



NEWSLETTER

Volume 21: 7

Editor: Ian E. Efford

November 2010

From the Editor

Our president was last seen eating cake in Lake Cowichan [see a photo elsewhere in this newsletter] and we understand that he is now gallivanting around Ireland and the UK. Thus, we will have to forego the usual President's message. Furthermore, the rumour has it that Siggie Kemmler, my co-editor, has run off to New Zealand leaving me on my own to produce the newsletter this month. At least, he did leave the last of his three-part article on his trip to Germany!

I continue to look for new articles and would also like to learn of public rhododendron gardens on Vancouver Island that have not already been reviewed in earlier editions of the newsletter. About three more are lined up waiting for authors to produce articles but if you have visited a beautiful garden somewhere on the island and think other members of the branch would like to visit it, either write a short article, preferably accompanied by a few pictures, or let me know and I will find a local expert to write the article. Alternatively, a few pictures alone of that garden would be of interest.

In an earlier newsletter, I asked for photos of the May bus tour of the gardens in the north. So far, none have arrived but I would like to ask again as it was such an exciting tour and such beautiful gardens that those on the bus should share these delights with members who were unable to go.

Ian E. Efford, Editor [efford@shaw.ca]

Future Events

Wednesday 3rd November 7.30 p.m.

Dr Glen Jamieson, "Mount Kinabalu: Southeast Asia's Kilimanjaro".

Note: Glen will also bring a collection of Vireya Rhododendrons for sale.

Wednesday 17th November 2010 7.00pm

Propagation Group meeting - location to be announced.

Wednesday 1st December

The Christmas Party.

Set-up helpers will be required at 5.30pm and the party will begin at 6.30pm.

Note the time and date in your calendar. Details will be in the next newsletter.

The Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

A Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

PO Box 904, Duncan, British Columbia V9L 3Y3 <http://cowichan.rhodos.ca>

The Society Donates Plants to Communities in Bloom, Lake Cowichan

In 2006 the membership of the Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society approved an initiative to purchase \$500 worth of suitable plants each year to give to a non-profit public facility in the valley (eg hospitals, nursing homes, municipal parks, etc). and to publicize this donation. These donations are to be distributed in various parts of the CVRD as almost all of our members live in the District.

This action was directed at one of the objectives of the Society which is to increase public interest in rhododendrons and membership in the society. Such a donation also contributes towards beautifying the area and thus increases the tourist attractiveness of the Cowichan Valley by making rhododendrons a major feature in the valley.

It should be noted that an annual expenditure of \$500 for plants for distribution to a public facility costs the society only \$400 as our purchase is made at the plant sale.

A previous recipient of our donations was the local branch of Vancouver Island University [these plants can be seen opposite the south side of Superstore and were planted in 2006].

On the 29th September, David Annis led a small group of our members out to Lake Cowichan to make a presentation of plants to the Communities in Bloom, Lake Cowichan. This group has led a very active programme to establish a Memorial Rhododendron Garden right beside the visitors' centre in the middle of the town. You will find a description of the history of the establishment of this garden written by our past president, Ingeborg Woodworth, who has been a guiding light in this project. The garden now has a very good collection



of about 75 rhododendrons and a request has been made to the local council for permission to expand the area across the stream and to include another 2 acres of land. Some of the larger plants were donated by Finnerty Garden at the University of Victoria. Finnerty acquired the plants in the first place from the garden on the lake which is now owned by the university but was originally owned by the Simpsons.

Communities in Bloom has a brochure listing all the plants in the garden and the name of the donors. 25 of the plants were donated by the society and were selected at our plant sale by one of our resident experts, Alan Campbell.

We were taken on a tour of the garden by the local committee and then went off to tea. Here we were offered some excellent scones and “thumb print” cookies [my informant tells me that is what they were, I just eat them!] and a celebration cake was cut by our leader, David.



Back: David Annis; Shirley Efford; Pat Foster; Dave Whiskin and Ingeborg Woodsworth Front: Siggie and Maria Kemmler; Kathy Whiskin; Edith Strocen and Sylvia McMahon * Green denotes members of the Executive of Communities in Bloom, Cowichan Lake.

This garden will become an excellent tourist attraction for the community as it is close to the tourism centre of the town. It is highly recommended that you visit the garden in the spring when it should be quite a show.



David Annis, our president, cutting the celebratory cake at the reception after the tour of the Memorial Rhododendron Garden in Lake Cowichan; Ingeborg Woodsworth, past president and a major promoter of the Garden takes a shot of those eagerly waiting for cake.



Pat Foster, President of Communities in Bloom, Lake Cowichan showing us around the garden.

Photos by Ian E. Efford except the one of Pat Foster which was taken by David Annis



Nomocharis pardanthina

Another example from Gordon MacKay of a companion plant that would go well with rhododendrons. See his article in the last issue.

**Report on the Symposium and 75th
Anniversary Celebrations of the
German Rhododendron Society,
Bremen May 18-25 2010
[Conclusion]**

Siggi Kemmler

Robert Hatcher is the horticultural supervisor at the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, Hill Botanic

Gardens, member and past president of the South Adelaide branch of the Australian Rhododendron Society, and vice president and public officer of the National Body of the Australian Rhododendron Society. The Mount Lofty Botanic Garden, first opened in 1977. The crescent-shaped garden is situated on 97 hectares in the Adelaide Hills east of the city on the eastern slopes of Mount Lofty, which has acidic soils and high rainfall. The cooler, wetter location suits plants from temperate climates

which are difficult to grow on the Adelaide Plains. Among the native Australian flora are cultivated plants from cool climates including a large collection of rhododendrons and magnolias, as well as the National Species Rose Collection.

Robert talked about rhododendrons 'down-under' suffering from the influence of global warming. Weather patterns in South Australia are strongly influenced by the El Niño/La Niña Southern Oscillation [ENSO] a periodic climate pattern in the tropical Pacific. El Niño originates off South America and used to occur every 7-10 years. La Niña is the counter current which operates in the Indian Ocean. [Author's note: Wikipedia has an excellent entry explaining the finer points of these currents]. The cycle has become unpredictable, shorter and more pronounced. This makes long range weather forecasting problematic and weather events more severe. The results are more intense floods, heat waves, storms, severe bush fires and hail storms.

Effects on rhododendrons include severe foliage burn and weaker resistance to insect attacks. The change in conditions also weakens the plants and makes them more susceptible to disease, bacterial and fungal attacks. Droughts and excessive heat can kill the plants. Today, many gardeners drill wells on their property and collect rain water to offset increasing water restrictions and poor mains water quality. Robert also suggested to select cultivars suitable for the weather conditions, planting in shade, and the use of anti-transpirants during heat waves to prevent desiccation.

Dr Anthony Fitchett is a family doctor in Dunedin and Chair of Directors of the Mornington Health Centre, one of New Zealand's leading health centres. He and his wife established a woodland rhododendron garden and arboretum on their four hectare

property. They prefer the big-leaved *Grandia* and *Falconera* subsections and the *Maddenia* subsection. They also grow special New Zealand cultivars and hybrids. Tony's presentation was titled 'Strangers in a Strange Land'.

There are no native rhododendrons in New Zealand, but by about 1850 rhododendrons had been introduced, and by about 1880 the first NZ hybrids were available. Temperate rhododendrons thrive on the South Island, vireyas do well on the North Island. Pests and disease are not major problems. A number of species were introduced during the first half of the 20th century and Edgar Steed of Christchurch and a few enthusiasts from other parts of New Zealand bred them extensively. Breeding by professionals and amateurs increased during the second half of the 20th century. There are now many good New Zealand hybrids available. The New Zealand Rhododendron Society was established in 1944, to promote, develop and protect rhododendron gardening in New Zealand. It holds an annual conference which moves round the country, funds rhododendron research and plant trials, and is involved in a Collections and Conservation project. The Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust owns a 62 ha garden on the slopes of Mt Egmont/Taranaki. Pukeiti and the smaller regional gardens of Heritage Park near Palmerston North, Orton Bradley Park near Christchurch, and Tannock Glen, Dunedin, have significant collections of selected species and hybrids, as do some municipal gardens, such as the Dunedin Botanic Garden.

John Weagle of Nova Scotia was the last speaker of the day. He has been gardening in Halifax since childhood. John is a well-known nurseryman/plantsman and speaker, a recipient of the Leslie Hancock Award and The Hybridizer's Award of the Rhododendron Society of Canada. His friend Captain Richard

Steele introduced him to the joys of hybridizing in the seventies. His main interests are the family *Ericaceae*, which does very well in coastal Nova Scotia, and to extend what can be grown in the challenging climate of Atlantic Canada. His talk was titled Breeding for a Cold Climate – Fifty Years of Rhododendron Hybridizing in Nova Scotia.

Protracted cold periods in winter, often interrupted by sudden temperature swings (4 - 6 hours) from + 4 to -17°C, soil deeply frozen for up to three months, heavy wet snow-falls, and frequent wind storms are disadvantages. Add to these a strong March sun with frozen ground, poor mineral soil which quickly dries out, and a long warm fall which makes hardening off difficult – and clearly, growing rhodies in Nova Scotia is challenging. On the plus side can be listed good rain fall, no excessive summer heat, cool summer nights, and frequent, cooling fogs lasting to late morning.

During the mid to late 19th century captains of sailing ships brought the first rhododendrons to maritime Canada. The oldest survivors are some of the ironclads brought from the States and Europe. In 1892/3 the Halifax Public Gardens and some well to do local gardeners purchased a shipment of ironclads from Waterers. In 1953 Dr Donald Craig at the Kentville Research Station in the Annapolis Valley began a breeding program to increase range and flower colours for zone 5. Young rhododendrons were planted in full sun in a windswept field and left to fend for themselves. At about this time Captain Richard Steele was breeding rhododendrons in the milder coastal climate. He and the Kentville research station shared pollen, plants, and ideas. He also was a friend of Joseph Gable, whose emphasis on hardiness had a profound effect on Steele's hybridizing. During the 1960s the late Dr Joe Bruckner began to hybridize in the cold St Johns climate in New Brunswick. His primary interests were species - species crosses, with emphasis on the super hardy *R.brachycarpum*

tigerstedtii, *R.lapponicum* from the Slave Lake area, and *R.dauricum* var. *sempervirens*, collected by Vladimir Vasak northwest of Lake Baikal. These three hybridizers - Steele, Craig, and Bruckner - achieved much in a relatively short time.

By 1977 Rhododendrons had become very popular garden plants, and so the Atlantic Chapter of the Rhododendron Society of Canada was formed. John, Walter Ostrom, and Joe Harvey became hybridizers and testers of species. Today, the Atlantic Chapter of the Canadian Rhododendron Society has about 250 members.

This three part report did only cover the first day of proceedings of the symposium. It is based on notes taken at and abstracts submitted to the conference. All errors and omissions are the fault of the author, Sigi Kemmler.



R. dauricum

[Photographed by Ian E. Efford. See reference in previous article.]

Flava
in Bob Smith's garden in Courtenay



Rothenburg

Both photos by Ian E. Efford

CVRS Membership Renewal

This reminder is to let the few members who have not renewed know that Sharon Tillie will be available at the next meeting to register you for the 2011 season. The fee is \$38 per regular membership. The regular membership has replaced the individual and family membership. Up to two persons per household may register under one membership. If you are not able to attend the meeting you can register by mail by sending your fee to Sandra Stevenson, 6078 Mary St., Duncan, B. C., V9L 2G8 I must receive all monies prior to November 10 and will be forwarding the 2011 membership renewals to the American Rhododendron Society on November 12.

Thank you to all of the members who have promptly paid their dues to date.

Sandra Stevenson, Membership Chair

Executive Meeting September 29, 2010: A Summary

- Bill presented the financial statement to August 31. No major income or expenses for the statement period. The chequing account balance is \$3,214.97, total holdings \$19,299.47.
- There was a query from the ARS about their grant money to the Communities in Bloom Memorial Garden which had been answered by Ingeborg Woodsworth, and to which the ARS replied with words to the effect that 'it was well done'.
- The Christmas party will be early, the first Wednesday of the month being December 1. The format will be the same as last year. Proceeds to Salvation Army and the Food Bank.
- Bill Dumont will put together an overnight tour to the Fraser Valley for next spring.
- The plant sale was discussed. There will be no tables next year from the CVRD. It was suggested to contract the table supply to the new fair grounds. More advertizing than last year is recommended. Approach is to be made to Anne Slaby and Deborah Kobewka to organize the advertizing for the sale.
- Bill noted that the library needs some serious pruning; meeting minutes, old newsletters, doubles, old photos, etc should be stored elsewhere. All agreed, but no solution.
- Vancouver Island University in Duncan [Malaspina College] told David that they will move the rhododendrons we donated to the new site and water them for two years; no commitment after that.
- David to contact the municipality re CVRS plant donations for public places, such as the new fairgrounds and the new ball parks on Somenos Road. Other sites throughout the District are also to be considered.
- The bursary was discussed. While there are sufficient funds, there is not enough interest. An alternative donation, such as Providence Farm, or expanding qualifying area and subject, were suggested but rejected. It was decided that David will contact Malaspina and U Vic and that the allocation of the bursary should be decided by the Scholarship and Bursary Directors of the college.

Siggi Kemmler, Secretary

2010-11 Directors

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| President: | David Annis |
| Vice President: | Ian E. Efford |
| 2nd Vice-President; | TBA |
| Treasurer: | Bill Dumont |
| Secretary: | |
| at Executive Meetings; | Siggi Kemmler |
| at General Meetings; | TBA |
| Members at Large: | Sharon Tillie
Carrie Nelson
Bernie Dinter
Judeen Hendrickson |

2010-11 Conveners

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Librarian: | Elaine Kitchen |
| Garden Tours: | Sharon Tillie |
| Spring Sale: | the CVRS Team |
| Club Liaison: | Alan Campbell |
| Raffle: | Hilda Gerrits |
| Membership: | Sandra Stevenson |
| Speakers: | the Executive |
| Tea Coordinator: | Carrie Nelson |
| Website: | TBA |
| Historian; | Mona Kaiser |
| Propagation; | Alan Campbell |
| Sunshine; | Mary Gale |
| Editor; | Ian E. Efford and Siggi Kemmler |

Recollections on the History of our Society: How the Society was founded by Peter Kearns

“I used to drive to the Victoria meetings with Daphne Jackson, Stan Groves and Fred Collins. These meetings were held at the Bowling Club at the south end of Cook St and the drive was getting increasingly irksome, so someone suggested forming our own chapter.

I remember nothing of the mechanics of getting it started but I remember that for our first meeting our guest speaker was Harold Greer, at that time, I think, President of the A.R.S. He gave a magnificent presentation involving three projectors, but was having difficulty setting up the equipment and finding the electrical sockets in the funeral home, our meeting place, a little less sophisticated than his usual Oregon meeting room.

To lighten the moment I said "you know we use 220 volts here?"

WHAT?

"Just kidding"

"I woudn't be surprised" he muttered.

I brought a Greer rhododendron Black Magic for the raffle. Now why on earth should I remember that?

The original Rhododendron "Cowichan" was a *R. williamsianum* seedling which I gave to Fred Collins as a baby when he admired its foliage. It flourished and bloomed profusely in his garden in Red Baron Place. I took cuttings and have one of the clones in my garden.”

Peter Kearns

The Top 10 Practical Tips

Information from an article in the Sept. 2010 issue of The Digger by Dr. Jennifer Parke (associate professor, senior research) is a plant pathologist in the Dept. of Crop and Soil Science, and Dept. of Botany and Plant Pathology at Oregon State University, Corvallis. She specializes in Phytophthora diseases of nursery plants and the biology & management of soil-borne fungal pathogens. She can be reached at jennifer.parke@oregonstate.edu.

1. Be careful what you buy. The best defense is to not bring in any outside plant material. If you do, know your source. Make sure your supplying nursery uses excellent sanitation practices. Keep purchased plants in a separate area and do not treat with fungicides effective against *Phytophthora*. Observe them for several weeks... Should disease develop, you have not exposed your [other plants.]

2. Don't use dirty pots. Re-using pots is a good idea for reducing costs, but make sure you aren't also recycling

pathogens and weeds. Break the cycle by sanitizing pots before re-use.

Several methods are available, including sanitizing with a hot water dip or soaking in a disinfectant, but most methods require washing to first remove old potting media and organic debris.

3. Keep propagation areas as clean as possible. Your propagation area should be the cleanest part of your nursery. Get rid of any weeds, sick plants, leafy debris or dying plants that could harbor pathogens. Use a source of clean water, such as well water, municipal water, or treated water. Disinfest your propagation beds between crops.

4. Ensure good drainage. Remember the disease triangle? A susceptible host, a virulent pathogen, and a conducive environment are all required for disease to occur. *Phytophthora* is likely to be present in your soil, so if you are growing susceptible plants, your best option for managing disease is manipulating the environment to be unfavorable to disease. *Phytophthora* loves puddles. To prevent disease, do whatever you can to ensure good drainage. Prepare the nursery site to have an adequate slope and install tile drains and irrigation ditches to convey water to a central location for treatment.

5. Never put pots on bare soil. Many growers do an excellent job of producing healthy plants but then set their container plants on contaminated ground. *Phytophthora* moves easily from soil to pots by swimming through films of water or by being splashed onto plants. You should assume that all soil ... is laden with *Phytophthora* spp. Place a barrier between the soil and the containers: a layer of gravel or

rock, or permeable fabric mesh.

6. Prevent the ground from getting contaminated. A common source of contamination is often infested soil or gravel beds. Although the infected container plants have been destroyed, the ground under them has been contaminated by leafy debris that has fallen from infected plants. These spores survive in the top few inches of ground, embedded in the organic debris. When environmental conditions favor their germination several months later, they can produce millions of spores which can infect a new crop of container plants placed on the gravel.

7. Don't let container plants tip over. Research showed that foliage of tipped over rhododendron plants could become infected after just a 10-second exposure to zoospore infested water on the ground.

8. Use only clean water for irrigation. *Phytophthora* species are water molds – aquatic organisms that have evolved to attack plants. They live in rivers and ponds, and are abundant in recirculated water systems. Assume that your water is contaminated with *Phytophthora* unless it is from a well or municipal source. You can test your water for the presence of *Phytophthora* species with a leaf baiting method and ELISA test kit. The test will not tell you *which* species of *Phytophthora* is present, but it will tell you if your water is contaminated. Several water treatment methods are effective. To learn more, attend a water treatment and water quality workshop.

9. Don't keep sick plants. What do you do with plants that look sick or unthrifty? If many plants are affected, it is especially important to diagnose the problem. If you put 'reject' plants in a holding area . . . hoping they will get better, you are asking for trouble. Dispose of these

plants, or compost them thoroughly to kill pathogens, otherwise you risk contaminating [other plants.]

10. Be alert for disease symptoms. Monitor your plants for disease symptoms. Learn to recognize symptoms of plant diseases and pests, attend a workshop on Phytophthora diseases at the North Willamette Research and Extension Center, or take the online *Phytophthora* course, which is offered in either English or Spanish. When in doubt, submit samples to the OSU Plant Disease Clinic.

The value of prevention: While *P. ramorum* cases in Oregon have dramatically reduced since the “scare” of 2004, nurseries across the U.S. need to pay special attention to sanitation. It’s old technology, but it works. The payoff is reduced risk, and protection against *Phytophthora* as well as many other pests and pathogens. Your vigilance in preventing *Phytophthora* diseases is very important for producing and maintaining high quality, healthy plants.