



Newsletter

Volume 23:6 Editor: Ian Efford September 2012

President's Message

Welcome to the new gardening year. I hope that your gardens survived the hot dry summer months and you did not suffer too many deaths among the rhododendrons. My watering system was disconnected until mid-July because of building changes so that it was a very stressful time for the rhododendrons and the gardener.

There is still an opportunity to attend the conference in Nanaimo between the 21-23rd September. Over 200 are expected to attend and there should be talks that will interest anyone with a love of rhododendrons. If you have trouble getting to and from the conference let me know and I will try to arrange car pooling.

The next North American conference will be in Seattle in May 2013 and over 500 are expected to attend. Two years following that event, the main conference will be in Victoria in May 2015. CVRS has been asked to help with that conference as part of a District 1 combined effort.

This last year we did not have our usual garden tours because we lacked a volunteer coordinator. This was a pity as one sees some very interesting gardens and, by sharing with the CV Garden Club, we also are invited to visit their open gardens. This is a very small volunteer job and only lasts a few weeks so that I hope someone will step forward to take over the task this year.

The Executive also recommended that we seek another volunteer to act a publicist for the society. The task would involve making sure that announcement of our meetings are in the local newspapers, on the local radio, etc. each month. Another small job that needs someone to step forward.

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Coming Events

October 3 rd Carmen Varcoe: Bhutan
November 7 th Garth Wedemire: A Personal Perspective on the East Coast Convention last Spring

We have new better and brighter name tags! These can be taken home or left at the end of each meeting. They are rather expensive and we do not wish to see them lost. On the other hand, they will be good publicity for the society if you attend the garden club meeting or the conference in September. If you lose one, you will be expected to pay the replacement cost!

I look forward to an interesting and active year and hope that it is enjoyed by all members. Bring a

friend and encourage them to become new members. If you have a problem with something within the club, please speak to me and I will do my best to resolve the issue. I also welcome suggestions for improvements and changes - such as encouraging more truss shows. Most branches have truss shows at meetings. We have dropped this activity and perhaps should revise it during the coming year.

Ian E. Efford

Society Gift of Plants to the Crofton Community

On May 5th, Ian E. Efford, President of the Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society was proud to present a gift of \$500 worth of rhododendron plants to Donna J. Brooks, President of the Crofton Community Centre to be planted in the newly constructed northern entrance to Crofton. The site was prepared and irrigation installed by the Municipality of North Cowichan but construction was delayed until the spring of this year. This gift continues our programme of donating plants to a public site within the CVRD. Other sites that have received gifts include the Cowichan VIU campus, the Lake Cowichan Rhododendron Garden, and the Shawnigan Lake Community Centre.



Photos by Warren Goulding, Chemainus Valley Courier

The plants are doing well although they are planted rather to close together. Donna Brooks is in discussion with Ernie Mansueti of the Municipality about spacing them more appropriately during the autumn.



At the last meeting of the Executive, it was decided to donate the plants for next year to Chemainus Community in Blooms after a request was received for plants to be placed in the re-designed garden around the locomotive. The locomotive is to be placed on a more stable foundation and the changes in design of the surrounding garden will include removal of much of the hedging and the installation of an irrigation system.

Your executive also decided that these annual donations will only continue after a full review of the programme by the 2013-14 executive. It was felt that we should consider whether there were better ways to promote rhododendrons in the CVRD before making additional donations.

Ian E. Efford

Gardens of Ucluelet

Wanda McAvoy and Dave McIntosh

Ucluelet has several gardens rather than just one large one. The rhododendron gardens were established mainly at the urging of Bill Dale who, along with Francis Gundry and Stuart Holland had documented the work of George Fraser, an early Ucluelet plantsman. George Fraser was known for his lovely garden and hybrids of native and imported plants but was best known for his

rhododendron hybrids. Unfortunately, this garden was lost after George Fraser's death in 1944. He began building his nursery in 1894 and one of his first plant catalogues was issued in 1915 entitled "List price of shrubs, etc., propagated and grown by George Fraser, Ucluelet, B.C., Canada.". A 1925 catalogue was entitled "Azaleas, Heaths, Hollies, Roses, Pernettyas, Rhododendrons, and other shrubs and plants, including native hybrids grown by George Fraser, Ucluelet, B.C., Canada." He worked the nursery for many years but was less active after 1936.

GEORGE FRASER GARDENS is a memorial garden located between Ucluelet Secondary and Elementary Schools on Peninsula Avenue. The plants are mostly rhododendron hybrids, donated by the late Bob Sinclair. The planting was carried out under the aegis of the Ucluelet and Area Historical Society and Ucluelet Lions' Club. The garden was officially opened by Les Clay in 1993. As well as rhododendrons the garden has seven plaques mounted on logs to commemorate Ucluelet elders.



At the entrance of Ucluelet, on the town side of the "Welcome to Ucluelet" sign is the **Fraser Hybrid Garden**. This garden is mainly composed of George Fraser hybrids. Included are R. 'George Fraser' [*R. macrophyllum* x *R. maximum*], R. 'Fraser's Pink', R. 'John Blair' [*R. arborescens* x *R. occidentalis*], R. 'Fraseri' [*R. canadensis* X *R. japonicum*], R. 'Caroline Gable', and R. 'Mrs. Jamie Fraser' [(*R. arboreum* x *R. macrophyllum*) x *R. arboretum*]. These hybrids were donated by Bill Dale in 2002 and transplanted from his garden in Sidney, BC. Some of these hybrids are found in private gardens on the West Coast and other parts of Vancouver Island, but this collection is duplicated only in Beacon Hill Park, Victoria.

In 2001 a monument was dedicated to pioneer George Fraser at GEORGE FRASER MEMORIAL PARK at the bottom of Main Street across from Whiskey Landing. A garden was planted with rhododendrons and descendant plants from Fraser's early



R. Fraseri

propagations. In 2007, heritage G. Fraser plants and rhododendrons were planted with the participation of Her Honour, Iona Campagnolo, Former Lt. Governor of BC. The garden planting was disturbed during the recent construction of a new aquarium and is currently being re-created. Rhododendrons growing here now are R. 'Fraseri', R. 'John Blair', R. Fiona Cristie' and Bill's Legacy (in honour of the late Bill Dale, propagated by Evelyn Weesjes, Sidney BC). At the entrance to this park, there is a sign 'Discover Our Gardens' showing the location of various gardens throughout the Ucluelet area.

Along the highway/multit-use path leading into Ucluelet there are 15 rhododendron gardens. Bill Dale was instrumental in his efforts to gain the interest of the Vancouver Island chapters/other individuals who generously donated over two hundred rhododendrons from 2001-2005. Many thanks to MARS, NRS, NIRS, CVRS, VRS and Terry Richmond who helped create the 'Rhododendron Mile' as some like to refer these gardens.

My Early Summer Reading

It is Canada Day and, despite the re-building of the back of our house, I have managed to find time to read two books recommended by friends. They both contained information of considerable interest about gardening and, to some extent, about rhododendrons.

“Wildlife of a Garden: A thirty-year study” by Jennifer Owen was published by the Royal Horticultural Society in 2010. I was sent this book by mutual friends of myself and the author. We met at Oxford University where Jennifer and her husband, Dennis, were undergraduates at the time and I subsequently visited them at the University of Michigan research station where Jennifer was studying bumble bees in their garden - a convenient way to undertake graduate research and raise her children at the same time! After teaching at universities in West and East Africa, they moved to Leicester University in the centre of England and began a thirty year sampling programme on the insects and other animals in a fairly typical back garden.

This book is a summary of the knowledge accumulated by standardized trapping and collecting of insects and other organisms. The results showed that the fauna of a garden is very complex and dynamic. Over 2600 different species were collected during the 30 years and it is estimated that this may be only 25% of the actual number of animals in the garden during that time. The difference arises because some of the most abundant animals were not sampled at all. These include the small animals, such as mites, that live in the soil, the animals that live in moss on tree trunks and most of the micro-fauna of the tree canopies.

Continuous sampling and detailed identification showed that individual species fluctuated

enormously over 30 years. Species that were very common at one time almost disappeared later on and others increased in numbers. For example, the two common social wasps [*Vespula germanica* and *vulgaris*] fluctuated considerably during the time period although both were relatively abundant in the first half of the study period. Thereafter, *V. germanica* declined and was relatively rare.

The first two chapters and the last three are very readable and give an overview of the results. The main conclusion is that gardens are very complex because the owners are always adding new plants and thus bring diversity in food supply for different herbivores, pests and predators. At the same time, the gardens are always being weeded, dug, hoed, mulched, etc. and this means that the garden ecosystem is kept in a constant state of flux. It can be seen as a transitional ecosystem which usually has more plants and animals than a very old established or climax one.

The Royal Horticultural Society has a mandate to encourage and support gardening and most of its publications, such as the excellent monthly magazine "The Garden", are written for the general gardener. This book is very well produced, but poorly edited, and most of the chapters are really research reports which are best read by someone with one or two degrees in entomology or ecology and experience in reading scientific papers. Despite their interesting content, it is best to read each chapter as separate research papers rather than as chapters in a book for the general audience.

For an audience interested in rhododendrons the most interesting chapter is the one on bees and wasps as bumble bees and sometimes wasps are the main pollinators. Jennifer Owen collected 121 species of bees and wasps of which 14 were social bees and 7 social wasps. Of these eight were bumble bees in the genus *Bombus* which is the group one usually sees feeding and pollinating rhododendrons. I do not know of any studies that have focused on the pollinators of rhododendrons on the west coast of North America. Certainly, I have

seen wasps going from flower to flower and playing that role but it is unclear what percentage of pollination is undertaken by wasps. It is quite obvious that the common honey bee is no longer a significant pollinator in our gardens as so few are seen now days.

For the rhododendron gardener, one significant outcome of Jennifer's study is that we should not be too keen to make our gardens "immaculate". Do not clean up small patches of grass, hedges, old logs, etc. These areas provide the nesting sites for many of the bumble bees and solitary bees and wasps and, until we know exactly what pollinates rhododendrons in this area we should maintain the highest level of insect diversity in our gardens. Even if not rhododendrons, these insects may pollinate other flowers or be predators of pests in the garden.

The second book, recommended to me by Dennis Bottemiller, is "**Wilson's China: A Century On**" by Mark Flanagan and Tony Kirkham published by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Mark Flanagan is Head of the Arboretum at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Tony Kirkham is Keeper of the Gardens in Windsor Great Park.

In the 19th century and the early part of the 20th Century nurseries employed young botanists or gardeners to explore distant parts of the world and supply a steady stream of new plants for sale to wealthy estate owners who competed among themselves for having the rarest and most exotic plants. One of the most famous was 'China' Wilson [Ernest Henry Wilson] who spent 11 years at the beginning of the 20th Century exploring the Chinese end of the Himalaya and sending his plant finds back to the Veitch Nursery in England. During our bus tour in May, I saw this book for sale at U.B.C., I thought that it would be an ideal addition to our library, written by two experts on plants about the explorer who discovered a very large number of the rhododendrons that we enjoy in our gardens today. Unfortunately, rather than focusing on their area of expertise, the authors

toured China a number of times in order to follow the footsteps of Wilson tracing the sites of old photographs of scenes and buildings taken by Wilson. It would have been far more interesting if they had written a book about the trees he discovered and their history in cultivation since that time. It is only in the last chapter on “Saving Wilson’s Plants” that we have an account of a few of the plants that Wilson discovered or introduced to horticulture. These include some well-known plants in our gardens such as the Dove Tree [*Davidia involucrata*], Virginia Creeper, *Magnolia wilsonii*, the Paper Bark Maple [*Acer griseum*], the Kiwi [*Actinidia chinensis*] and a couple of Rhododendrons, *R. orbiculare* and *argyriophyllum*. I found this chapter most interesting as it focused directly on the subject of Wilson’s discoveries and introductions and their history in cultivation.

Ken Cox et al. Published a very successful book

“Frank Kingdon Ward’s History of the Tsangpo Gorge” which followed the travels of another famous plant collector who focused on an area a little further to the west along the Himalaya Flanigan and Kirkham failed to achieve the same level of interest, except in the last chapter, as they did not focus on the plants which was the central focus of both explorers. The reader who has an overall interest in China, may enjoy this account of Wilson’s travels, on the other hand, if you are interested in the plants you might be better to read only the last chapter and Wilson’s own 1913 account “A Naturalist in Western China”.

Ian E. Efford

I have a copy of Jennifer Owen’s book which I will lend to interested members and the Wilson book is in our library.

Master Gardeners Association

The Provincial Master Gardeners Association (MGABC), a volunteer service and education organization, is celebrating 30 years of providing public education on sustainable gardening practices.

They will be celebrating this milestone by hosting a conference showcasing an exciting group of **“BEST OF THE WEST”** horticulture speakers, all experts in their fields. The event will be held at the Beban Social Centre, Bowen Road, Nanaimo, BC, on Saturday, October, 20, 2012. The Vancouver Island Chapter of Master Gardeners is our host.

Lucy Hardiman, the keynote evening speaker, is from Portland Oregon, and speaks regularly at the annual Northwest Flower and Garden Show in Seattle. She is a design specialist.

Cass Turnbull from Seattle, Harry Jongerden from VanDusen Botanical Garden, Vancouver, and Linda Gilkeson from Salt Spring Island will offer inspiration and information on what they are best known for: pruning, the role of botanical gardens and integrated pest and disease management.

In addition to these gardening experts, there will be a community panel focusing on best practices in local food production and options going forward, including a question and answer component for conference delegates to participate in.

There will also be a Vendors Marketplace to get a head start on Christmas gift buying, books to add to

MGABC Website at www.mgabc.org for details.



In Memoriam — Margaret DeWeese

By Theresa McMillan

On April 13, Margaret DeWeese, a long time member of Victoria's gardening community, passed away. She had been the editor of our Newsletter from September 2006 to November 2007, First Vice President, then VRS President from 2008 to January 2009, when she resigned for reasons of health.

Margaret wrote many articles on gardening which appeared in our Newsletter, the University of Victoria's Finnerty Garden Newsletter, and other garden magazines. Margaret had a beautiful garden, Shibui, which surrounded the pond on her property in Genoa Bay near Duncan. Her beautiful and artistic home and garden became a Bed and Breakfast. She gave garden tours, displaying fine vireya rhododendrons and many Japanese maples and rhododendrons. Our thoughts go out to her family, her three children, and her six grandchildren.

[Editor: This obituary was published in the Victoria Rhododendron Society newsletter. Margaret DeWeese had also been a long-time member of our society.]

Hidden Acres Rhododendrons

Nursery and Display Garden

Paul & Lynn Wurz

Our garden and nursery is located 15 minutes north of Campbell River on Vancouver Island. Our property is 8 ½ acres in size, and approximately 3 acres is planted in garden. Our mission in our rhododendron garden is to make as many of the new and specialty rhododendrons available to gardeners.

All of our rhododendrons are grown on site from "cuttings" taken from our rhododendron plants. We currently have approximately 1000 hybrids growing in our garden, and in excess of 50-60 different species rhododendrons. In particular, we specialize in Fujioka and Lofthouse rhododendrons. Besides rhodos, our garden consists of countless hostas, ferns, dahlias, lilies, and other shade plants.

Our garden and nursery is open to visitors and customers most of the year, but an e-mail or phone call is helpful during the "off-season". A hobby farm and vegetable garden takes up much of the remaining land on our rural property.

We enjoy our small business, and the friendships that it brings. Come for a visit, and a walk in the garden. Our website is: <http://hiddenacresrhodos.com/>



Scenes from Hidden Acres



Chorus Line



Chemainus



**Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society
Programme 2012-2013**

7:30 pm at St John's Anglican Church

**163 First St, Duncan, BC V9L 1R1
(1st and Jubilee)**

- September 5th By popular demand, the evening will be devoted to a panel answering members questions about any aspect of rhododendron cultivation, hybridization, etc. Bring your questions, leaves that appear to have problems, etc.
- October 3rd Carmen Varcoe will present a talk on Bhutan, which is located in the centre of the natural distribution of rhododendrons.
- November 7th Garth Wedemire will present a personal perspective on the East Coast Convention last Spring
- December 5th The Christmas dinner.
- February 6th TBA
- March 6th TBA
- April 3rd TBA
- May 6th TBA
- June 22nd. Summer Picnic



**2012-2013
Executive**

Past President: David Annis
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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: vacant
Raffle: Hilda Gerrits
Club Liason: Alan Campbell
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Website and Newsletter Desktop Publisher:
Contractor-Mary-Lynn Boxem
Newsletter Editor: Ian Efford
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Garden Tours: vacant
Plant Sale: the team
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Christmas Party: The team
Publicity: vacant