



NEWSLETTER

Volume 20: 4

Editor: Ian E. Efford

April 2009

President's Message

Welcome to Spring! At least it is supposed to be according to the calendar, even though it doesn't feel like it temperature-wise. We get a warm day or two as a teaser and then lots of cool weather. We need to be thankful for what we have. Sharon and I just came back after a weeklong trip to Prince George. Talk about snow! They have lots still lying around and the piles are 6 to 8 feet tall along each driveway.

The rhododendrons are noticing that it is spring. My "Olive" is beautiful and my *R. sutchuenense* has one truss on it. Yeah! They are great to look at in contrast to all the crocuses and daffodils that are around everywhere. Speaking of gardens, if you can host a garden tour of club members sometime this spring, contact Sharon Tillie. She is making a list of any garden, be it a show garden or even a garden in progress, that could be open to members for a couple of hours some evening.

This month's speaker has an interesting talk on Magnolias. Don Martyn is coming over from Fraser South Chapter to explain that these trees make great companion plants for our treasured rhododendrons. This is a timely presentation as the early Magnolias will begin their bloom soon.

See you at the meeting.

David

What is Coming Up?

April 1st Wednesday 7.30pm
Don Martyn speaking on "Magnolias in the Rhododendron Garden".

May 2nd
CVRS Plant Sale [see details elsewhere]

May 6th Wednesday 7.30pm
Wanda NcAvoy speaking on "Fraser Days in Ucluelet - April 29th - 3 May, 2009"

May 18th 9.00am-noon
Abkhazi Gardens. A plant sale extravaganza. 1964 Fairfield Road. Parking at Margaret Jenkins School. Gardens open for free. Tea Room open from 10am.

April 29th - May 3rd
ARS 2009 Rhododendron Rendezvous in Everett, Washington State.

From the Editor

Again, another garden that you must visit is described; this time Abkhazi Garden. I have requested permission to reprint the article by Harold Fearing but have not yet received permission. I hope to before you read it!

The Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

A Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

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

Ian E. Efford [efford@shaw.ca]

What's Not (Yet) in Bloom

**Harold Fearing, President
South Fraser Rhododendron Society**

As I write this (March 7) it is still winter. We had a dusting of snow this afternoon and it is too cold to comfortably work outside. We have had a few blooms of *R. sichotense* and *R. ledebourii*, both Siberian natives related to *R. dauricum*, but very little else. Our plant of *R. ririei* was on track for more blooms than it had ever had, with buds half open. Its flowers are a light lavender, which I like, though some don't. However the -4 C night time temperature we had a week or so ago froze all of the buds, and so we will have no real flowers.

R. strigillosum is beginning to come out and should be nice in a week or so, if it also doesn't get frozen. Its flowers are a bright blood red which is particularly welcome this early in the season. For us this has been a hardy, well-shaped plant that dependably covers itself with flowers. The young stems and leaf bases are covered with long bristles, so it is an interesting plant even when not in bloom.

Two others which should be coming out very soon are *R. ciliatum* and *R. moupinense*. *R. ciliatum* is a medium sized plant with leaves edged in long bristles, or cilia, from which it gets its name. The flowers appear in loose clusters of 2-5, and are white, or flushed pink. *R. moupinense* tends to be a smaller plant and have smaller leaves than *R. ciliatum*. The flowers can be white or pink, or white with various pink markings. We have a particularly nice clone obtained from the Badmintons (though apparently originally from the RSF) which is white, flushed pink on the edges with a blotch of pink speckles.



R. strigillosum, bright red blossom with deep nectaries, above, and leaf whorl with stem bristles, below



One often finds in the nurseries a plant *R. Cilpinense*' which is a hybrid, *ciliatum x moupinense*. For us at least it tends to be a larger plant than either of its parents. The flowers are similar, white flushed pink, but are larger also. Many of the plants one buys in the nurseries as *R. moupinense* are apparently actually this hybrid.

The Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

Finally among the early bloomers I should mention one of my favorites, *R. lutescens*. As is typical of members of the Triflora section, this has somewhat open asymmetric flowers in clusters of 1-3. They are a nice yellow, often with green spots. The plant tends to be a bit straggly, so I have found it works best in a fair



R. lutescens, with its exceptionally clear yellow blossoms and early bloom period provides a welcome ray of sunshine after a long grey winter.

amount of sun, and with an occasional judicious bit of pruning. But in full bloom it is great, especially so early in the season. I have heard from some people that some forms are a bit tender, but we have not found that. The clone we have has never had any winter damage either in Vancouver or in Abbotsford.

So, I have had to indulge in the usual winter gardener's musing about plants not yet in bloom. But hopefully it shouldn't be too long before those blooms exist in reality.

[This article is reprinted from The Yak March 2009. As we have had such a cold year, it was felt that the subject remains appropriate even in April!]



R. ciliatum, with some of the abundant leaf bristles shining in the sun



And the progeny, *R. 'Cilpenense'*, with silken blossoms less campanulate than *ciliatum* but not so rounded and open as *moupinense*.



A particularly fine form of *R. moupinense*, with its winsome and generously open-faced blossoms in pink and white.

The Bus Tour Cancelled.

Bill Dumont writes "I am sorry to inform all of you that we did not get the minimum registration for this trip and so we have cancelled it. We had 19 confirmations -well below the 30 minimum. I think the difficult economic times and other issues worked against a successful trip this year. I view this, however, as a postponement only and hopefully next year we might try gain. Thanks again for your support and commitment to this years tour-sorry for the bad news - it is a great itinerary for any avid gardener.

Heather Sale

March 28. Victoria Island Heather Society Spring Heather Sale. Farmers Institute Hall, Cobble Hill. The doors will open at 9:30 for demonstrations and the sale will begin at 10am. Be there early to get the best selections. The sale will finish at noon or when sold out. There will be an excellent selection of winter blooming heaths, summer blooming heathers with spring coloured foliage or spring tips, summer blooming Irish heaths and tree heaths. An interesting selection of kits of 10 plants will be for sale as well as some potted plants for the deck. Master Gardeners will be on-hand to answer your general gardening questions. Contact Elaine at 250-743-0965 for more information.

[Ed. Note that heathers prefer the same growing conditions as rhododendrons and thus make ideal companion plants.]

Pots

As you know, Ken & Madeleine Webb are two of the most generous donors of plants to the CVRS. They have probably given us more than 100 plants during the last 12 months. The result is that they are running out of pots!! Please, would you save pots for them and bring them to a meeting? They use 6x5 scotch pots, 1 gallons and up to 2 gallons. Pots returned will probably come back full at some later date!

Hats

Everyone, including the men in ball caps, is encouraged to wear a florally-decorated hat to the plant sale. This will help to emphasize the festive air that is being created by Peter Lewis as a way of attracting more buyers to the sale and raising more money for your Society.

American Rhododendron Society District One Directors Meet.

On March 4th, representatives from the executives of every rhododendron club in BC attended an all-day meeting in Qualicum. They discussed ways to attract new members, raise funds, disseminate information about rhododendrons in the community, and make chapter meetings more interesting. We all thank to our President, David Annis, for being our club's representative at this provincial meeting.



The Abkhazi Garden

Valerie Murray, Head Gardener

The Abkhazi Garden is an exquisite heritagehouse and garden located on the southern most tip of Vancouver Island. It was created by Peggy Pemberton Carter, a British woman, born in Shanghai, and Prince Nicholas Abkhazi, the last prince of Abkhazia. Peggy and Nicholas had met in Paris in the 1920's but did not make a life together until after WWII when they found each other again, married and put down roots in Victoria in 1946. The wild lot that Peggy purchased was one of the last undeveloped lots close to downtown Victoria. No one had wanted to build on the property because it was dominated by rock, but it was this very rock that attracted Peggy. She saw the possibilities where others saw the problems and she designed a garden to fit seamlessly into the natural rocky landscape under carefully protected native Garry oaks. It is the natural landscape and the Abkhazis' response to it that is the defining feature of the garden.



Behind a simple hornbeam hedge on Fairfield Road. Peggy and Nicholas led a private life, however an open gate was a sign to friends and neighbours that visitors were welcome.

From as early as 1949 horticultural societies came to visit the garden which was always a place of peace and beauty. Time has only enhanced its magic. Over the last six decades curious conifers and Japanese maples have reached a handsome maturity and the unusual rhododendrons, that the garden is known for, have grown to be magnificent trees with sculptural trunks and branches as attractive as the flowers that adorn them every spring.

The Abkhazis had both died by 1994 and five years later the garden was threatened with

destruction when a townhouse development was approved for the one and one half acre property. A campaign was begun by local residents and spear-headed by The Land Conservancy of B.C., a charitable land trust. TLC now owns and manages the garden with a small paid staff and a very large contingent of dedicated volunteers.

Although designated a heritage garden by the city of Victoria, the garden is not fixed in a precise moment in time. The garden has changed much since the Abkhazis began clearing bramble and ivy from the untamed site 60 years ago. Their garden was different in the 1940's, 1960's and 1980's, as plants grew and were lost or replaced and as the tastes of the Abkhazis changed when new plants became available. What never changed, however, was the respect for the unique character of the natural landscape and the strong design of the garden layout. The Abkhazis were always interested in the newest and the best plants and their mentors were the best plantsmen of the day. This tradition continues as we seek out new plants to lengthen the season of interest for our visitors.

Our wonderful rhododendrons bloom from late

January to early July -- the mass of blooms being enjoyed at the end of April or the beginning of May -- but our plant collection is expanding so there is something to see throughout our open season.

We invite you to visit beginning March 1st until the end of September, Wednesday to Sunday, 11am-5pm, Our restaurant offers light lunches or afternoon tea. For more information call 250-598-8096 or check our website www.abkhazi.com .

New Members

Peter Lewis

We all welcome the five new members that joined the Society this month. They are:
Nora Dowsett who have been gardening for seven years, her half acre garden is a mixed garden with about twenty rhododendrons. She particularly likes the variegated varieties. Nora is joining in order to obtain basic knowledge on how to grow, what varieties to buy and where to plant them in the garden. Nora is a financial planner with the Bank of Montreal and gardening is her creative outlet.

Sandi Kedziora has a garden that stretches to nearly 3/4 acre and which is mostly planted with perennials. She has an eye for colour and has about ten rhododendrons so far. She became a member in order to experience kinship with other like-minded gardening souls.

Al Lawrence has moved to Duncan from Lake Cowichan where he had quite a large garden dominated by large rhododendrons. He now lives on an average-sized lot so would like to know about the smaller varieties that are available. Al also has a special fondness for lilies.

Irene Krohe lives in Saltair and her garden faces the ocean. She has large mature rhododendrons some of which she would like to transplant. She would like to learn all aspects of rhododendron gardening.

I would encourage all members to seek out these new members and introduce yourselves.

"The Ultimate Rhododendron Conference"

District 1 is hosting "The Ultimate Rhododendron Conference", April 2 – 4, 2010, at Canada's premier rhododendron garden, the University of British Columbia Botanical Garden. The conference is aimed at all gardeners who would like to learn more about rhododendrons. Over Saturday and Sunday, delegates will attend 6, ninety-minute sessions in the garden classrooms at, one of two learning levels:

2. **Level 1** is aimed at newer rhododendron collectors and at general perennial gardeners who want to learn to grow the most spectacular rhododendrons on their block. Topics will include lecture/slide presentations, best-practice advice, garden tours, and field work:

- * Rhododendron environmental needs and how to duplicate them in your garden
- * Rhododendron and perennial pruning
- * Rhododendron culture and care, irrigation, and pest and disease management
- * How to design a rhododendron garden to prevent future problems
- * How to choose superior rhododendrons for your area
- * The best dwarf rhododendrons for rock gardens, containers, and small garden spaces

Instructor: **Ron Knight**, ARS District 1 Director and creator of Caron Gardens (www3.telus.net/rcknight), featured in the March 2009 issue of Gardens West magazine.

Level 2 is designed for confirmed rhodoholics and veteran rhododendron collectors. Topics will include lecture/slide presentations, laboratory and field experiences, research-based information, and practical advice about:

- * The best species rhododendrons for West Coast gardens and how to grow them
- * Rhododendron anatomy as seen with a projected dissection microscope
- * Using keys to distinguish between closely related and often confused species
- * Low tech ways to propagate rhododendrons from seed or cuttings
- * The importance of salts, pH and micronutrients; pH and soil nutrient testing
- * How to solve the 10 worst problems of rhododendron culture and care

Instructor: **Douglas Justice**, Associate Director and Curator of Collections at UBC Botanical Garden (www.ubcbotanicalgarden.org).

Garden visits on Friday and Saturday will include UBC Botanical Garden, VanDusen Botanical Garden, and Nitobe Memorial Japanese Garden.

Websites

At the last meeting, two websites were mentioned. Siggi spoke about a fabulous palm tree garden in Hawaii. The website for this garden is:
<http://www.lundkvistpalmgarden.com/Garden.html>
David mentioned a website where you can find out the weather for Duncan. It is part of www.weatheroffice.com, the Federal Government's Environment Canada site. On the BC page there is a box on the right hand side that will get you to several places that are not on the BC map. There is a link to "Olympic Summary" and North Cowichan is there. It gives just the basic info as recorded at the North Cowichan Office up the highway, not the forecasts. This is the link directly to the North Cowichan site. Try it to see if it gets you directly in.
http://www.weatheroffice.gc.ca/forecast/24_hour_conditions_e.html?voo&unit=m

News From Britain

A couple of news items of interest to gardeners have been received through e-mail to our members.
£25 million funding to fight woodland disease
Environment Minister Jane Kennedy has announced £25 million to help eradicate a deadly plant disease plaguing historic gardens, woodland and heathlands across England and Wales.
The funding will support a five-year programme to manage and contain the risks of two plant diseases *Phytophthora ramorum* and *Phytophthora kernoviae* from spreading further, following a scientific review and stakeholder consultation.
Ms Kennedy said:
“These lethal diseases are having a detrimental effect in pristine locations, which in turn could have a detrimental effect on our local tourism industry, and our own lifestyles.
“Defra, the Forestry Commission and local authorities are currently tackling outbreaks

across England and Wales including the New Forest, the south west of England, and Cannock Chase in Staffordshire. These are significant tourist hot spots that could face a drop in visitor numbers if we don't act now.

“Many of us escape the hustle and bustle of the city for the fresh air in our beautiful countryside.

“But if this disease spreads, it could mean parts of the countryside being cordoned off, and more limited public access – in addition to further loss of our precious woodland.

“That's why we've announced this significant funding to help combat these diseases and safeguard our woodlands for the future.”

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/latest/2009/plant-0303.htm>

The National Trust for Scotland

The National Trust proposed changes to eleven of its 130 built or countryside properties as a cost saving measure.

The Trust manages 35 gardens in Scotland including some of the well-known rhododendron gardens. Amongst the Trust's countryside and garden properties, it is proposed to close Arduaine and Inveresk Garden and the Mountain Visitor Centre at Ben Lawers. The Trust announced it is anticipating that in the region of 91 full time equivalent posts will be lost in 2009/10 and seasonal staffing levels will also change.

Paul Wurz

Paul Wurz is speaking at the Mill Bay Garden Club at the Mill Bay Community Hall next to Kerry Park Arena on May 26 at 7 pm. He will be speaking on Rhododendrons.

Tea and Goodies Teams 2009

<u>Since there was no January meeting these people can be spares.</u>	<u>Ruth Cook</u> ☺ 748 8293	<u>Betsy Bakker</u> 748 3595	<u>Sandy & Allan Campbell</u> 743 3597
<u>February</u>	<u>Heather Barker</u> ☺ 748-4657	<u>Jackie Walker</u> 743 3650	<u>Maria & Sigi Kemmler</u> 746 8751
<u>March</u>	<u>Hugh & Fiona Lawrence</u> ☺ 743 7808	<u>Cynara de Goutiere</u> 743 5791	<u>Susan O'Connor</u> 746 8695
<u>April</u>	<u>Lynda Macovichuk</u> ☺ 746 4105	<u>Ann Marie Pagliaros</u> 701 0597	<u>Joyce Gammie</u> 246 2484
<u>May</u>	<u>Peter Kearns</u> ☺ 746 5782	<u>Anu-Edith Eggengberger</u> 701 0305	<u>Carrie & Richard Nelson</u> 743 3679
<u>September</u>	<u>Janice Graham Andrews</u> ☺ 246 5420	<u>Sharon Tillie</u> 748 8254	<u>Daphne Jackson</u> 743 5632
<u>October</u>	<u>Peter Lewis</u> ☺ 746 7000	<u>Liz & Allan Murray</u> 743 9190	<u>Joyce Maclean</u> 746 4105
<u>November</u>	<u>Anne & Roger Slaby</u> ☺ 748 4623	<u>Cynthia Gracia</u> 748 4072	<u>Marie Jacques</u> 743 5021

-
☺ Indicates the team leader

-
Please let your team leader and Marie Therese 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; are also responsible for the kitchen clean-up after the meeting. The teams should be at the hall by 7:15 p.m.

-
Marie Therese will look after the kitchen supplies; if anything is needed or if there are questions or problems, please call her at 250 748 5787. She will also call to remind you the day before the meeting.