



# NEWSLETTER

Volume 21: 5

Editor: Ian E. Efford and Siggie O. Kemmler

September 2010

## President's Message

Wow, what a summer we have had! Such a dry July with hot temperatures, a lull for some rain (was it enough?) and then back to the hot weather. I trust that your rhododendrons are faring well. Mine look good, but then again that is probably because I put new bark mulch under them and the gardens look really neat and tidy because of that. The pruning I did earlier in the summer has resulted in some excellent growth.

Those of us that made it to the picnic in June had a great day. Very clear skies and a wonderful setting in the Murray garden. Thank you, Liz and Allan, for allowing us to have our picnic there. Thanks also to Bill Dumont for doing the 'main' course. The mini-salmon burgers were delicious.

During the past few months rhododendron enthusiasts have had to say good bye to a number of people. Bill Dale lived in Victoria but was a member of our club. He passed away in May. He was a great promoter of getting George Fraser recognized for his work in Ucluelet. In June, Dot Gibson passed away after a lengthy stay in hospital. She was half of the famous duo with all those fabulous rhododendrons on that hillside in Tofino. Lastly we all were saddened to hear of the passing of Etta Cook. She had been an active member of our club from the beginning (stretching way back to December 1988). Her garden was always a delight to view. To all the families involved, we send our condolences.

The Executive is gearing up for the fall and planning what activities we might have at our meetings. Stay tuned! At the moment there are a few gaps in our roster that could be filled by volunteers. Even two volunteers that wish to share one of the jobs. If you are willing to slide into one of these jobs, contact me or any member of the Executive. Sometimes the effort involved is not all that great.

See you at the meeting.

*David Annis*

**1<sup>st</sup> September 2010 Wednesday**

**7.30pm**

**Gordon McKay, Alba Nursery**

**"Companion Plants for Rhododendron Gardens"**

**As this talk will be of general interest to gardeners, we suggest that members bring their friends as guests.**

## **Report on the Symposium and 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations of the German Rhododendron Society**

Bremen, May 18 - 25 2010

The German Rhododendron Society was founded in Bremen in October 1935. The following year trial gardens were established in Munich and Essen, but most significant was the dedication of the rhododendron park in Bremen in 1937. It is now one of the world's finest rhododendron gardens. The society began with 35 founding members. Between 1941 and 1948 it was not active but then was formally resurrected under its current name.

The conference had 239 attendants coming from 16 countries. Canada was represented by six participants. The first two days were taken up by expert presentations on aspects of rhododendron culture, the remainder of the week's activities included visits to the major nurseries, growers, and gardens; it even included a tour of the Hamburg harbour.

On the first day of the conference Dr. Hartwig Schepker, the scientific director of the Bremen Rhododendron Park, gave an overview of the history of rhododendron culture in Germany and then talked at length about the German rhododendron gene bank.

The Germans have been growing rhododendrons for almost 200 years. The first known named rhododendron was *Jewess*, created in Dresden by Ludwig Leopold Liebig in 1859, one parent was *r.caucasicum*, the other is unknown. Another important early grower and hybridizer was the Seidel nursery near Dresden. The major growers in Germany today are Hobbie, Bruns, and Hachmann, the latter also creates excellent hybrids.

**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 Bremen Rhodo-dendron Park also is doing serious hybridizing. An important German contribution to rhodo-dendron cultivation has been the creation of a lime tolerant understock. In 1980 the Federal Institute for Ornamental Plant Breeding (IZZ) in Ahrensburg, Holstein, Germany, began the research, and breeding endeavours over 25 years in different soils resulted in the root stock named INKARHO. The name is short for INteressengemeinschaft KAlktoleranter RHODodendron (interest group lime-tolerant rhododendron). It is a copyrighted trade name, so I don't think we can propagate INKARHO stock.

The rhododendron gene bank is a project coordinated by the Chamber of Agriculture of Lower Saxony, a federal institution with a strong background in rhododendron cultivation. Concern for the loss of biologic diversity and identification of cultivars are the major goals of the three year project, begun in 2008. Cultivars and species from collections across Germany are analysed and verified. Species corresponding with the original genetic material are labelled and the data, including high resolution photography, is stored. On completion of the project the selected hybrids and species will be distributed to network members for cultivation. When the rhododendron gene bank project is completed, it will serve as example to establish gene banks of other ornamentals. The network consists of the major collections in Bad Zwischenahn /Rostrup, the Bremen Rhododendron Park, and select public and private collections. 3850 rhododendron cultivars, of which 1240 were of German origin, and 600 species were recorded. At the end of last year 2440 cultivars (890 German) and 240 species were verified. An internet database should launch this fall. For an in depth report on the gene bank see the Winter 2010 Journal article by Caroline Schmidt and Dr. Hartwig Schepker *Setting up a Rhododendron Gene Bank in Germany*.

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### The 2010 Plant Sale

The Society is very grateful to Queen of Angels School for allowing us to hold our annual plant sale in their gymnasium again. We did not get the enormous crowds we had in 2009 [was this

because we only gave away 50 rhododendron plants rather than 200?].



At the same time, we did have total sales of over \$7,800 and made a profit of over \$1,500. Our success depends on the volunteer effort of our members and we are particularly grateful to Bill Dumont for leading the team and for arranging for the colourful aprons to be ready for the occasion. These aprons can be seen in action in the two photos from the sale.



## Ideas about the Propagation Group

Ken Webb and Alan Campbell have been discussing the possibility of developing a seminar on rhododendron propagation. The idea is to see if there would be enough interest from Island Chapters (perhaps even all of District 1) to hold one or more days of discussions focusing on the taking of cuttings and all that is involved in getting them to root.

The thought is to hold the seminar at the Webb's home, where there are excellent propagating facilities. Everyone attending would get 'hands on' experience by taking the cuttings, prepare them, and stick the cuttings into the rooting medium. A number of propagators would be on hand to discuss their own methods (as not everyone follows the same procedures) as well as discussing questions and answers.

A lunch could be provided (at a cost of \$5.00 or so) or bring your own and maybe ending the day with dinner out somewhere.

Please e-mail Alan Campbell if you would attend such a session at [stonefold@shaw.ca](mailto:stonefold@shaw.ca)

Ken and Alan also would like to see the Cowichan propagating group expand. At present it seems only Al, Siggie and Ian can maintain interest. At some meetings we see others attend then it's back to only the three of us. Ken wonders if some of the propagating group from Victoria would come to our meetings (held centrally at Alan's home) in order to build more interest in our Chapter. We could try it a couple of times but if it turns out to be the same low numbers then the idea would fold. It's disheartening to call a meeting then have only 2 or 3 people turn up.

Again, e-mail your thoughts to Alan.

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## Our New Logo

Bill Dumont recently took on the task of "re-vitalizing" our emblem of R. Cowichan. When we looked at the current image available for the CVRS logo it was clear it needed updating and in a format that facilitates digitizing for embroidered images and other uses. It was decided to commission several images from Charles Dool, a renowned water color painter in Victoria. He produced two beautiful images-the one with the darker leaves has been selected as the base for the

new logo (image 1 below). The font and layout of the accompanying text were re-designed and the new logo was unveiled at the Plant Sale on May 1. The two original paintings will be kept by the club.



Bill showing off the new aprons



New Logo, image 1



New Log, image 2

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## R. macrosepalum linearifolium

This rhododendron is very unusual in that it possesses very elongated leaves and the new growth is very distinctively pink. It grows readily in the valley and is an ideal feature plant in any garden. This actual specimen was photographed in Mary Parker's Nanaimo garden during this year's bus tour. More on the bus tour in the next issue.

If you have any special photos of this year's bus tour to the northern part of the island, please e-mail me the best ones to [efford@shaw.ca](mailto:efford@shaw.ca).



## Wet Winter Likely to Spark New Round of Sudden Oak Death

Richard Halstead

The spores that spread sudden oak death are plentiful again in Northern California due to the wet winter, and researchers predict that will result in another surge of tree deaths by 2012. "It's interesting how quickly the pathogen bounced back after getting slapped around for three years because it was so dry," said David Rizzo, a professor of plant pathology at the University of California at Davis. Since it emerged in Mill Valley in 1995, sudden oak death has killed tens of thousands of oaks. There is no known cure.

Rizzo said people have underestimated sudden oak death's staying power before. After several dry years at the beginning of the decade, "people were saying the disease is gone in Marin," Rizzo said. But it came roaring back after wet winters in 2005 and 2006. "The spring this year reminds me so much of 2005," Rizzo said. "Cold and wet all the way into May." Two years after the rains in 2005, the number of dead oak trees jumped. Rizzo expects to see a similar spike by 2012. "It's called sudden oak death, but it really takes about two years to kill," he said.

Sudden oak death is caused by a fungus-like pathogen known as *Phytophthora ramorum*. But there are many other types of *Phytophthoras*. *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, which kills a wider range of trees than *Phy-tophtora ramorum* and has devastated some areas in Australia, has also turned up in California.

"The main canopy species at China Camp are coast live oak, madrone and bay," Swiecki said. "The *Phytophthora ramorum* kills off the oaks, and *Phytophthora cinnamomi* kills both madrone and bay. In areas where we have *cinnamomi*, what we're ending up with is these plots of weeds, a total change in the habitat."

The question is why government regulators aren't getting tougher with plant nurseries, whose shipment of infected plants across state borders has been identified as one of the chief means of spreading sudden oak death and a host of other dangerous plant diseases.

"Those nurseries need to be tested four times a year. It's for the good of the environment," said Sandra Denman, a research scientist with the United Kingdom's Forestry Commission. Denman reported that *phytophthora ramorum* has infected large stands of Japanese larches in England. [See next article]

*Editor: This article is a precis of an article in the Oakland Tribune of 06/14/2010*

## Red Alert over Conifer Disease

Andrew Forgrave, Daily Post Jun 15 2010

Hundreds of trees in South Wales are to be felled as forestry bosses race to contain the spread of a deadly fungal disease. Forestry Commission Wales said the discovery of *Phytophthora ramorum* – more commonly known as “sudden oak death” – in larch trees was a “worrying development”. An extensive felling programme has been ordered along with a series of aerial surveys as the commission rushes to halt its spread northwards. The disease was first recorded in Britain in 2002 but until last year fewer than 100 trees had been infected – mainly shrub species such as **rhododendron**, viburnum and bilberry.

Last year it was found in larch trees in south west England and now it appears spores have spread across the Bristol Channel to Wales. It has been found at three separate sites – the Afan Valley, near Port Talbot; Garw Valley, near Bridgend; and the Vale of Glamorgan. Richard Siddons, of FC Wales, said: “The disease was discovered here as a result of aerial surveys, with subsequent testing confirming there is widespread infection in all ages of Japanese larch. “So far in Wales, it has only been found in woodland that is managed by Forestry Commission Wales.

“However, the situation is changing rapidly as we undertake more surveys, and it is likely the infection has spread more widely.”

FC Wales said significant numbers of larch trees have died or are dying. What’s worrying forestry experts is that the disease appears to have changed behaviour by jumping to a commercially important conifer species. Wales is seen as particularly vulnerable as larch makes up a larger proportion of its commercial forestry than in England or Scotland – around 8%, covering 23,000ha. FC Wales has implemented biosecurity measures to prevent the spread of infection in soil, needles, vehicles and timber. Timber processors have been told to take special measures to allow logs from the infected trees to be taken to mills for conversion into timber.

Richard Siddons said FC Wales is treating the outbreak very seriously. He said: “Based on our scientists’ knowledge of regional weather patterns and how the disease spreads, we hope we can contain it in a region bounded in the north roughly by the A44 road in mid Wales and in the east by the M5 motorway.”

Advisory signs have been placed signs at forest entrances and visitors are being asked to take precautions. Woodland owners and managers in Wales are also being asked to keep an eye out for the disease. Symptoms include lesions in the bark – sometimes known as bleeding cankers

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## Membership Fees are due for the 2011 Season

It is once again time to renew our memberships for the upcoming year. As you may recall the ARS changed the fee structure, beginning last year. The new ARS fee structure reads as follows:

**Regular Member** - \$40 US.

Two members of a family in same household are now allowed under Regular Membership. ARS policy states, however, that a single or regular membership is entitled to only one vote in meetings or elections of the Society.

**Family membership** has been discontinued.

**Commercial & Corporate** - \$90 US

**Sustaining** - \$75 US

**Sponsoring** - \$150 US

**Life Member – Single** - \$1000 US

**Life Member - Family** - \$1500 US

Our chapter has been increasing fees with a goal of matching the ARS fees by next year. This means that, once again, we will subsidize the membership fees to bring our regular Membership fee to \$38.00 Canadian funds for the period January 2011 to December 31, 2011.

Despite the small increase of \$3.00 [And a reduction for family members of \$10.00] our fees remain a bargain. Over this twelve month period we meet on nine occasions and enjoy a number of benefits for the small sum of \$4.40 per meeting, some of which include: the rental of our great meeting space, superb speakers sharing a wealth of knowledge, our local newsletter, an opportunity to borrow from our library, tea/coffee and snacks during our meetings, visiting members’ open gardens, an opportunity to come together with individuals with like interests in our community, discounts at a number of nurseries, a rhododendron for new members, opportunities to participate in educational workshops and rhododendron-focused travel events. And of course our membership in a national organization that provides a host of benefits, such as our well respected ARS Journal and opportunities to participate in annual conferences and educational events, to name a few.

I will be available to begin collecting membership fees at our first meeting **September 1, with a goal to have all members paid up by November 1.**

*Sandra Stevenson*  
*Membership Chair*

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The June issue of the Yak [p2] published this photo of one of our local and most famous rhododendrons located in downtown Ladysmith.

Reputedly 125 years old> It is clearly very old, very large - some 25 feet high and 30 feet wide, and very, very happy.



## The Rhododendrons at the Train Station

Earlier this spring the City of Duncan cut back the rhododendrons around the parking lot at the train station. Peter Lewis was rather aghast at the severity of the pruning and enquired about the reason for this work. He received the following reply from Tom Ireland of Duncan Public Works.

*“ The Rhododendrons along Canada Avenue at the Train Station were tidied up for the following reasons:*

- 1. They were overgrowing the sidewalk and driveway entrances.*
- 2. A hardy pruning can rejuvenate growth and they have never been maintained. There were leaves only on the outer ends of the branches and they were becoming gangly.*
- 3. If left like this I was concerned that heavy snow may flatten them and break branches.*
- 4. Underneath was a garbage can which due to heavy growth we were unable to clean out.*
- 5. Needles have often been discarded in planters downtown and keeping them tidy allows us to stay on top of anything that may get thrown in.*
- 6. Let's face it, they all looked pretty bad and nobody has ever done anything to tidy them up in my 20 years.*
- 7. Prior to pruning, it was investigated if this would cause harm and we were told no, it may actually improve the overall health.*
- 8. Sightlines for traffic and pedestrians around all the planters was becoming an issue.”*

Quite a good answer and for those who visited the Dumonts' garden and saw the very severity of pruning the Bill applied to some of his larger plants, the City did a rather delicate job!! I have also been cutting back a number of the older plants in our garden but have taken the alternative approach to pruning. I have cut back to their base, one third of the oldest branches in each plant. This opens up the plant and allows air to flow through as well as allowing sprinkler water to better reach the root area of these and neighbouring plants. In both cases, new growth will result but the pruning should be undertaken soon after flowering in order to allow the new leaves to harden off before the frost comes.

Ian E. Efford

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## R. haematodes

I have included a photo of this species of very beautiful rhododendron because it grows well in the garden and, most notably, it flowered from the 3<sup>rd</sup> May right through to the last half of July!

Ian E. Efford



## Rhodo Mulch

Your rhododendrons will definitely benefit from this nourishing mulch!

10kg bag of mushroom manure

10kg bag of bark mulch

250ml rhododendron fertilizer

60ml of micronized iron, chelated iron, or fritted trace elements.

Mix thoroughly together and spread a 2.5cm layer from the trunk to the dripline of each rhodo every year, generally in spring.

**Wim Vander Zalm**, Horticulturist, owner of two Art Knapp Plantland locations.

*Editor: this short note is taken from Gardenwise. Early summer 2010 p.45*

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