



# NEWSLETTER

Volume 22:8 Editor: Bill Dumont November 2011

## Vice President's Message

November! Where has this year gone? Some of us are busy planting our Rhodies purchased at the last meeting or in the planning stage, how many do we have to move before we can place the new ones? Some of us are gently placing our cuttings in their protected spots to ensure a good return. Many of us are packing away our tender Rhododendrons or blanketing them for winter or heaven forbid, doing a garden renovation. I am sure we are all looking forward to having an opportunity to peruse the literature over the next few months and build our wish list for the New Year. And before we know it we begin all of this craziness over again.

While you are planning for next season consider some of the following activities to both enhance participation and provide learning opportunities for our members. Shirley Rock, ARS membership chair has compiled a list of activities from other chapters. Some of the activities are as follows:

- Club Photo Contests
- Loonie Table at meetings (members donate plants and can purchase plants for \$1)
- Members receive emails from the public regarding Rhododendron issues. They answer the emails and publish the questions and answer in their newsletter
- Display a photo and write-up for Rhododendron of the month at the meeting
- Spring Truss Show – this can be of a competitive or non-competitive nature

I understand, historically, members have participated in a competitive truss show at the spring sale. We may want to revive this tradition and have a Truss Event at our May meeting. Or take it a step further and have Rhododendron displays at all of the meetings. Some months may be preferable for branch or bark characteristics, others for bud or leave interest. This can be of a competitive or a non-competitive nature. Events such as this add interest and can provide motivation to seek out old and new cultivars. They provide opportunities for identification of characteristics specific to certain hybrids or relationship to specific species. An environment is created for ongoing discussion of this fabulous Genus Rhododendron.

## Coming Events

November 2  
Gerry Gibbens – A walk down 32 years of Memory Lane at VanDusen Gardens – past, present and future

December 7  
Christmas Party

February 1  
Bill Terry: “The Perfect Garden: Plant Hunting in Tibet”

May 5  
2012 Cowichan Valley Garden Fair and Rhodo Sale – Cowex

On a number of occasions members have expressed interest in having more learning opportunities incorporated into our meeting agenda. Another means of achieving this educational goal would be to organize workshops that are meaningful to our members. This can be built into our monthly meetings or have experiential learning taking place in specific gardens. There is a wealth of information and skill among our club members and propagation group to

draw on. We can begin by having members provide feedback on topics they would like to have covered. Let those creative juices begin flowing. We welcome your thoughts and ideas by email or in writing to anyone of the executive. This will enable us to continue this discussion and begin the planning process.

*Sandra Stevenson, Vice President*

### **Highlights of the Spring Fraser Valley CVRS Bus Tour**

On Friday May 13 at 6:15 am CVRS and members from other ARS clubs and friends arrived at Duncan's train station to head off to the Duke Point ferry terminal for a bus tour of some very special gardens in the upper Fraser Valley. In spite of being a Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> everything went very smoothly the first day but day 2 presented some unexpected bus challenges.

We arrived at our first garden in the late morning -the Finley Rhodo Garden in north Surrey. This 3 acre hillside site overlooking the Fraser River was first started in second growth woodland more than 50 years ago by Vern and Doc Finley. Doc passed away several years ago. The garden got beyond the capacity of the Finley's and is slowly being recovered with family assistance and lots of grunt work. Hundreds of huge rhodos tower over the visitor. The thousands of rhodos on site were most impressive but the cool 2011 spring held back some flowering that had been anticipated.

Nevertheless the 90 minutes on site were barely adequate to take in the whole garden. The family also has a rhodo nursery and made some of their more spectacular azaleas and rhodos available for sale to the group. These were quickly snapped up like a women's shoe sale and the last compartment on the bus started to fill with plants.

*Flowering Rhodos at the Finley Gardens*





Our bus started to exhibit some challenges with shifting and getting into reverse on the steep road. We then headed to nearby Bear Creek Park for a picnic and a much appreciated bag lunch. The gardens and trees there were also impressive on this sunny and warm spring day.

Our next stop was in south Langley at the Wingswept Garden, home of John and Gael Dodd. Most people were blown away by its design and content including impressive rhodos. Carved from bush and peat bog, beginning in 1978, this evolving landscape garden has become a haven for birds and plant lovers. Grassy vistas, ponds, trees, rocks and sky are united by large plantings of rhododendrons, roses, and herbaceous borders. The project began as the family purchased a vacant lot with most of the alders and conifers having been recently felled-basically a mess -that has been transformed into one of the more beautiful formal backyard gardens ever seen by most people on the tour. We were given a hearty welcome with warm sunshine, a soggy lawn and lots of rhodo blooming along with tasty refreshments. There were many interesting companion plants and information from the owners of this 3 acre paradise of pools, spectacular annual and perennial beds and thoughtful plantings of thousands of different plants and rhodos. Like many impressive gardens the front yard, while also beautiful, gives no indication of the mature jewel that lies in the back. Just a fantastic garden!!



*The magnificent backyard at Wingswept Garden*

We then headed to the iconic Harrison Hot Springs hotel where the group enjoyed a full course dinner and entertainment in the Copper Room. This was followed by a very relaxing late-night soak in the hot springs. It rained during the night but we awoke to a hearty buffet breakfast and sun peaking out of the clouds. But the cold spring continued for a short time that morning as we headed for the next garden.

Most rhodoholics have heard of Lu Zhu gardens in Agassiz, the incredible creation of Dr. Mike Bale and his family. It is located along the Lougheed Highway on a steep 25 acre hillside overlooking Mount Cheam and the upper Fraser River valley. Mike, a practicing medical doctor in Chilliwack bought the land in 1976.



*Wingswept: View of the Main House*

Then after attending the ARS convention in Victoria in 1989 he discovered what he wanted to do with the land. He had part of his site cleared in 1992. It was a perfect, mountain slope often bathed in mist and rain.

He began planting rhododendrons and figures there are now more than 10,000 on site, many with drip irrigation. We must have seen another 5,000 in a maze of greenhouses on site. Dr. Bale, members of his family and volunteers guided many small groups to various highlights of the garden-a rhodo fanatics dream. Vistas of the garden show rock faces, a waterwheel, waterfalls, beautiful pergolas, wooden viewing platforms overlooking the Valley, a rail speeder,, bridges, large stones artistically arranged and an incredible network of trails.

Parts of the property are very steep and rocky.



Rhodos are planted anywhere and everywhere under the canopy of mostly second growth mixed conifer and hardwood forests. There is so much to this garden it is almost impossible to comprehend its magnitude. Dr. Bale generously gave our group many rhodos and the bus continued to fill up with plants.



*Liz and Sally taking in Wingswept*

The Bale's hospitality was also impressive, fresh squeezed juice in mimosas, other interesting refreshments, coffee, tea, sandwiches and many types of goodies were offered and accepted by our malnourished group from Vancouver and Salt Spring Islands.

Oh yeah-speaking of the bus- the transmission finally called it quits and seized up as they driver was trying to turn the bus around at the entrance to Lu Zhu. Fortunately we were able to rent another local bus in a



*The pond views are spectacular at Wingswept*

fairly timely manner and the first move of everything off our bus to the other went smoothly. Thank the Lord for the labelling of rhodos! While the broken bus and driver waited for a mechanic to arrive the group headed off in the replacement bus to Brian Minter's garden centre in Chilliwack for a spending spree on the plant candy at Minters.

Meanwhile Bill Dumont and several helpers set up shop and cooked a special lunch for the group at the beautiful Gwynne Vaughan Park nearby. It's fair to call any lunch with cheddar cheese and bacon grilled sandwiches, fresh potato and fruit salads, lemon and chocolate cakes *special!* Just as we finished the lunch our original bus showed up in working order and the second transfer of baggage and plants began-albeit in a more chaotic manner.



*Mt. Cheam and Fraser Valley from Lu Zhu*



After cleaning up and loading the bus we left Chilliwack for our final stop at Cedar Rim nursery in Langley, reputedly the largest retail nursery in BC with some huge plants for sale. The driver and the guide were happy nobody bought any of the 20 gallon rhodos available or any of the most impressive huge palms at this nursery. Another plant buying spree ensued fully constrained by the lack of time and any more space on the bus.

We caught the 5 pm Spirit of Vancouver Island ferry to Swartz Bay and had our final feast onboard for our famished group at the Pacific Buffet with its chocolate decadence dessert table. A tired but satisfied group and their new plant treasures arrived early Saturday evening at the Duncan train station with a big load of plants and good memories of a great trip to the Fraser Valley.



*R. schlippanbachii in bloom at Lu Zhu*

*Thanks to Ian, Bob and Brenda for their pictures for this article.*

### *Wingswept Gardens*



*Presentation of Thank You gifts to the Bales*



*Lu Zhe Garden*



*Presentation of thank you Rhodo to Mike Bale*

## Rhodos For Sale

There are still 6 rhodos left from the Norm Todd sale at the last meeting. These include:

- 1 gal - \$8 each - Daphnoides, Uvarifolium
- 2 gal - \$11 each - Marchioness of Lansdowne, Mildred Amateis
- 3 gal - \$17 each - President Roosevelt, Yak Sunrise

If you are interested in these plants please contact Bill Dumont 250 743 9882. He will be bringing these to the Nov. 2 meeting.

## Get Ready for the Christmas Party Rhodo Contest

Start thinking about how you might want to participate in the HO HO Rhodo Photo Contest at our annual Christmas Party on December 7. The rules are simple, dig through those thousands of coloured Rhodo photos that you have on your computer and pick one you like. Send it to your favourite Photo processing place like Peacocks, London Drugs or Walmart and get them to produce it in 8x10in or 9x12in. Next bring it to the Christmas party along with 4 (yes, four) quarters and you might just end the evening much wealthier than when you arrived!! The only rule about the photo is that there has to be a rhodo somewhere in the photo; if you know it's name so much the better but not necessary and oh yes, it does not have to be in bloom. So you can even go out and shoot a few photos now.

## Financial Report

Bill Dumont, Society Treasurer reported the following effective September 30, 2011:

Current Account	1836.41
Bursary Account	18.49
Term Deposits	16605.48
Shares	5.00
Total Deposits	18465.38

The bigger financial issues this month and next include payment of ARS dues for all membership renewals and the purchase and sale of Norm Todd's plants. As well we will be investing in a new logo and separate website for the Cowichan Valley Garden Fair and Rhodo Sale.

## District 1 Clubs Join Together

Chris Hodson, past president of the Peace Arch Rhododendron Society advises that the Peace Arch chapter, has completed a merger with the Fraser South chapter and that all PARS memberships have been transferred to the Fraser South group. He describes it as "a sad day for the club, brought on by the fact that no new volunteers came forward in the spring to take on executive positions, and the habitual four that did all the heavy lifting said enough is enough". He noted "I look on the merger positively, as I believe it will result in a number of benefits to our membership, namely greater interface with growers and serious rhodoholics and more lively and enriching meetings."

## CVRS Membership Renewal

There are still some members who have not renewed their membership for 2012. Please contact Marie Jacques as soon as possible with your \$38 payment, same price as last year. We have to send the final list to ARS by mid November so please renew now. Thanks.

## Next meeting - Wednesday November 2- Don't Miss It

Gerry Gibbens is the Senior Horticulturalist at VanDusen Botanical Gardens in Vancouver and has been with the garden since 1980 and will retire in 2012. Gerry is a recognized rhododendron expert, speaker, & educator. He is Past-president of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society & the Alpine Garden Club of BC as well as a past Director of District 1 of the American Rhododendron Society. Gerry received his garden training at Windsor Great Park in England. Gerry plans a walk down memory lane of the last 32 years as a great way to tell the story of VanDusen Gardens past, present and future. Don't miss this excellent speaker!



## Chelsea Flower Show and Floriade 2012 Guided Tour and Cruise

Every year the grounds of the Royal Hospital are transformed into show gardens, inspirational small gardens and vibrant horticultural displays that make up the world's most famous flower show.



The Chelsea Flower Show is attended by 157,000 visitors each year. The number is limited by the capacity of the 11-acre ground. Tickets must be purchased in advance. The show has become an important venue for watching emerging gardening trends. New plants are launched at the show and the popularity of older varieties revived before the eyes of the horticultural world. It's the garden design equivalent of Paris Fashion Week!



Bernie Forbes of Marlin Travel in Duncan (250 748 2594) [Bernie.forbes@marlintravel.ca](mailto:Bernie.forbes@marlintravel.ca) is offering a fantastic 12 day European cruise holiday on the *Azamara Journey* ship that includes the Chelsea Flower Show. The cruise departs from Amsterdam on May 17 and includes stops in Netherlands, Belgium, Bruges, Rouen France, London, and Southampton. Give Bernie a call if you are interested.



### 2011-2012 Executive

Past President: David Annis

President: Ian Efford

([efford@shaw.ca](mailto:efford@shaw.ca) 250597-4470)

Vice President: Sandra Stevenson

([pinchofherbs@shaw.ca](mailto:pinchofherbs@shaw.ca) 250-748-557)

Secretary: Leslie Bundon

Treasurer: Bill Dumont

Membership: Marie Jacques

### Members at Large

Bernie Dinter, Joe Hudak, Elaine Kitchen,  
Christopher Justice

### Convenors

Sunshine: Mary Gale

Tea: Debra Kobulka

Raffle: Hilda Gerrits

Club Liason: Alan Campbell

Library: Dixie Mueller

Programme Co-ordinator: Alan Campbell

Website and Newsletter Desktop Publisher:

Contractor-Mary-Lynn Boxem

Newsletter Editor: Ian Efford

History: Mona Kaiser (pending) and Liz Murray

Garden Tours: Ingeborg Wordsworth (pending)

Plant Sale: the team

Facility Liason: Roy Elvins

Christmas Party: The team



## **COWICHAN VALLEY RHODODENDRON SOCIETY**

### **Programme for 2011-2012**

**7:30 pm at St John's Anglican Church**

**163 First St, Duncan, BC V9L 1R1**

**(1<sup>st</sup> and Jubilee)**

September 7	Siggi Kemmler and Ken Webb "Rhododendron Nurseries in North Germany"
October 5	Bill McMillan "Selected English Gardens and Birds"
November 2	Gerry Gibbens "The Rhododendrons at VanDusen Gardens"
December 7	Christmas Party
February 1	Bill Terry "The Perfect Garden: Plant Hunting in Tibet" Co-Sponsored with the Cowichan Valley Garden Club
March 7	Geoff Ball "Milner Garden and its Rhododendrons"
March 20	District 1 Executive Meeting
April 4	Bill Bischoff "A Prize Winning Garden in the Making"
May 2	Dennis Bottemiller, Rhododendron Species Botanic Garden "Variables in Propagation of Rhododendron Cuttings"
May 5	Garden Fair and Rhododendron Sale
June 16	Summer Picnic