed nicely and is scheduled to officially open on Sunday, April 22, 2018.



A healthy and elegant huge rhododendron being maneuvered into place...



Giants of the Genus *Rhododendron* lined up, snug in their swaddling waiting for their turn to get their feet in the ground

The next few months will be busy in preparation. Executive director Geoff Ball outlined upcoming work:

- Companion plants and additional rhododendrons will be planted. A list of 20 trees was provided. There is room for about 125 plants
- Mulching to be finished, fence painted
- Roadwork at the rear is to be completed, pathways made safe for visitors, a gate to be installed in the back to indicate that there is no entrance, at this time, down to the water
- Enhancement of second node, signage, etc. for those entering from the house side the labelling and tracking

Volunteers, for the most part from the closest chapters, NRS and MARS, have worked on mulching, planting and building the fence. There will likely be a mulching bee on March 1. The fence should be finished this month. A planting bee will come later.



Official Opening:

This will signify to visitors that the species garden, though not complete, is open to the public. The format will be a comfortable event, featuring a ribbon cutting, several speeches, perhaps a cake and light refreshments. Michael Recalma will be invited on behalf of the First Nations, as will other dignitaries and members of the media. Details will come later.

Geoff provided handouts and explained the expenses and funding. The next meeting will take place in late March or early April.

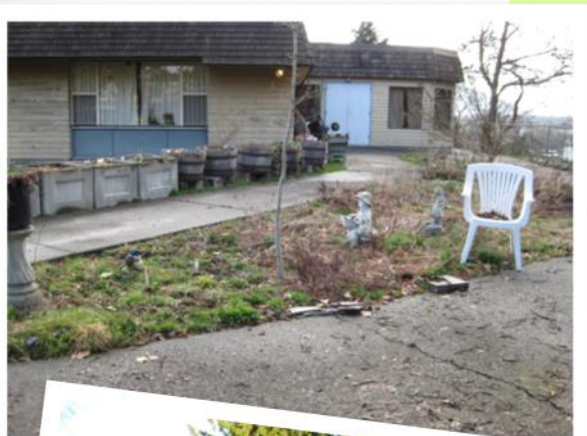
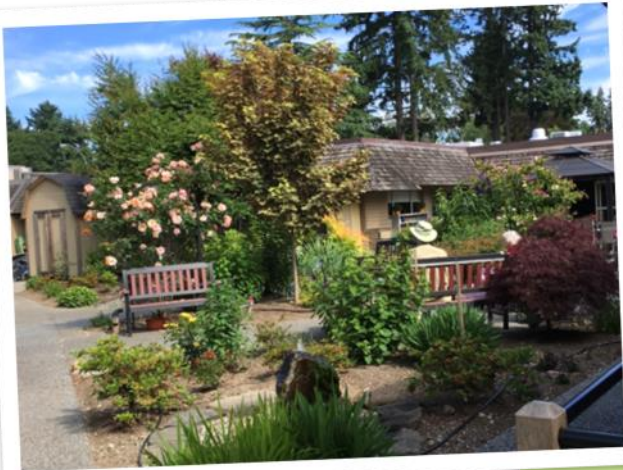
Report by Verna Buhler and Photos provided by MARS



Craig, Art, Susan (NRS) and Art (MARS) working on the gigantic pile of mulch.



Marilyn supervises while Elaine and Art dump their loads of mulch.



10 YEARS ALREADY!

Cairnsmore Place Plant Sale

Volunteer Gardeners will celebrate their 10th year at the **Annual Plant Sale on Saturday, April 21 from 9 - 12 noon**

At this event, there will be hundreds of plants ready for planting. This year there will be a special focus on **Hostas**; more than 100 will be for sale. You will also find a fun selection of wood-crafted garden ornaments fabricated by our volunteers. Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer your most difficult gardening questions.

Only 10 years ago the gardens needed some care. A band of volunteers was formed and now eighteen volunteers work every Wednesday morning from February to November.

All proceeds are used for the maintenance of the gardens: fertilizer, watering systems, soil, mulch, plants, and new projects.

This work can only be done with the generous support of the Cowichan Valley's gardening community. Generous donations have funded some major projects.

Today, the gardens are enjoyed by residents, families, and staff all year-round.

Incredible it is, how everything grew so beautifully in that time!

Diane Allen

SHARING YOUR GARDEN

With Friends Of The Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

Text and photos by Verna Buhler

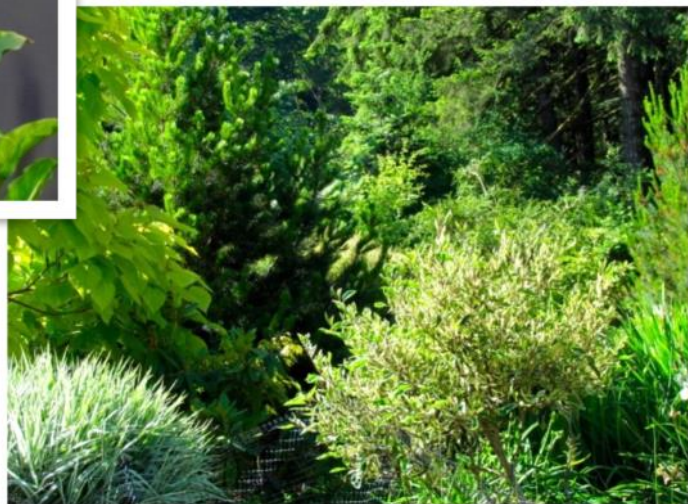
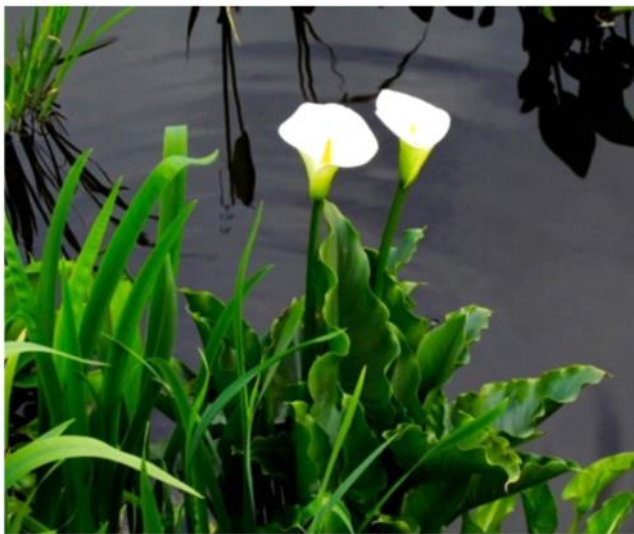


Have you ever considered inviting club members into your garden to share those special parts of the garden that are so meaningful to you, but you doubt that the whole garden will look just perfect at any specific time of the season? Please do not let that stop you.

It may be intimidating at first thought, but realizing that, just as you appreciate and clearly understand the hard work and passion that creating and nurturing gardens requires, so do your fellow gardeners. They also know how gardens are continually changing from one day to the next. Photos can isolate and focus

on spectacular combinations in one area of the garden, while another part is past its prime, or just hasn't been fully detailed at that point in the year.

Gardeners' eyes do this as well! They note the beautiful combinations of foliage, of colour, or of structure. Sometimes, both by accident or design, all of these components come together.



Was the effect of the combination of the flowers of *R. 'Sapho'* (perhaps) and the white trunks of trees visualized in the design of the garden? Was the perfect timing of the blooms of *Sambucus nigra* 'Black Lace' and *Rosa* 'Queen Elizabeth' clearly understood at the time the garden was planted?

Probably not. Yet Nature continually creates magic, given the opportunity to do so when we plant our gardens.



Perhaps your garden includes many varieties of plants that are not rhododendrons, and this is a rhododendron club tour.

Gardeners appreciate plants and lifelong learning. What a learning experience it can be to hear fellow gardeners explain the unique qualities and their relationships with other favourite plants!



Please do not hesitate to share your gardens!

Al Murray is inviting people to do so this spring. Please give him a call or send an email.

Editor's Note: Al is the approachable and encouraging type of friend who will rush to help you with that final mulching that you need to complete the day before.

"mistyview@shaw.ca"



Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden

Annual Symposium - April 6 & 7

Everyone Welcome!

Location: Best Western Plus, Federal Way,

WA and Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden

Featured Speaker: William McNamara,

Executive Director of Quarryhill Botanical Garden

Information & Registration: www.rhodygarden.org

Early bird registration is now through March 9th (\$125.00)

253-838-4646 x 140



Cobble Hill's 18th Seedy Saturday
March 10th from 10 a.m. 2 p.m.
Cobble Hill Hall, Youth Hall & Stu Armour Building
3550 Watson Avenue - Cobble Hill Village

Our expanded Seedy Saturday offers 3 venues featuring **Lee Valley Tools**,
Dinter Nursery, Perennial Ridge Nurseries, Metchosin Farm,
Saltspring Seeds, Full Circle Seeds, Seeds of Diversity and many others
including organic & heritage seeds, plant starts, bulbs & tubers,
mason bees & their houses, garden tools, body care, permaculture,
master gardeners, kiddies' plant fun and so much more!

FREE ENTRY
presented by the Cobble Hill Farmers Institute
Wheelchair accessible, lots of free parking, great food
find us on Facebook - Cobble Hill Seedy Saturday

For more information contact:
cobblehillseeds@gmail.com

Calendar of Upcoming Events

March 10; 10-2pm

Seedy Saturday
Cobble Hill, BC

March 14

MARS Monthly Meeting
Speaker: David Sellars

April 6 & 7

Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden
Annual Symposium
Best Western Plus, Federal Way
WA and Rhododendron Species Garden

April 11

MARS Monthly Meeting
Speaker: Carmen Varcoe
Former Chair of Finnerty Gardens Society,
Victoria, BC

April 21

MARS Rhododendron Show and Sale
Parksville, BC

April 28; 10-2pm

Cowichan Valley Garden Fair
Mellor Hall, Cowichan Exhibition Park

May 9

MARS Monthly Meeting
Speaker: Nancy Moore – Shade Gardens

May 12 & 13

MARS Mother's Day Weekend Garden Tour

May 20 - 27

ARS 2018 Convention Bremen, Germany

Seedy Saturday Events

Comox Valley Seedy Saturday

Saturday March 3, 2018
Florence Filberg Centre in Courtenay.
(Des Kennedy speaking in the morning
"Becoming a seed extremist.")

Nanaimo Seedy Sunday

Sunday March 4, 2018; 10 to 3
Nanaimo District Secondary School @ 355
Wakesiah Avenue Nanaimo (corner of
Wakesiah and 3rd)

Cobble Hill Seedy Saturday

Saturday March 10, 2018
Cobble Hill Hall, 3550 Watson Avenue

Cowichan Valley Seedy Sunday

Sunday March 18, 2018; 10 -2
Si'em Lelum Gymnasium, 5574 River Road,
Duncan

Campbell River Seedy Saturday

Saturday March 24, 2018; 9 am to noon
Campbell River Community Centre
401-11th Avenue

2017-18 Executive

President: Barrie Agar
barrie.agar@shaw.ca (250) 748-2308

Vice President: Judeen Hendricksen

Past President: Carrie Nelson

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, Ali Morris

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

TEA SERVICE DUTIES for MARCH 7th:
David Annis Team

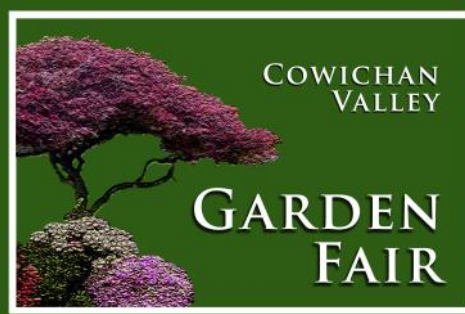
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Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

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<http://cowichanrhodos.ca>



April 28; 10 am - 2 pm
<http://cowichanvalleygardenfair.com>



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