



NEWSLETTER

Volume 18, Number 8

Editor: Siggie Kemmler

November 2007

2008 Membership Dues

Most have paid their dues; those who have not been able to, please do so at the November meeting. If you can not attend, please mail your cheque to the membership chair: Carrie Nelson, 1720 Baldy Mountain Road, Shawnigan Lake, V0R 2W2

Christmas Party

The executive discussed this and, considering last year's short notice cancellation due to snow, decided against the usual pot-luck dinner. A brunch at *The Inn at the Water* on Sunday, December 9th is suggested and will be discussed at the meeting. If the membership agrees, a sing-up sheet will be circulated. It is said that *The Inn at the Water* has a gourmet buffet at a very reasonable price.

Officers for 2008

The position of Newsletter editor is still open. The pay doesn't show on the scale, but job satisfaction rates close to ten.

From the Kitchen

It has become apparent that many people do not read the instructions following the annual schedule as published in the newsletter. So here they are once more, with slight alterations (and they will be published as well when the new list comes out next month). Maria will look after the kitchen supplies; if anything is needed, or if there are questions or problems, please call her at 746 8751. She will also call to remind you the day before the meeting. Rules: ☺ Indicates the team leader. Please let your team leader and Maria know if you can't come to the meeting.

The team leader will bring ½ litre of milk. The team under each month's heading will supply goodies, set up and make tea and coffee; it is also responsible for the kitchen clean-up after the meeting. The teams should be

What's Coming Up

November Meeting: November 7th in St. John's Anglican Church Hall, 486 Jubilee Street, Duncan. Set-up at 7:00 p.m. meeting starts 7:30.

Speaker: Gerry Gibbens will speak on 'Dwarf Rhododendrons in the Garden'. Gerry is the curator of the Sino - Himalayan garden at Van Dusen Botanical Garden in Vancouver.

Tea and Goodies: Ann and Roger Slaby (748 4623); Don and Hilda Gerrits (701 0755; Marie Jacques (743 5021). * indicates team leader. Please let team leader or Maria Kemmler know if you cannot come to the meeting.

Propagation Group Meeting: Nov. 13 at 7:30 p.m. at the home of Siggie Kemmler, 3730 Gibbins Road, Duncan.

Directors' Meeting: Nov. 14 at 7:30 p.m. at the home of Janet Gardner, 1228 Marget Place, Maple Bay.

at the hall by 7:00 p.m. A detailed list of duties is in the blue container in the kitchen.

Maria is the organizer of the thing, yet there have been times when she was the sole and only person doing the kitchen chores. She says it is neither rocket science nor growing rhodies from seed – she just wants you all to cooperate.

Erratum: In the September newsletter Mr Dinter's age was given as 92. Mr Dinter was in fact eighty-two years old.

The Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

A Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

PO Box 904, Duncan, BC V9L 3Y2 <http://cowichan.rhodos.ca/>



President's Message

Everything good matures to a special beauty - or so it seems to me. My garden is giving me more pleasure with every season.

What wonderful autumn colours we have this year. The Japanese maples are glowing each in its particular shade of red or

gold, Viburnums and Cotinus don't want to be left out of this artistic display either. Yes, enjoy while we may...

Christmas is just around the corner. And that brings me to this year's party planning. By popular request I have booked the 'Inn at the Water' for Brunch on Sunday, December 9th. We will have our usual games, raffle, and auction; I shall speak about this at our November meeting and there will be a sign-up sheet, as well as the collection of monies for the brunch at the meeting.

Our Christmas party is popular and always well attended and provides such a great opportunity to socialize and visit with all members, so don't forget, sign up quickly.

See you November 7th.

Ingeborg Woodsworth

Species CD

Harold Greer of Greer Gardens, author of Greer's Guide to Available Rhododendrons, the rhodo friends bible, is issuing a species CD which will have **photographs and descriptions of more than 1800 species rhododendrons**. Those interested contact me at the November meeting or send e-mail to siggi-k@shaw.ca. If enough order, there should be a volume discount. *Siggi*

November in the Garden

With the Autumn colour faded and the days getting shorter we tend to be more inside - what a great opportunity for the Rhododendron gardener! Consider becoming an associate member in another rhododendron society. In district one there are five societies on Vancouver Island. If you are an ARS member in one society you can become an associate in any or all that you choose for about \$12.00 each. You get all of their newsletters, e-mails, etc. and you can participate in any of their meetings and tours. What a bargain. In October we noticed that the MARS (Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society) was meeting in Nanaimo with that group to listen to Dennis Bottemiller, the propagation/nursery manager of the Species Foundation, speaking on propagation of

rhododendrons. We went up to hear him and took a few friends from the Victoria Society. What a great talk, and a

nice evening; we got a chance to visit with many friends. At that meeting there were five societies from district one represented, not bad for a weekday evening! So consider an associate membership, the newsletters are interesting and the rewards are great.

The past summer was not bad for keeping the rhodos watered, but what will next summer bring? November may be a good month to look at your garden in terms of watering and how to make it easier on yourself. Maybe you would like to take in more summer activities or go away a little more often. With good planning and the right equipment both you and your plants can have a better summer. If you research a water system now and make a list of what you need and where to get it, it might just be the thing for a Christmas wish list!

Research can start at the computer. I googled "home garden irrigation" and came up with lots of information. Go to the B.C. Aquifer store on the highway towards the Old Farm Market, they have systems set up in small scale and can show you how to set up. They probably won't be very busy in the late fall and will be able to help you. Also look in the feed stores and the hardware stores. Ask friends and fellow gardeners who have systems. You could install the system yourself or ask a landscaper or a water system expert to install it for you. Every garden and gardener is different and that will dictate which time saving, water saving systems will meet your needs. A little planning and set up work will free you for years to come.

Liz Murray



The Question Box

Moving Rhododendrons

By Norman Todd

Q When and how can Rhododendrons be moved?

A The short answer is anytime when the soil is completely moist. For most years that means from November through April.

Rhododendrons are very shallow rooted. Those who have seen the Asian plants growing wild are always stunned by how shallow the roots are. If they go to see them during the monsoon season (typically, June through October) they understand why. During the active growth period the plants are well supplied with water. They seldom have to worry about where the next drink is coming from.

These shallow roots make moving rhododendrons a fairly simple matter. Just dig around the drip line and undercut with a shovel. The only limitation on the size of plant that can be moved is muscle-power. For really large plants dig a trench around the outside of the plant and undercut as far as the shovel will go in. Sometimes it helps to have a two by six plank and a short log for a fulcrum and gradually work the two by six under the plant. With some burlap wrapped around some stout branches and a good strong rope, or even a come-along, the side opposite that being undercut can be tilted backward to expose more of the plant's underside. Once the soil is completely loosened from the roots, the rope can be used to pull the rhododendron on to a tarpaulin. The plant can then be skidded to the new location or onto a truck or trailer. Easy! – and when it is in its new location all those involved in the operation deserve to be decadently indulged.

Make sure the planting space or hole is quite a bit bigger than the plant. Remember the old adage a \$50 hole for a \$5 plant. Dig in 50% bark mulch and mix thoroughly. This almost guarantees an acceptable acidity level and provides the porosity that the fine, fine rhododendron roots relish. Then water well and leave for

a week. Then some granular fertilizer (10-8-6) or Murray's organic mix can be lightly applied around the drip line. Some people scatter fertilizer in the hole before planting. This, I do not recommend. If the newly exposed and damaged roots come into direct contact with the fertilizer they can be burnt. And save the bone meal for your bulbs. It is not very useful to rhodos and can be harmful because of its alkalinity.

Some particularly fastidious gardeners make sure the plant still faces the same way it did before moving. I think this council of perfection is correct but if the plant would have a more pleasing profile by reorienting it, I would not hesitate to do so. I have seen some dramatic improvements in the shape of a one-sided plant over one or two years when the bare side was given the sunny aspect.

One-metre plants can be moved like chess pieces. An artistic gardener I knew remarked that her rhodos did not need to come with wheels; they were juxtaposed at will to suit the whims of her aesthetic niceties.

Currently, I am facing a huge task. Some of my plants have been in the same place for about 30 years and they have all grown together. I find that most people planting a new garden have a time span no longer than ten years. The height (width) of a rhododendron is given in most books and catalogues at ten years of age. This is a convenient guide for spacing. The separation between plants is then the ten-year height. Of course, most rhododendrons live longer than we do and if we keep the same garden for more than ten years, or acquire one of that age, we then face my rather pressing problem. Where can I put every second plant?

Well, it's all good dirty fun and provides a bit of exercise. Actually I now get more satisfaction by leaning on the shovel while watching the sweat drip down from my labouring colleagues. Enjoy.

Notes from the Conference

A fond recall of things past - the 27th Western Regional Rhododendron Conference, sponsored by District # 4 of the American Rhododendron Society, in Newport, Oregon, on the weekend of the 21st to 23rd of September. By car via the monotonous I-5 is a very long way to get there. On the way back we took the coastal route from Astoria to Newport, which is



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much more enjoyable and scenic. We were lucky and had sunshine and beautiful vistas.

Oregon's enthusiastic ARS members gave us a most wonderful welcome; the staff of the Agate Beach Western Hotel were helpful and provided good food and comfort at all times. I managed to sneak away for a daily barefoot walk through the sifting sands coming away from Yaquina Head lighthouse, which was built in 1871 and it is now a museum.

Friday, Saturday and even Sunday morning we enjoyed the interesting speakers on various subjects, educational and entertaining. A tiered foliage display (see pictures at right) drew my attention to eight different leaf sizes of *r. macrophyllum* - there even was a white-flowered type among them I was told. Oregon has great numbers of stands of *r. macrophyllum* at various sites, as I remember from living there on the coast twenty years ago.

The lobby had a wonderful display of rhododendrons and companion plants from different nurseries' AND we were able to purchase these - with certificates issued on Sunday morning, which made it very easy to cross the border with rhodos from the States.

District # 1 was well represented with 36 members from our various BC chapters, the majority from Vancouver Island.

Sorry you missed this great weekend, put on your 'to do list' the next Western Regional as a MUST!

Ingeborg Woodsworth



Numbers 24 to 29 show differences in *r. macrophyllum* leaf sizes. (photos by Soggi)

Reflections in a Garden

by Janet Holm

Some people say
that woodlice make unsatisfactory friends
But who's to know? It may
just be that one woodlouse pretends
indifference, and there the matter ends.

I shouldn't mind
a friend so ignominious and stout,
if only she were kind
and sensed behind the walls of doubt
a warmth she didn't want to do without.

If it be so
and they are kind, then here my journey ends.
I need no longer grow
embittered by the hope that heart pretends.
My weeds conceal a thousand timorous friends.





In Memoriam Fred Collins

Fred Collins, a founding member of the Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society, has died aged 90. When the Chapter was formed in 1988 Fred was on the executive and had been a strong supporter ever since. In recognition he was awarded the Bronze Medal of the A.R.S. He also was the first recipient of the C.V.R.S. rosebowl.

Before retiring from teaching, Fred lived in Maple Ridge where he and his friend Bob Rhodes were involved in hybridizing. Fred's hybrids include:

Orient ('Hawk Jervis Bay' x 'Naomi Exbury')

Annabelle ('Mrs. Furnival' selfed)

Superlady (a sport of 'Olympic Lady')

He also grew on the original *r. williamsianum* seedling named Cowichan which was adapted by our club; it is the plant in our club logo.

Fred's last rhododendron garden was at Red Baron Place in Satellite Park where he had a fine collection of plants. He was generous with cuttings and always had time for visitors. Fred's final home was at River's Edge in Duncan where he developed a keen interest in orchids.

We shall miss him.

Himalayas Anyone?

Tom Carter of Parksville, mountaineer and senior member of the Alpine Club of Canada is offering a trek that will be devoted to exploring and luxuriating in "Rhododendron land". The route will parallel the Annapurna Range. Travelling on foot in this botanical paradise, with snow peaks above and fascinating villages along the path, this is a special opportunity for rhododendron lovers. The trek is planned for next spring. Those interested can contact Mr Carter at www.moonmountainadventures.com or by calling 250-954-2345

About Fertilizer and Fungus

by Hans Melzer

translated by Siggie Kemmler

I venture to address a disputed subject, since it contradicts fertilization guidelines in prospects, on fertilizer bags, and in the so-called specialist books.

It could be that in areas with much rain rhododendrons need some fertilizer; people who think rhododendrons are bog plants may also

believe this. But rhododendrons are at home in the mountains, in particular on steep slopes with much scree. (see professor Spethmann's or Mr P. Jürgen's colour photo, Immergrün journal # 43, p.11)*. As one can see, the rhododendrons are growing uncultivated in the open landscape. The shed and rotted leaves are the only fertilizer.

The fertilizer industry wants to make us believe that is necessary to fertilize several times a year, and that only then will the plants set flower buds. For many years I believed this and had to fight every problem requiring fungicides to control it.

Over the last ten years I have completely changed the fertilizing of seedlings and hybrids I propagate. I now fertilize only once, in April, using a slow release, 5 to 6 months fertilizer ending in -san or -cote. It can be either an 18-6-12 or 20-8-15 with 3% trace elements; the trace fertilizers, such as Radigen, are important. Rhododendrons growing for many years in the garden have not been fertilized for over 12 years and show no reduction in bloom. The picture shows my hybrid *Oberpfälzer Sonnenschein** shortly before 10:00 on May 25, 2007. I noted



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that blossoms no longer rot shortly after rain, and there is no more phtophtora. For example, Blue Peter, which always had rotting blossoms after a day's rain, now lasts several days. The blossoms, ca 12-15cm are now, in 2007 without fertilizer, a bit smaller, but stable; new growth is not decreased. As well, there is no more leaf spotting which one supposedly has to control with sprays. There is no more frost damage on new growth. Last winter, when we had five months of frost here in the Upper Palatinate, only broken by short thaw- rain days, I had hundred plants in containers which showed clear, transparent ice - and not one of them died. The roots are well grown through the root balls, consisting of pine, larch and fir bark, which is completely permeable and lets air get to the roots. And rhodos want air.

But here also is an exception. Rhododendrons can also be grown in loam if mixed with some sand and if it is not kept too wet. When I lift a plant I find it in a ball of loam. Walter Nagel in Bretten cultivated all his rhododendrons in loam. With very good results.

Now a word about those beautiful rhododendron fertilizer packages. There one reads the pernicious advice "work in lightly". Every rhododendron lover knows, and it is written in almost all the literature, that one must not hoe under rhodos. They recommend it anyway. What is the difference between "working in" and hoeing? Rhododendrons love air at the roots.

Recommended is "compact soil when planting". Why? What for?

From conversations I learned that in Upper Bavaria they always used/use Alkrisal as sour fertilizer; I never thought the plants were a healthy green. I know permanent fertilizer is better. My daughter lives there.

These have been my experiences over the last years. Think about it. Less often is more!

* the original article was not available to me, hence no pictures.

--- 2007 Directors ---

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LIBRARIAN	Janet Gardner	748 1867
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