



# Newsletter



Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

Volume 28:8 November 2017

## President's Message

Autumn is finally upon us, and with a vengeance. The rain of the past few days has been welcome, although it may take more than that to make up for the summer's deficit. However the combination of warmth and drought may payoff in terms of better bud set for next spring. Working in the nursery industry, we played a rather chancy game of withholding water from the rhodos in the summer, to **increase the bud set** for the following spring, and hopefully increased sales. Timing was everything. Too much water and you might have beautiful leafy large plants and not a flower bud to be seen. Too little, and stunted, brown edged leaves, but with multiple flowers was the outcome.

### Dave Dougan Memorial Service

**Sat, Oct 28**

(More details on page 2)

### Cowichan Valley Speaker: Glen Jamieson

**Wed, Nov 1 @ 7:30pm**

**"Vireyas"**

(More details on page 3)

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**Bud set on Hachmann's R. 'Goldbukett' in fall after a dry summer**  
Photo by Verna Buhler

For those of us growing rhodos in the ground, it is not such a crucial exercise, and as rhodos age into middle age, they tend to produce flowers in a more reliable manner, without interference from us.

The other advantage to long warm spells is they ripen the wood, which makes it hardier and more likely to survive a cold snap. Long warm autumns, followed by a sudden onslaught of serious winter, are more likely to inflict damage on plants.

So now is the time for the final clean up in the garden, cutting back the perennials, tidying up the late

summer shrubs, and mulching any tender shrubs we may be trying to protect. Clean out the dead wood in the rhodos and spread the fallen leaves, around them.

We have done all we can do, and it is time to pull a chair up to the fire, and dream and make plans for next year.

Barrie Agar, President



### ***Dave Dougan* "Get-Together"**

from 2:30 pm - 5:30 pm

at the Ramada Inn

140 Trans-Canada Hwy, Duncan, BC

### **Dave Dougan Memorial Service**

Saturday, October 28, 2017 at 1:30 pm  
at the Dougan grave site in Duncan, BC

Dave passed away on October 17, 2017 in the Campbell River Hospital. He was 96 years old.



**Dave Dougan with 30-year old *R. praetans***  
Photo by Bill Dale



## November 1st Guest Speaker

### DR. GLEN JAMIESON

#### “Vireya Rhododendrons” and “Indumentum and Tomentum”

Dr. Glen Jamieson has a B.Sc in Agriculture from McGill University and a M.Sc. and Ph.D. in Zoology from UBC. He worked for Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) as a research scientist for 31 years, more specifically, in the Maritimes for 5 years, and at the Pacific Biological Station in Nanaimo, BC for 26 years. He retired from DFO in 2008, and became editor of the Journal of the American Rhododendron Society in 2009. He joined the ARS in 1995, and participated in numerous plant exploration trips: Yunnan, China (2005); Borneo (2008); Ecuador and Peru (five trips between 2008-2014) and in Sikkim, India (2015). He has travelled extensively elsewhere as well. He and his wife Dorothy live in Parksville, and maintain a garden that is periodically on the Mt. Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society (MARS) garden tour; he also has an extensive vireya collection, possibly the largest in Canada. Glen is currently in his third presidency of MARS, and is a member of the MARS committee responsible for organizing the Fall 2019 ARS convention, which will be held in Parksville in one year's time.

At the November CVRS meeting, Glen will give two presentations. In his main feature he will focus on **Vireyas**, discussing their taxonomy, their distribution in the wild, their culture, and the natural diversity that occurs within the group. There are about 300 species of vireya rhododendrons, representing about 1/3 of the genus, and while all naturally occur in semi-tropical and tropical countries, their habitat is mostly at elevation where temperatures are cool, but above freezing. As such, they grow well outside in our sea level Vancouver Island climate if given some winter protection on the coldest days. Their flowers are very unique and attractive, and the smaller plants can be in continuous flower, with some of Glen's having at least some flowers continuously over two and one-half years.

The second will be a short educational presentation on “**Indumentum and Tomentum**”. Glen has begun giving monthly talks to MARS members on aspects of rhododendrons such as “Lepidote and Elepidote” and on “Corolla and Calyx”, in an effort to demystify botanical terminology to ARS members.



Vireya rhododendron growing in the Rutherford Conservatory at the Rhododendron Species Foundation and Botanical Garden in Federal Way, Washington Photo: Verna Buhler



*R. pachysanthum* indumentum and tomentum Photo: Verna Buhler

# Letter *from the Editor*



November is a very special month --- the month when we take time and gather together in gratitude for the far too many, who sacrificed their lives for our freedom. This month, Sandra has invited us to join her on her "Trip to **Remember**". The process of reviewing this article with her has deepened my own understanding and appreciation of November, and I hope it will do the same for you as well.



Every year, November startles me out of my summer pace into a fall race. Will I ever learn where October goes? At this point, I haven't even begun gathering any rhododendron cuttings!

In the first week of November, I hurriedly plant the garlic if I have not managed to do so "on October

15<sup>th</sup>, at midnight, by the full moon, buck naked" as our friend and garlic grower guru, Ken, from Saltspring Island always insisted was key. The cold, rain, and darkness moves in, so suddenly it seems, that I desperately scurry about completing the harvest, digging dahlia tubers and calla bulbs, trying to put the garden, at least partially, to bed.

A most unexpected surprise opened in our garden this last week. A sturdy waxy truss of coral pink blooms, with a rather stunning calyx. Having read the faded label "The Glades October Pink" on the rhododendron that I discovered at Joe Hudak's, I asked, and received the response "Oh yes, it blooms in October". So, not wanting to miss its bloom down the road of much time, I planted it near the walkway in a new bed created just for Joe's, Dixie's, and Jim's plants, all special treasures. Since it already burst into bloom I wanted to know more; my curiosity led me on a futile search on the *internet*, and I couldn't reach the previous owner. So naturally I am asking you, those who know more than Ms or Mr Goggle, what you can tell me about this rhododendron.

Thank you!

Verna Buhler





# A Trip to *Remember*

Article and Photos by Sandra Stevenson

## Vimy

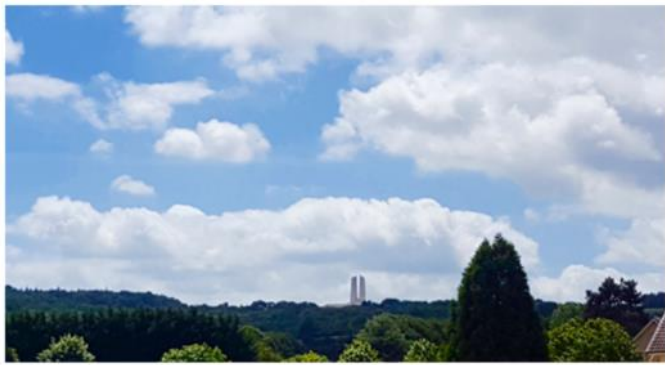
This month is a time for reflection and honoring our protectors and their families who have given so much for our country. I thought it an appropriate month to share photos taken on our recent trip to Northern France.

We traveled to Nord-Pas-de-Calais, to the graveside of our grandfather who fought in World War I. This year marked 100 years since the battle of Vimy Ridge, April 1917.



On our arrival at Vimy, the sight of the gleaming white marble Canadian National Monument rising from the carpet of green, reaching strong and free into the sky, took our breaths away. This structure became a symbol and reminder of the sacrifice of the 11,285 Canadian soldiers killed in France who have no known graves. In 1922, the French Government donated the land on the escarpment of Vimy, and the 250 acres surrounding it, to Canada to be held in perpetuity. The monument and its surrounding parkland is maintained by the Canadian Government.





Walter Seymour Allward (1876 – 1955), a Canadian architect and sculptor, designed this majestic monument, which can be seen towering high into the sky from miles away. It was unveiled in July 1936 by King Edward VIII in front of a crowd of approximately 100,000 people of which over 50,000 were Canadian and French Veterans and their families.

As we strolled the formal paths taking in the 360-degree view of the plains below we were given a stark reminder of the devastation to lives and land so many years ago. Warning signs are scattered throughout the park to stay on the paths for fear of coming upon undetonated explosives.



In a small church cemetery not far away, we paid respect at our grandfather's graveside. It has been immaculately cared for by appreciative strangers for the past 100 years.



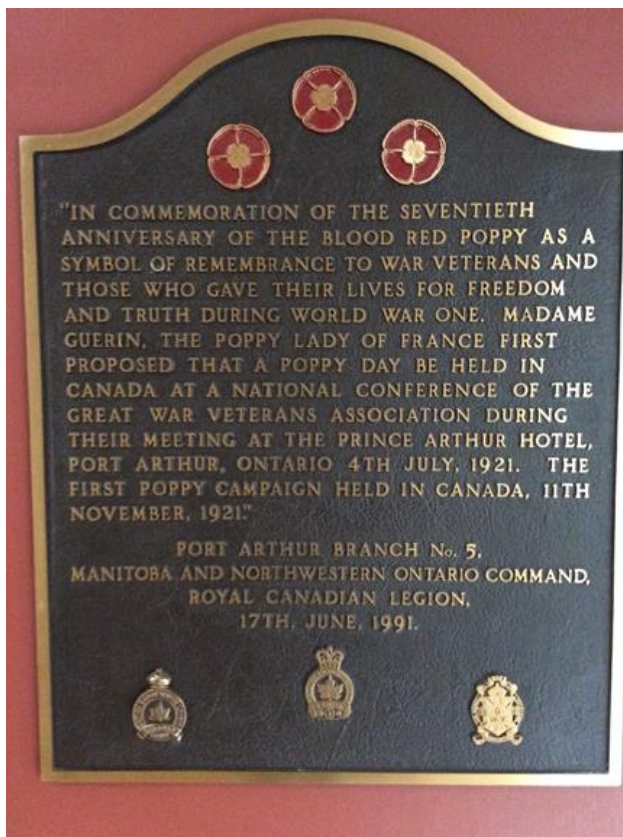


## Poppy Fields

After exploring the Arras area we travelled across the plains to the beaches of Normandy. I have included some photos of the scenic drive through this agricultural area. It is so fitting to have the poppy as a lasting memorial symbol to the fallen.



During the first Great War the landscapes on and surrounding the battlegrounds were devastated and reduced to a wasteland of churned up soil, ruined woodlands, fields and streams. An American pilot, James McConnell, described the scene as a scene of “murdered nature”. The disturbed land created an ideal environment for the red field, or corn, poppy “*papaver rhoeas*” to germinate. Against all odds, the red poppies, now the most poignant symbol of these past wars, were the first resilient encouragements of life to begin growing in clusters on the edges of farmers’ fields and the wastelands of war. Inspired by these signs of life, a Canadian surgeon, Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, wrote the poem ‘In Flanders Fields’ in the spring of 1915, in remembrance of his friend and colleague who lost his life in battle.



*John McCrae's poem influenced a French woman by the name of Madame Anna Guerin, who also became known as "The Poppy Lady of France". In July 1921, she met with the Great War Veterans Association in Port Arthur, Ontario (now Thunder Bay) and suggested the poppy be adopted as a national emblem to be worn on Armistice Day in memory of fallen comrades. It is at this time that the concept of a "Poppy Day" donor recognition replica be promoted and worn nation wide for Armistice Day and that funds raised would be used to support French children affected by war, and Canadian Veterans, originated. A plaque commemorating this event can be seen in the lobby of the Prince Arthur Hotel in Thunder Bay, Ontario*

As we drove this area in June, the farmers' fields were awash with the scarlet poppies and could be seen for miles.

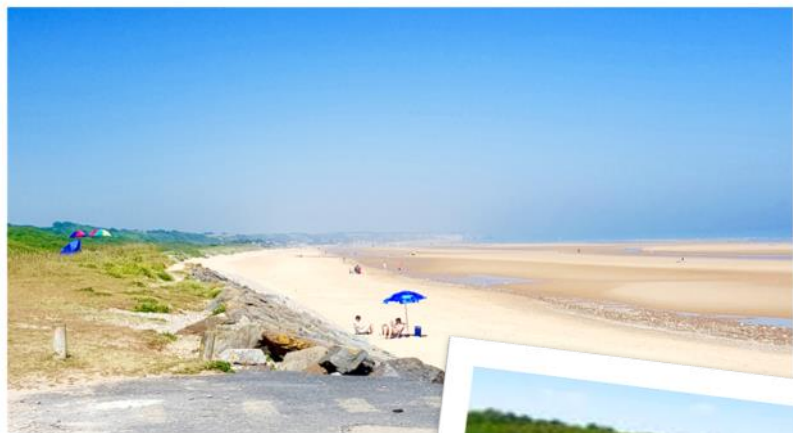




## The Beaches

I have included photos taken as we traveled down the Beaches of Normandy. The five beaches Juno (Canadian), Omaha and Utah (American), and Golden and Sword (Great Britain) consisted of 60 miles of white sand beaches spotted with cliffs. Remnants of war can be seen. Craters caused by explosives all those years ago now pock the landscape along the shore. Bunkers built into the hillside provide scenic views of miles of coastlines of white sand beaches and a sea of blue capping waves that roll, it seems, forever until they disappear into the horizon. Looking at this beautiful scenery makes it hard to comprehend the brutal history and heavy losses of life during the WWII invasions that took place along these shores.

This “Trip to **Remember**” was a humbling experience and gave me a richer appreciation for our freedom, and deeper sense of gratitude for those protectors who gave, and who continue to give, the ultimate sacrifice and their families who carry the scars.



# ARS 2018 Convention in Germany, “North America meets Europe”

*The 2018 ARS Convention will be in Bremen, Germany 20-27 May 2018, with optional tours before and after the convention. The schedule probably will change slightly in the next couple months.*

## **1st Pre Tour: May 7-12**

Optional 5 days visiting Dutch Gardens including **Keukenhof Gardens** (starts in Amsterdam)

## **2nd Pre Tour: May 12-14**

Optional 2 days visiting RHODO 2018 Rhododendron Festival and Hachmann Nursery (starts in Bremen)



**RHODO 2018 in Westerstede**

## **3rd Pre-Tour: May 13-20**

Optional 7 days visiting gardens in Denmark & Sweden including public and private gardens (starts in Bremen)

## **Convention: May 20-27**

6 day convention in Bremen from May 20 to 27 including 3 days of garden and nursery tours (starts in Bremen)

## **Post-Tour: May 27-30**

Optional 4 days visiting gardens in Finland.

**Details and registration for this Convention at: [ars2018.org](http://ars2018.org)**



# One Great European Garden

By David Annis

Okay, there are plenty of great gardens in the world and everyone has one or two that come to mind that they have visited over the years. If anyone is going to the ARS convention in Europe next spring, here is a garden that should not be missed!

My wife and I cruised across the Atlantic in 2016 and when we got to Rotterdam we took a shore excursion to Keukenhof Garden. We knew that tulips were the main attraction, but we were not prepared for what we saw. The garden is 32 hectares in size and had the most amazing collection of tulips, hyacinths, and other assorted bulb plants.



Supposedly there are 7 million spring flowers on the site with over 800 varieties of just tulips. Wide swaths and drifts of the same coloured hybrid extend over large beds that are intermingled with the natural trees. There are single, doubles, fringed, multi-coloured, and many other forms of flowers.



This is a show garden for the tulip growers of Holland. Each gets allotted an area to work with in the fall and they plant bulbs that will be in their spring catalogue. This is a chance to show the latest varieties that the company has developed and is putting on the market.





The garden is open for two months in the spring (22 March – 13 May, 2018) and millions of people pass through the gates. After closing, apparently the bulbs are dug up and destroyed so as not to contaminate the stocks. In addition to the tulips, there are various flower shows in some of the pavilions. When we were at Keukenhof there was an incredible orchid display on at the same time.



If you are going to the ARS convention in Europe in 2018 one of the pre-tours is to Holland the Keukenhof Garden. I highly recommend this side trip with the group, or to do it on your own. The garden is not that far from Schiphol (Amsterdam) airport. On the trip to the garden it is easy to see whole fields of colour from the blooming plants of the various growers.



*Photos by David Annis*



## Sympetalous - another term to remember

By Bruce Palmer

(Reprinted by permission: Published in the October 2017 Eureka Chapter newsletter)

October is not blooming time for rhodies, but have you ever noticed that rhododendron flower petals drop as a unit when the bloom is finished? That's because the flowers are *sympetalous*. Sympetalous is a three-part word: sym- derives from the Greek *syn*, together; -petal- comes from the Greek *petalon*, a leaf (flower petals are modified from leaves); -ous is directly from the Old French *ous*, in turn altered from the Latin *us*, having or full of.

Sympetalous flowers have their petals joined at the base in a tube-like arrangement, shown by the tiny truss at left. Plants with sympetalous flowers are not as common as those with distinct (separate) petals such as roses, but all members of the family *Ericaceae* (to which rhododendrons



*R. sargentianum* 'Maricee'

belong) have sympetalous flowers. In our region think about Huckleberry, Salal, Pieris, Manzanita and Madrone in addition to our native *Rhododendron macrophyllum* (= *Rhododendron californicum*) and *Rhododendron occidentale* and all of the hybrid and species rhodies in our gardens.

What might be the advantage for a plant to have sympetalous flowers? It's not very clear for rhododendrons, but for many other sympetalous plants it is unmistakable. Think about Fuchsias (named for Leonhart Fuchs [1501- 1566], predecessor of Linnaeus, who set the stage for accurate plant descriptions, illustrations and names). The nectaries are at the bottom of a tube well suited for the beaks of hummingbirds that live in the American Tropics, the geographical origin of the genus *Fuchsia*.

My favorite examples, of course, are in Hawai'i. In the Hawai'ian cloud forests above an elevation of



8 ft. tall *Lobelia gloria montis* with curved flowers

4,000 feet, a number of endemic giant Lobelias thrive. Most have large, curved sympetalous flowers. One such plant is *Lobelia gloria montis* (named by Joseph Rock of Rhododendron Society fame), one of the larger giant lobelias living near the summit of Pu'u Kukui at about 5,000 feet in the West Maui Mountains. This and other Lobelias in the cloud forests are pollinated by several species of endemic Honeycreepers, probably descended and evolved from finches that arrived in the islands accidentally. Most Hawai'ian Honeycreepers have distinctly curved beaks adapted to extract nectar from the curved, sympetalous flowers of Lobelias. I'iwi is a good Honeycreeper example. The two I'iwi are shown *in flagrante delicto*, but this is the only photo I was ever able to get of Honeycreepers with curved beaks.



I'iwi (*Drepanis coccinea*) showing curved beak

There are examples of the same adaptations in the family *Ericaceae*. Most members of the family are found in the Northern Hemisphere, but the genus *Erica* has a large number of species in Southern Africa. Most sympetalous flowers in South African *Ericas* are curved, pollinated by the curved-beaked Sunbirds. The illustration is a South African *Erica* in Maria Krenik's collection.

Not all sympetalous flowers are designed for bird pollination. Snapdragons, for example, capture insects temporarily in their tubular flowers, and then release them after pollination.

There are lots of other examples showing adaptations related to sympetaly, but that's enough for now. Enjoy your sympetalous rhododendron flowers when they appear next spring.



South African *Erica* showing curved flowers



# Propagation Season Has Begun

After the first successful season of propagation that took place in Ian and Shirley Efford's yard, the CVRS propagator is now being set up at the home of Verna Buhler and George Morgen. Members are invited to take cuttings of their favourite rhododendrons, label them clearly, and place them in plastic bags. Members can either drop by 3908 Cowichan Lake Road to personally prepare and place the cuttings into the propagator, or give them to Verna who will place them in the propagator for fellow members.

To get started immediately, bring some cuttings to the CVRS monthly meeting on November 1<sup>st</sup>. We can then make further arrangements as to your preferences for proceeding with the next steps! Help create and fill the special rhododendron plant "bank" for the upcoming years of the CVRS Plant Fair.



At a propagation workshop, Ian Efford explains to Cowichan Valley Garden Club members, how to take cuttings from the rhododendrons in his garden and then how to prepare the cuttings and the medium for planting the cuttings before placing them into the propagator.

Photos: Malcolm Ho-You



# Moonridge: A Mountaintop Garden

**Leslie Drew, Duncan,  
British Columbia, Canada**

Just north of Victoria on the craggy Malahat, noted for panoramic scenery and arbutus trees, a third-generation Vancouver Islander reached into his back pocket and found enough money to buy a mountain.



**Dougan Garden on Malahat Mountain** Photo by Bill Dale

He laid out a subdivision of the sort where quality mattered most. For a long time, it looked as if he'd lose his plaid shirt. In the economic downturn of the early 1980s, the 10-acre lots sat unsold while costs went into space orbit. David E. Dougan, though, always gambles to win; he never walks away from a fight. He waited, as a logger often has to wait for weather to change. While waiting, having boundless energy, he exercised the developer's right to first choice of a lot for himself. Instead of sea frontage, he chose one of the loftiest sites - the only one whose view encompasses snowy peaks of the Olympic mountains far off to the right and the mainland Coast Range far off to the left, as well as blue waters of the inlet 900 feet below. Here he had a West Coast contemporary-style house built for himself and his wife Lurana ("Lucy" to Dave). They named the place Moonridge. At first, he didn't intend to make much of a garden; given the splendor of rock outcrops and arbutus, a few primulas would be enough. That was 12 years ago. Today, the Dougan garden is generally regarded as being close to the pinnacle of small private rhododendron gardens, perhaps at the very top.

Every springtime during the last few years - 1992 especially - this garden has amazed wave upon

wave of tour groups of the American Rhododendron Society. The far horizons give an illusion of endless space to what is actually less than an acre. Almost the entire garden can, in fact, be scanned from a central position. We look on hypnotized, as if walking in a dream we hope goes on forever. Still entranced, viewers turn to the two prime features: a massive mound of solid rock where rhododendrons grow in pockets in ascending heights, and beneath, an adjacent pond, long and deep, rippling as schools of fish stream along, streaking scarlet. A curving lawn links bluff, pond, and borders.

Now, in closer focus, comes what really blows the mind: the rhododendrons themselves brimming health and deftly arranged. "A garden is rare that covers such a wide range of rhododendrons so well cared for," says Bob Rhodes, hybridizer and medical doctor. Other commentators hint at more abstract qualities. ("I should be encouraged to go home and do better with my own garden," an artist member of the groups says, "but instead I'm totally discouraged." Dave, quick both to take and make jokes, bursts into laughter.) When all the compliments have been uttered, when the last guests reluctantly wander off, Moonridge falls silent and the garden regains its essential intimacy. The Dougans



sit back to watch the late show by moonlight. The garden is hauntingly beautiful, even more mysterious.

An element of mystery, we all know, surrounds any major work of art. Even on an outsize canvas, while the composition and most techniques can be clearly discerned, there remains something beyond comprehension which seems wrapped in a deeper enigma - the artist's own uniqueness - which, in Dave Dougan's case, is also full of paradox. A short, stocky man with determination in his stride, he hasn't a shred of formal training in horticulture. Like many a lad growing up in the Great Depression, he never went beyond grade eight in school. He isn't a propagator, never has been, yet knows the pedigrees of hundreds of rhododendron hybrids. He prizes the garden-building efforts of "ambitious, hands-on" amateurs over those of academics. And he detests formality, which his garden reflects.

Naturalness is often cited as the garden's great charm, but the same can be said of many gardens, the difference here being that the inspiration came from still higher places, from memory of exhilarating alpine landscapes he roamed in younger days. This, more than anything else, informed

his vision of what the garden should look like. The pool was conceived as a crystal tarn ("those little alpine pools look so beautiful"). In the translation, achieved in subtle ways, lies much of the garden's fascination for everyone, outdoors people particularly.

"I knew this was a glorious piece of land; old Mother Nature didn't short this one," he continues, enthusiasm rising in his voice. "The only disadvantage was it had absolutely no soil. However, I did have an outside source of swamp muck. So, after a bulldozer took out the Douglas firs, I had hundreds of loads of topsoil and sedge peat delivered, and all of this I hand-wheeled to make a planting ramp for the rock mound and a good base for the lawn and other beds. (His wheelbarrow, which he also trundled over his two previous gardens, deserves bronzing, he says in jest, like his logging boots by the fireplace.) At the same time, he planted several rhododendrons carried forward from his earlier gardens supplemented by Japanese maples, dogwood varieties, a *Magnolia x loebneri* 'Leonard Messel', a deodar cedar, a *Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca', and a small *Sequoia gigantea* which, to his astonishment, is now 40 feet tall.



*R. edgeworthii*, grown in a tub and wintered in a greenhouse.  
Photo by Bill Dale

Money alone, therefore, didn't build this garden; Dave Dougan expended his own physical labor on a herculean scale. At age 71, he still works four hours on most days, weeding, shifting rhododendrons, and as many as six hours a day before and during the rhododendron season. Lurana, when she isn't looking after their grandchildren or porcelain painting, is always ready to entertain and lend a hand in troublesome weather. Since southeastern Vancouver Island, lying in the Olympics rain shadow, can sizzle in summer, he relies mightily on his automatic watering system (fed from a deep well serving the subdivision) which every week supplies 3,000 gallons in a three-hour period to six garden sectors each with five heads, either standpipes or lawn pop-ups, in rotation. Even so, anxious not to waste water, he often waters his plants by hand. "Rhododendrons wouldn't survive here otherwise," he says matter-of-factly. "If this garden were left for a year, I doubt that 10 percent of the plants would still be alive."

For a visual person, Dave Dougan talks a lot about blind luck. Or dumb luck. He came by his huge *R. pseudochrysanthum* by "blind luck" nearly 30 years ago. The way he met an early mentor was

blind luck again. Except for the dimensions of the 50-foot-long pool, which had to be proportionate to the dramatic rock bluff, the phases of his garden, so he claims, resulted less from design than from "dumb luck." He's not talking blarney from his Protestant Irish background, nor is it false modesty, for he is proud of his accomplishments. Rather, he seems to be saying that one cannot be sure of anything in this changing world, least of all steady success in rhododendron gardening. What he does say with certainty is this: "In their variety of flower, foliage and form, rhododendrons are the loveliest of all the shrubs and trees that we can grow here." From this firm belief flows his devotion to the genus and by extension to the ARS.

Significantly, he started young. "When I was a little kid, I had a garden of sorts. My mother was a gardener, and although she had eight kids and I was the only one who did this, I'd go out into the bush and bring back little plants such as the rattlesnake plantain and put them in my own little square. Later, at 14, when I joined my dad and my older brothers in their logging ventures, what an opportunity that was to learn about plants! After work, I'd go into the mountains, look at the wonderful scen-



'Crest'  
Photo by Bill Dale



ery, notice plants - and animals and birds and insects - and try to figure out where they like to live, how they interacted." He was, in fact, studying ecology.

"Then, when we were living at Cowichan Bay (10 miles north of the Malahat, in gentler terrain) Lucy got me a book from England, *Flowering Shrubs and Small Trees* by Norman Catchpole. It was a real bible to me; it had a whole chapter on rhododendrons. Next, somebody told us about Mary and Ted Greig (later ARS Gold Medalists) and their nursery at Royston. Mary was a very cut-and-dried person, but for some reason she took a liking to me, and loaned us her precious tomes - writings by the great plant hunters like George Forrest and Frank Kingdon Ward.

"The Greigs had whole greenhouses full of exotic rhododendrons such as *bullatum* and *lindleyi*, and if you happened to be there in March, when these plants were in bloom, you couldn't help but become an enthusiast. They had an amazing number of species from the Buchanan Simpson collection which they'd bought in the 1930s and stuff they'd imported from the Sunningdale Nursery in England, damn good things like the so-called Greig form of *strigillosum* and big *calophytum*s; that one over there (pointing to a corner of the garden) doesn't touch theirs."

The bright young man was learning fast in a wilderness almost bereft of guides, for few gardeners around here grew species. He learned, too, with similarly fired up friends like Peter and Pat Stone, who were starting their exceptional garden on Quamichan Lake; he learned from visits to the Layritz Nursery in Victoria, stocked with the latest British hybrids but also with species like *R. thomsonii* and *R. falconeri*; he learned from Dr. Stuart Holland, chief geologist of British Columbia and a lover of species, who urged the Dougans to join the ARS, which they did in 1952, a Christmas gift from Lurana

to Dave. And he learned by "clumping around the hills" with Ed Lohbrunner, an authority on alpinists.

By 1955, the Cowichan Bay garden showed remarkable promise. It was all species from the Greigs except for a few Rothschild hybrids, and planting hadn't been easy: impervious clay, or hardpan, had to be dug out and replaced with anything available, not at all unusual in the Cowichan Valley. Suddenly, on November 11, came ill luck of calamitous scope. An ice-cold wind swept across from the mainland. "We were logging on the top of Texada Island in the middle of the strait, and we watched this weird thing come roaring out of the mouth of Jervis Inlet like a cyclone, frothing. We never got back up the mountain that year. It was terrible. Plants were still growing, hadn't had a chance to harden off. We were wiped out at Cowichan Bay; even great big broad-leaf maples in the ravine there were killed. At Layritz's the shade house actually stank from rotting foliage. (The only green thing left was a 'Babylon', which I bought - it's still at Cowichan Bay.) The Seattle Arboretum was decimated, though a few plants came back from the roots again, in three or four years. A lot of very fine material was lost in gardens throughout the Northwest."



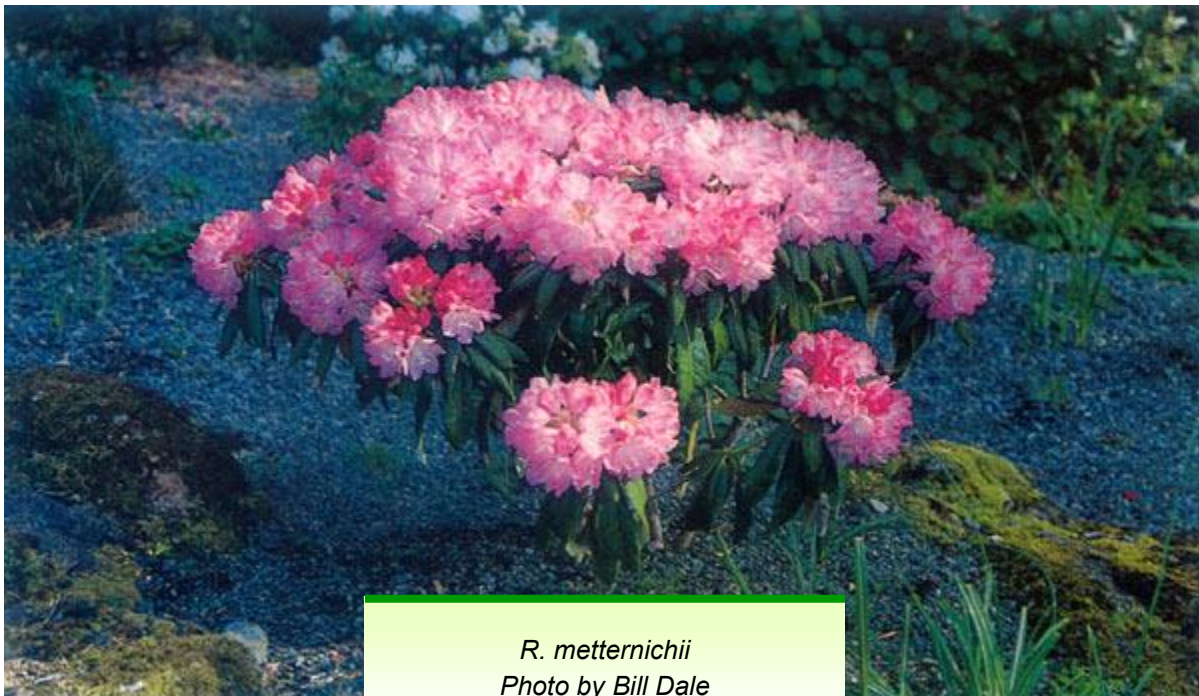
'Rose Elf' (*R. racemosum* x *pemakoense*)  
Photo by Bill Dale

Undaunted by this setback, and by another cold blast a few years later, the Dougans again grew rhododendrons when they moved to the seaside at Nanaimo. This garden, dipping to a tiny pebble bay, had a southern exposure that should have been advantageous compared with the Cowichan Bay garden, north facing and notoriously frost-prone in early spring. Yet more plants died, and Dave doesn't know why, though he suspects an underlying slag dump, a vestige of Nanaimo's coal mining era. Of the three gardens, Moonridge has proved by far the most amiable by virtue of its southern exposure, the moisture-laden mists that swirl around the Malahat, and, above all, perfect air drainage.

A show judge, organizer of ARS chapters, president of the Victoria Chapter when the 1989 convention was held there for the first time and made an embarrassingly large profit, Dave Dougan seldom proffers advice to beginners other than to suggest membership in the ARS, his own alma mater. Within the circle of friends, though, he recommends that anyone interested in species seek out selected forms. "That's the English contribution: on the big estates they grew species from seed, by the thousands, and came up with the best forms. The species merge

into one another no end; like where does *sutchuenense* end and *calophytum* begin? Which is why we're so lucky to have nurserymen like Clint Smith, who always grows selected forms (if it's *luteiflorum*, it's 'Glen Cloy'). We, the buyers, benefit enormously from having guys like Clint."

Nowadays, in new plantings Dave Dougan favors the small species, *R. taliense* especially. In the "overcrowded" field of hybrids ("a helluva lot of hybrids should never have been introduced") he grows only outstanding newcomers that shape up - make what he calls "mounders" - and flower profusely. His search for quality is consistent with his dictum: "If it's a good garden plant it's a good garden plant," a reminder that he is a gardener first and foremost. Mounders appear all over his giant volcanic mound and elsewhere: a strong pink *R. campylogynum*, *R. pachysanthum*, *R. morii*, *R. yakushmanum* grown from seed collected on the home island of Japan and exhibiting larger than normal foliage, *R. metternichii*, and a 'Carmen' seven feet broad. One future mounder he keeps close tabs on is a creation of H.L. Larson's *R. yakushmanum* x *R. calophytum* x 'Grisette', grown by Gold Medalist Evelyn Weesjes and her husband Nick from seed obtained from Lar-



*R. metternichii*  
Photo by Bill Dale



son in 1968. "It's very nice," Evelyn says. "It has white buds, quite striking, different from an ordinary yak. The flowers start pinkish and turn white. Dave admired our plant, and that was his downfall." She has named the cross 'Dave Dougan'\* - a tribute also indirectly to Larson whose hybridizing he admires.

In the rhododendron pantheon gods abound, some smiling, some scowling. The creator is also the destroyer. In trying to make a bit of heaven on earth, gardeners obsessed with shrubs and trees learn to act the dual roles. "The one thing you learn - the only thing you learn - is how short a time it takes for shrubs and trees to get completely out of hand. You have to be ruthless and get out the chainsaw. Some of the Rothschild and Lem hybrids become monstrous in a few years, and for that reason I don't

grow them anymore. Last year I destroyed more rhododendrons than I planted. A simply beautiful 'Moonstone' from the Greigs, too big to move, had to go. I felt like a murderer, but I got back six other plants struggling to survive underneath. Every plant must have its place in the sun." This, then, seems the secret of how the garden maintains a serene state of equilibrium, holding viewers rapt from one year to the next. "Dumb luck" did he say?

*Reprinted from JARS Summer 1993 Volume 47 Number 3*

\* Unregistered but not in conflict with a registered name.

## Calendar of UPCOMING EVENTS

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Sat. October 28    | Dave Dougan Memorial Service  |
| Wed. November 1    | Cowichan Valley Speaker: Glen Jamieson "Vireyas"                          |
| Mon. November 6    | Victoria Speaker: Sean Rafferty "Species Rhododendrons"                   |
| Thurs November 9   | Nanaimo Speaker: Geoffrey Ball "Milner Gardens and Woodland"              |
| Tues. November 14  | North Island Speaker: Doug Justice "Rhodoendrons at UBC"                  |
| Wed. November 15   | Fraser South Speaker: Ted Goshulak "Pond Life at Trinity Western U."      |
| Thurs. November 16 | Vancouver Speaker: Doug Justice "A Botanical Excursion to Tibet"          |
| Thurs. November 16 | CVRS Book Club Meeting at 2 pm at Verna Buhler's, 3908 Cowichan Lake Road |

**May 20 – 27, 2018      2017 ARS Convention, Bremen, Germany**

**Dinters' Classes for Gardeners** - presented by their staff or visiting experts. The seminars last about one hour and there is no charge or registration required. For more details, visit [www.dinternursery.ca/seminars.htm](http://www.dinternursery.ca/seminars.htm)

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Sunshine: Mary Gale

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Raffle: Hilda Gerrits

Club Liaison: Alan Campbell

Library: TBA (due to change of Library venue)

Membership Recruitment: Peter Lewis

Program Co-ordinator: Vacant

History: Ian Efford

Garden/Bus Tours: Vacant

CV Garden Fair: The Team

Facility Liaison: Roy Elvins

Christmas Party: The Team



## Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

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April 2018

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