

Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

Newsletter

Volume 29:4 May 2018

President's Message

Our Club's Garden Fair has come and gone, and a very successful event it was! There was the usual crush of eager shoppers at opening time, and the usual scrum, reminiscent of a \$1.49 Day at Woodwards, for the carts, the better to race around the hall ahead of the others. Tables rapidly emptied as the plants were collected and driven away to their new homes.

The growers and vendors were a diverse group, and there were many different and choice plants, not just Rhododendrons. Beautiful herbaceous and tree *paeonies*, ferns, various perennials and shrubs; it was a fabulous showing. The Fair has grown beyond an event just for Rhododendron enthusiasts to something that appeals to the wider horticultural community.



Volunteers at the Cowichan Valley Garden Fair 2018

Guest Speaker: Barrie Agar Japanese Gardens

Wed, May 2 @ 7:30pm
(More details on page 2)

Thursday, May 3: Maple Bay Manor Open Garden Tour

**Saturday, May 5 Victoria
Gardens Bus Trip** - sign up and
carpooling coordination
at Wednesday night meeting

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This Fair would be nowhere, would not happen at all, if it were not for the volunteers who make it happen. From pursuing and organizing the registration of growers and vendors, setting up the hall, collect-



ing the plants from members' gardens for the CVRS table, helping the growers unload their products, directing traffic around the hall and car-park, sorting the purchases and serving as cashiers, answering questions on rhodo growing, manning the membership tables, and one hundred and one things that often are not apparent until they are required, you, volunteers, are the magic that brings it together.

We also had fun!

This is a heartfelt thank you to all of you who were able and had the time to lend a hand to this event and make it the success it was.

Barrie Agar, President



Japanese Gardens

Shifting our Perception of Beauty in the Landscape

Wednesday, May 2, 2018

Barrie Agar, our very own highly knowledgeable and humorous President, is our special speaker this Wednesday.

She will present on the fascinating topic of Japanese Gardens. Experiences and photos that she took while on a trip several years ago form the basis of this presentation. Although she did not see that many Rhododendrons of the Subgenus *Rhododendron* and *Hymenanthus* (the plants we generally refer to as rhododendrons), the Rhododendrons of the Subgenus *Penanthera* and *Tsutsutsi* (those we regularly refer to

as the deciduous and evergreen azaleas) were definitely the order of the day.

"Japanese gardens are fascinating, and to appreciate them requires a shift in our own perception of beauty in the landscape."

Letter *from the Editor*



How fortunate I feel to live in the Cowichan Valley!

April was so very busy! But we must not slow down! There are more wonderful events happening this week.

Today, we must hurriedly plan our May garden visits, some of which, incidentally, happen this week. We must not miss the Maple Bay Manor Open Garden on Thursday, or the excellent Victoria Garden Tour trip on Saturday!

April is Volunteer Month isn't it? If the title isn't officially accurate, it most certainly is unofficially true. This month's newsletter simply portrays how busy and happy people can be when they are out creating vibrant and friendly communities through shared purposeful activity. Consider how many people you have chatted with during your rounds of plant and garden sales, tours, and volunteering events this past month. How often have those been anything but enjoyable and positive happenings despite periods of intense hustle?



Photo: Sharon Tillie



Yes, we love plants---that's why we are meeting all over the valley! But it is more than that, and we all know this; we are grateful that we care for each other and have a context within which we can meet to convey this to others.

In this newsletter, as well as in the June newsletter, we can reflect on those shared experiences and celebrate times together. Read about the Al and Liz's Garden tour, smile back at the faces of happy volunteers at the Plant Fair, and enjoy planning your May garden tours. Remember too the great gardens that you may have visited in the past, and the lovely persons who created them such as Dr. Roberts A. Smith.

Next month you will read about the Greig Species Garden Official Opening, the CVRS Plant Fair, the plans for the Summer Picnic in June, and the positions vacant for next year's Executive Committee. More opportunities for happiness coming up!

I, personally, thank you all for your role in creating this special community!

Verna Buhler



SPECIAL GARDEN TOUR for CVRS Members - Saturday, May 5

SIGN UP. . .

. . .for a Road Trip to Visit Victoria Rhododendron
Society Members' Gardens!!

Bring a packed lunch for a picnic in the garden.

The Blackmore Garden:

Lois and Roy have built their home and large Rhododendron Garden high up on Triangle Mountain. The mature rhododendrons were planted in the garden many years ago and the planting has never stopped.

This mountain garden boasts a large number of potted plants arranged throughout the garden and on the large wrap around patios. In these pots are many of Lois's favourite hybrids, developed by Jim Barlup.

We will be eating our lunch in this lovely garden.



The Massa Garden:

This very large Rhododendron Garden is built on a Sooke hillside near Glintz Lake. Rhododendrons are planted to the contours of the land. Many of the plantings are mature rhododendrons, but many more have been planted recently.

Joanna and her late husband Moe had a wonderful vision for this property and you won't want to miss it in full splendor!



The McMillan Garden:

Bill and Theresa live on a corner lot in Colwood. Bill is, coincidentally, our April guest speaker.

They share their expertise with The Horticulture of the Pacific and, as you may have noted as you read about our guest speaker this month, many others.



An amazing array of rhododendrons are grown on this property. Whether you enjoy seeing species or hybrids, you will delight in their garden.

Furthermore, you will be awakened to the possibilities on your own small piece of paradise.

SIGN UP EARLY with our Garden Tour

Coordinators, Al and Liz Murray, to ensure that

they have time to coordinate the best Day Trip possible! Call them at (250) 743-9190, or email at mistyview@shaw.ca

VOLUNTEERS ARE HAPPY PEOPLE

It's Really True!!



*Photos on this page by
Sharon Tillie*







Liz and Al Murray's Stunning Garden

Photos for the April 17th visit were provided by David Annis

Photos for the April 26th visit, and article by Verna Buhler

The CVRS Open Garden Tour at Al and Liz's on April 17th was earlier than most, and a number of club members acknowledged regretfully that they had missed it. Despite the cool temperature that evening, the Murray garden was as spectacular as ever.

slipped in for just a quick visit, as I was super tired. The rhododendrons that were pictured in beautiful promising buds earlier had responded to the warmer temperatures and created constant "oh wow's" of amazement from guests.

Why the tours in the evening? Al and Liz know the magical effect of viewing their gardens in the evening light and are willing to share those moments with others. Liz, awaiting knee surgery, hosts from the patio by their front door. From here she explains that *R. 'Maureen'* faithfully gifts them with large pink blooms for weeks every single year.



The hummingbird scolded, territorially, at eye level near the tea, coffee and treats patio area.

Just over two weeks later, on April 26th, from 5:30 to dusk, Al and Liz generously opened their garden once again for guests, the Mill Bay Garden Club. I called to see if Al and Liz were open to the idea of a few extra guests, and of course they were; so I





In front of her is her alpine garden featuring some of her favourite spring blooms such as soft mauve and yellow species tulips along with anemone and gentian.

After only a few moments in the garden, guests tune in to a unique phenomenon---soft drifts of air borne knowledge begin to float through the garden, occurring in most concentrated form near the gentle gardener.

A simple question leads Al, the soft-spoken gardener, to release the perfect balance of information.

"Yes, this woodland area is a new expansion of the rhododendron garden. Here rhododendrons have been planted around and in the decaying stumps of old trees because they thrive in just that type of environment. Yes, along that pathway, the bark mulch has been mounded, holes dug into those mounds, then half filled with soil where the

*rhododendrons have been placed. In a short while the bark mulch will decompose and create the perfect growing environment for the new plantings. Yes, this lovely rhododendron, *R. pachysanthum*, is a species that was previously grown in a pot but needed more room, so this is its new home. It has a soft gray tomentum and a rich copper indumentum. Yes, it looks kinda' happy here."*

Such knowledge continues to draw more guests closer to the plant whisperer as he willingly and unhurriedly teaches and demonstrates as meanderings along the winding pathways continue. "Why do your plants appear so full and lush and healthy?" He pauses and reaches out to the tip of a branch of a rhododendron where a healthy young shoot is emerging and pinches it off. He wards off

the "Oh no" responses by explaining with a slight smile that because he has done so, the plant will send three, perhaps four, new shoots instead of growing only the single one at that tip. "You know that stunning white, heavy, waxy magnolia up above the *augustinii*

there----do you remember what it is called?" Of course he does.



Eventually we are led back to the patio where several guests are already chuckling to stories shared by Liz over a cup of tea and densely moist lemon cake. They take turns then; Al answers a garden development question, and then Liz adds the humorous story or history about the event.

The urgent plan for a quick visit has disappeared, replaced hours ago by the magical restorative spirit of their hospitality and garden.



Winter Survival

By Ian E. Efford

I have been keeping my more delicate rhododendrons in my greenhouse in the colder months, but as these plants continue to grow, space is becoming a serious problem. This winter, I decided to take the advice of experts who suggested that some of the more tender plants can be kept outdoors in a protected area. I estimate that our very coldest night probably reached -10C but that was the exception and, although many nights were below freezing, the cold nights seem to have a low temperature around -5C.

My main difficulties have been with *R. lindleyi* and *R. edgeworthii* and I decided to keep them outside and also to add a slightly less tender plant *R. burmanicum* along with a hardier plant, *R. spinuliflorum*, to the trial. I have summarized the mixed results below.



R. edgeworthii

Photo by Suesan Lightburn

R. edgeworthii

This species survived very well and does not appear to have suffered any serious damage. The bud count is high this year but this species seems to vary its flowering; in some years producing a large number, and in others, rather few. I noticed that the branches that were most exposed to wind lacked buds.



R. edgeworthii

Photo by Garth Wedemire

R. lindleyi

This is probably my most tender rhododendron and leaving it out during the winter turned out to be a disaster! It lost a lot of leaves and ended up a bare, skeleton. It will probably recover. There is one bud so that we will see one very large white flower again in 2018 but the potential for a great display was lost. I find this species difficult to grow under the best conditions. It grows very rapidly with long internodes [20cm. or more] and this creates a pruning problem. Cutting it back just creates more shoots; which starts the whole growth spurt again. The flowers are large and lovely so it makes an attractive gardening challenge!





R. burmanicum

Photo by Ian Efford

R. burmanicum

This species has survived outdoors for a couple of years and produced quite a few beautiful yellow flowers. For the test, I did move it from a very protected spot to be with the other three species in a slightly less protected area. It looks all right but it did lose a few leaves, possibly to a cold wind. At the moment, there are only a couple of buds; which is fewer than in previous years. I would say that it can be reliably left outside without too much concern but should be in an area protected from wind.

R. spinuliferum

This very unusual species with the “lipstick” red flowers appears to be quite unharmed by being outside all winter. At the moment, it does not show any signs of buds but they may develop as the weather warms up.

Linda Derkach lives right on the coast in Qualicum Beach where it is probably a little warmer than our garden in Duncan. She said that she has a very similar experience with *R. edgeworthii*, which has survived for three years outdoors although in a protected area away from the wind coming off the sea. She also grows *R. lyi* in the open and that, again, has many flowers. I had this species but it died, I believe, from insufficient summer watering.

Most of us have rhododendrons that survive the winter without any protection and can be covered in buds at this time of the year. In addition, there are others that are determined to flower early in spring or even in the winter. In my garden, *R. 'PJM'* is just opening in a protected area but not in the plant exposed to the wind. One of its parents, *R. mucronulatum* is just at the end of its flowering for the year. *R. 'Snow Queen'* is in flower, but *R. 'Snow Lady'* has not yet flowered.

It is not these hardy plants that are of greatest interest; it is the more delicate tropical *Maddenia*, such as *R. lindleyi* and *R. lyi*, and *Edgeworthia*, such as *R. edgeworthii*, which are at the very limit of their cold tolerance.



R. spinuliferum

Photo by Ian Efford

Other warm climate plants

My testing has broadened to include an interesting plant from Florida, *Illicium floridanum*. A member of the anise family which lives as a shrub in wet areas and usually in understory situations as the genus is very sensitive to excess light. It has a rather attractive red, star-like flowers but the flower is not as large as is often illustrated! Its natural habitat is along the eastern part of the Gulf Coast from Louisiana to Florida where the winters are warm and the summers very hot and humid. Obviously, this is a plant that should not survive the low temperatures of our west coast winters. In our garden, it survived last winter unaffected by the cold and did not lose any leaves. It might be one of the plants which, like the Louisianan irises with a similar Gulf Coast distribution, thrive in a cold climate even though it evolved in a warm one. A couple more winters should confirm its hardiness.

In an earlier article, I mentioned that I am also growing *Franklinia alatamaha*, a tree that is extinct in the wild and grew along the banks of the Alatamaha River that flows through central Georgia. Again, it thrives in a location with a warm climate throughout the year and hot humid conditions in summer. My tree, planted in a fairly open location in the garden, has not only survived this last winter but it flowered last summer and the leaves are opening now. Although it is normally not recommended for growing in our local gardens, I recently saw a number on sale at the local Canadian Tire store.

Any sane gardener would not be trying to grow these warm climate plants in the Cowichan Valley but, who said gardeners are sane?





In Memory Of

Dr. Roberts A. Smith

(December 22, 1928 - January 25, 2018)

Members of the North Island Rhododendron Society lost a fellow member and a dear friend on Thursday, January 25, 2018 with the sudden passing of Dr. Roberts (Bob) Smith. Not many knew the history of Bob Smith and the fact that he moved to the Comox Valley with his family when he was just eight years old in 1937. It was the education he received at Courtenay Elementary and Courtenay High schools that provided the foundation for his future success as a chemist.

He received his undergraduate and master's degrees in microbiology from UBC in 1952 and 1953 and his doctorate in biochemistry from the [University of Illinois](#) in Champaign-Urbana in 1957. Bob then joined the [University of California, Los Angeles](#) faculty in 1958 where he continued to teach and maintain a vigorous research program until his retirement in 1987. In 1960, Bob joined ICN Pharmaceuticals and was instrumental in the development of one of the world's first the anti-viral drugs, ribavirin, a medication now on the World Health Organization's List of Essential Medicines. He continued to serve as chair of the Scientific Advisory Board of ICN and in advisory roles until well into the 2000s.

He was inducted into the Comox Valley Walk of Achievement back in October 2008: "The work of Dr. Roberts A. Smith has helped to save thousands of lives over the years. He was a pioneer in the anti-viral field and came up with the idea to limit the search for anti-viral compounds after the structure of DNA and RNA was discovered in the 1950s."

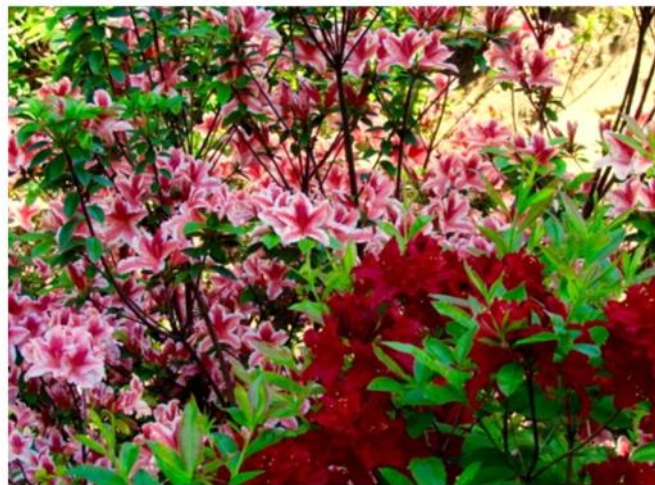
Bob's idea to limit anti-viral compounds led to the selection of a broad spectrum anti-viral that is now widely used throughout the world in various life-saving drugs. Through his company in California, he went on to study AIDS and other



diseases, eventually working on a drug that, when combined with *interferon A*, is used to treat Hepatitis C. "Today it is quite widely used in other parts of the world for certain diseases," he said. "It's an important drug and I am very happy to have had the opportunity to be associated with its development."

At their home in Courtenay, Roberts and Adela developed a tremendous estate garden, which includes hundreds of rhododendron varieties. They welcomed many garden enthusiasts on tours of their property. Bob was always willing to chauffeur, in his always-handy golf cart, those who had difficulty managing the inclines and winding pathways on the hillside property. Adele warned about accepting this offer however, as his enthusiasm for reducing the time it took for him to careen through the many tight corners of the terraced garden had him chuckling as guests held tight knuckled to their seats. Adele admitted that she frequently insisted that Bob stop the cart so that she could take a closer look at the blooming rhododendrons.

Through the friendship and encouragement of NIRS founder, Harry Wright, Bob eventually became a member of the North Island chapter in November of 2005.



During the following years, the Smiths hosted many garden tours for NIRS club, as well as others in the District. The Smiths also hosted several of the NIRS annual June picnics including the club's 25th Anniversary celebration in 2009, and its 30th celebration in 2014.

Bob enthusiastically supported the ongoing work of the NIRS propagation group, by providing his propagating shed, greenhouse and outdoor potting and growing areas.

Bob is going to be dearly missed by all who knew him. He had a big heart, which after 90 years just decided it had given enough.

Roberts Smith is gone, but it will surely be a long, long, time before he is forgotten by the members of the NIRS or any other chapter whose members have had the opportunity to meet him and Adela and tour their wonderful garden.

I'm sure we all have so many happy memories of Bob but the two vans of members of the CVRS who participated in the 2016 Garden Tour will always remember him as we last saw him -- cheerfully sitting with Adela near the front door and talking with all the guests as they passed by.

And of course, we will remember his rhododendrons – oh, so very beautiful!

Photos by Verna Buhler, May 2016

NAVIGATING GARDEN MYTHS

2018 Special Fall Conference

Sponsored by
Mount Arrowsmith and Nanaimo Rhododendron Societies

Sunday, October 28, 2018; 1 – 4pm
Parksville Community and Conference Centre

Two Vancouver Island Rhododendron Societies are hosting a one-day fall conference that should be of interest to all island gardening groups.

Five speakers have currently been confirmed:

- **Linda Chalker-Scott**, Washington State University horticulture scientist
- **Douglas Justice**, UBC Botanical Garden curator
- **Jeff de Jong**, teacher and radio personality
- **Dany Fortin**, Comox horticulturist
- **Shane Tillapaugh** on crevice gardens

Attendance is limited to about 100 on a first-come basis. Cost for the day will be \$25 (\$30 at the door if space remains available) Coffee and tea will be provided, but you will need to bring your own bag lunch. There will be a door prize and a small silent auction.

‘Navigating Garden Myths’ Program

10:00 -10:10 AM: Introductions

10:10 - 11:10 AM: Linda Chalker-Scott: Garden Myths – Facts or Fiction

Break (15 min)

11:25 - 12:25 PM: Donna Balzer - Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is: Grow Better Food Faster

12:25 -1:15 PM: Lunch

1:15 - 2:15 AM: Douglas Justice

2:15-3:15 PM: Jeff de Jong – Rhododendrons Need Friends Too!

3:15- 3:30 PM: Break 3:30-4:30 PM: Danny Fortin/Shane Tillapaugh – Crevice Gardening

Please register early by cheque, made out to **2018 Conference**, and mailing it to
MARS, PO Box 342, Qualicum Beach, V9K 1S8.

GARDENS to VISIT in MAY!

Each year Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society Members open their gardens for their fellow members to visit. It is such a pleasure to wander comfortably through gardens and chat about plants with enthusiasts who share the passion.



Maple Bay Manor

1437 Maple Bay Rd.

Thursday, May 3, showing 5:30 - 8 p.m.

Lynn Clarke has been renovating the Stone property. The garden, with many Rhododendron and mature trees is becoming a place of beauty again. Come and see all of her improvements.

Ali Morris

751 Satellite Drive, Cobble Hill

Sunday, May 20, open 1 – 4 p.m.

Ali Morris is a collector of rare and unusual plants. Not only will her garden display stunning rhododendrons, it will also be filled with an assortment of companion plants that will keep you begging for plant identification. Ali is highly knowledgeable and will be able to provide the Latin names and the particulars about each plant's cultivation requirements. Her garden provides a unique experience for those who enjoy creative garden design and artistic plant combinations.



George Morgen and Verna Buhler

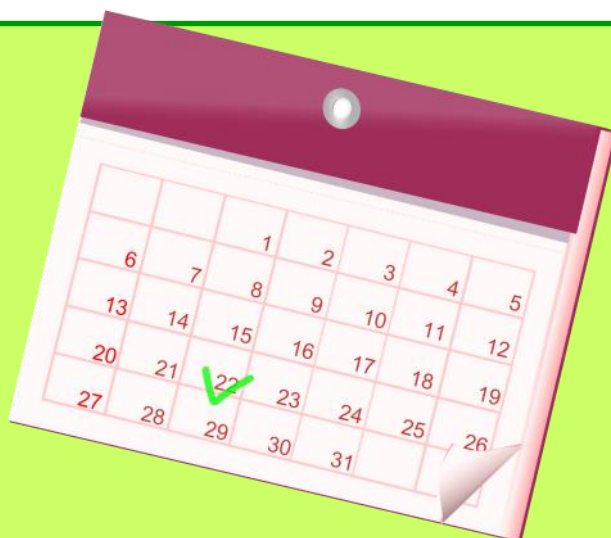
3908 Cowichan Lake Road, Duncan

Saturday, May 26, open 1 – 5 p.m.

The gardens on the two-acre property are relatively young --- the oldest planted approximately eight years ago and the youngest only weeks ago. Rhododendrons have been planted throughout the yard along with a variety of both coniferous and deciduous trees and a variety of companion plants. The gardens also include fruit trees, a variety of berries, and a vineyard that supplies enough white wine for family and guests!

If you are on your way to Perennial Ridge Farms for the Annual Spring Sale that takes place that same weekend, stop by for a tour of our garden. This property is situated only minutes East of Perennial Ridge Farms.

Calendar of Upcoming Events



Wednesday, May 2; 7:30 pm

CVRS Monthly Meeting: Barrie Agar
'Japanese Gardens'

Thursday, May 3; 5:30 - 8 pm

Maple Bay Manor Private Garden Tour
(CVRS Members Only)

Saturday May 5

CVRS Victoria Gardens Road Trip (See the notice in this newsletter for more details)

May 9

MARS Monthly Meeting
Speaker: Nancy Moore – Shade Gardens

May 12 & 13

MARS Mother's Day Weekend Garden Tour

Sunday, May 20; 1-4pm

Ali Morris Private Garden Tour, Cobble Hill (CVRS Members Only)

Saturday, May 26; 1- dusk

George Morgen/Verna Buhler Private Garden Tour (Members Only)

May 20 - 27

ARS 2018 Convention Bremen, Germany

July 15, 2018; 10am to 4pm

Point Roberts Garden Tour XV, Point Roberts

Sunday, October 28, 2018; 1 – 4pm

2018 Special Fall Conference 'Navigating Garden Myths'

February 2, 2019

Mixing It Up "Beauty & the Beast"

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

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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



Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

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

<http://cowichanrhodos.ca>



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



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