

The Victoria Rhododendron Society

Newsletter



Box 5562 Postal Station B, Victoria BC Canada V8R 6S4

March 2013

Thirty-Third Year of Publication

e-mail: wtmcmillan@telus.net

web page – <http://victoriarhodo.ca>

MEETING 7:30
MONDAY, March 11, 2013
GARTH HOMER CENTRE, 811 DARWIN STREET, VICTORIA, B. C.

Speakers: Art and Sue Lightburn, “China”
Annual General Meeting and election of next year’s Board

Art and Sue Lightburn are members of the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society. Art is the President and Susan is a Director.

They have had a love of rhododendrons since 1977, when they lived in Haida Gwaii. They now garden in Nanoose Bay.

In 2012, they travelled to China on an amazing self-directed tour and saw rhodos in the wild in South-west China. The talk will be richly illustrated by Susan’s photographs.

In This Issue

- **February’s talk** pg. 1
- **Journal of the A.R.S. on line** pg. 3
- **“The Allure of Species” by Herbert Spady** pg. 4
- **Notes from the Board, Lois Blackmore and Calvin Parsons** pg. 7
- **Upcoming events** pg. 8

REFRESHMENTS

WOULD THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS please let Johanna Massa know at 250-642-5491 if you plan to come to April’s meeting and bring goodies:

MARK & PATTY NIXON, PATRICIA OWEN, DAVID & JOYCE PARKER, CALVIN PARSONS, AND RHONDA ROSE

Please wrap your cookies or snacks.

Coffee and tea are supplied.

Assistance in setting out the food, and helping Johanna in the kitchen cleanup is really appreciated.

February’s Talk

By Theresa McMillan

Agnes Lynn’s talk, “Companion Plants for Rhododendrons”, was illustrated by many photographs taken by her husband, Dave. Her garden has been developed over many years with the help of many gardeners, such as Ian McTaggart-Cowan, Herman Vartnou, Tony Waller, Howard Senn, Hamish Robertson, Doris Page and Joe Harvey. Plants under consideration for companion to her rhodo garden have to have at least

VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY BOARD

President:

Calvin Parsons 250-590-0489

waterlily@shaw.ca

1st Vice President

Peter Barriscale 250-385-3950

pbarris@shaw.ca

Past President:

Jacqueline Bradbury 250-389-1379

jacqbradbury@shaw.ca

Treasurer:

Ann Widdowson 250-479-9167

awiddowson@shaw.ca

Secretary:

Norma Senn 250-595-7276

normasgarden@telus.net

Members-at-Large:

Lois Blackmore 250-478-6615

loisb@shaw.ca

Sharon Joseph 250-383-1756

undergroundca@yahoo.com

Theresa McMillan 250-478-3515

wtmcmillan@telus.net

Carolyn Marquardt 250-477.8387

tonymarquardt@shaw.ca

Gareth Shearman 250-385-4302

shearman@victoria.tc.ca

Madeleine Webb 250-744-1785

kenwebb@shaw.ca

Ken Webb 250-744-1785

Kenwebb@shaw.ca

Newsletter Committee:

Theresa McMillan 250-478-3515

Bill McMillan 250-478-3515

Linda Gilmore 250-642-2256

Joyce Whittle 250-656-7313

Calvin Parsons 250-385-1970

Madeleine Webb 250-744-1785

Website:

Calvin Parsons 250-590-0489

(Continued from page 1)

two out of four outstanding qualities: flowers, (including fragrance), foliage, berries or bark. As well, the combination of plants has to be of year-long interest. There is structure built into the garden by using evergreens and conifers and the rhododendrons of various sizes.

For more interest there are early flowering bulbs, winter daphnes, mahonias, witch hazels, peeling bark maples, then spring-like flowering cherries, pieris, the wild flowering currant so attractive to rufous hummingbirds, fragrant Spanish broom, red bud, fothergillia, ekianthus, fatsia Japonica, hydrangeas, clematis, and later summer interest in lavatera, and the fall with Burning Bush.



***Enkianthus campanulatus*,**

two sources of interest, spring bloom and fall foliage



Mahonia Winterset, two sources of interest, winter bloom and summer berries

TO OUR MEMBERS:

The Journal of the American Rhododendron Society (JARS) is now online.

If any members wish to view the online Journal only and stop receiving hard copy, please let us know. With the most recent increase in postage rates, it would help if many

members would choose this option.

Instructions for access:

1. Go to the ARS Office website:
www.arsoffice.org
2. Click on "View Journal American Rhododendron Society online edition."
3. If you already have a username and password, click on "login" and fill them in. If you do not have a username and password, click on "Register Now" and follow instructions for obtaining them to gain access.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

I have tried this procedure myself. To register you will need a username, a password, and your **membership number**. Your membership number is to be found on the front (white) protective cover of the mailed ARS Journal. As well, **Gareth Shearman**, who is responsible for membership, can provide you with your membership number. His contact information is below.

Once you are registered, the latest journal will appear on your computer monitor.

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NOTICE FROM GARETH:

If anyone who paid \$30 for full ARS membership this year has NOT received the Winter 2013 ARS Journal (Vol. 67 Number 1), please let me know.

Gareth Shearman

Membership Chair

shearman@victoria.tc.ca

or leave me some voice mail at:

[\(250\) 479-2851](tel:(250)479-2851)

NOTICE REGARDING THE KIND OF LYSOL FOR WEEVIL CONTROL (from Bill McMillan)

The Lysol used in last month's article is from standard sources like Canadian Tire, Costco or Canadian Superstore and has 3.2% of the active ingredient, Lactic acid.

Dilution is 1 cup Lysol to 4 litres of water. Be sure to spray the whole plant, stems and all and the soil around it.

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The Allure of Species

By Dr. Herb Spady, Salem, OR

Reprinted with permission from the Peace Arch Rhododendron Society Newsletter, March 1997, as well as the Portland Chapter Newsletter, and the January 1985 edition of the ARS Journal.

Did you ever wonder what motivates the species enthusiast? I have, and I have read a lot of nonsense about how wonderful species are. In the process I have developed some desire to analyze my motivation and enthusiasm for species rhododendrons in an honest way.

Some say that they tire of the sameness of hybrid rhododendrons. Does one then turn to great variety in species? I think not. There must now be about 20,000 named varieties of hybrid rhododendrons.

Within that group one can find most any combination of characteristics. Many of those combinations do not exist in species rhododendrons. Even superb plant habit and leaf character, although not always the choice of the

hybridizer, can be found. In addition new clones are arriving steadily and are filling the voids.

Are species easier to grow? No way, some are downright impossible. They require the most exacting ideal climate and artificially manipulated environment. Many that are started never reach maturity and may only bloom a few times before their demise. Others may grow reasonably well but may not bloom for fifteen, twenty or more years. Many seem to resent fertilization, or at least, they cannot all be treated equally as far as fertilizer is concerned. Their tolerance to exposure varies greatly. Many are very difficult to propagate. Of course many of these deficiencies exist in hybrids also. The trouble is that if the faults exist in one clone of a species they very likely will exist in nearly all the clones of a species.

In spite of what some enthusiasts say, some species are not good ornamental plants. They may be ungainly, tall and thin leaved. They may flower only sparingly. The flowers are not infrequently in the rather dull white, pale yellow, pink or pinkish-mauve range. There are species that are more curious than ornamental and are best grown in someone else's garden. Fortunately, there are species which are better than others, and there are clones of species that are better than the average of that particular species. The enthusiast needs skill, advice and knowledge in seeking these out. To a certain extent he or she also needs a certain ruthlessness in discarding the "undesirables".

Did you ever stop to think about the incredible thing that you do when you grow a species rhododendron? Very few of us live in areas where rhododendrons grow naturally. We then take this plant from its natural environment, where it has over millions of years, developed the ability to survive and repro-

duce. We put it in a foreign situation. There, if left on its own, it will probably die. We nurture it, expect it to thrive and perform for us. We manipulate it in many unnatural ways in our efforts to make it perform as we wish. Just think of it. Some of the plants in the species collection may come from altitudes of 15,000 feet. They are buried under the snow all winter. Under that snow the humidity is 100% and the temperature goes only a few degrees below freezing. The soil is moist but there is



Growing species out of their 'comfort zone'.
Cold damage to leaves of *R. mallosum*.

no standing or moving water. We are asking that plant to thrive in the drenching rain and soggy soil much of the winter in the Willamette Valley. When it turns cold, we are asking it to endure temperatures much lower than it experiences under its winter snow blanket. Usually humidities are much lower, also. What about summer? The summer in its natural home is probably cool, misty and rather high light intensity. Ours are not too misty and cool. In fact when they are, we complain, "What happened to summer?" When we have pleasant summer weather, do we have good rhododendron weather? When we have hot summer weather, we have miserable rhododendron weather. We do not experience much

hot and humid weather with hot nights as they do in the midwest and east. That is especially bad. What a challenge it is to successfully grow species rhododendrons. We must admire those that can do it with skill



R. falconeri ssp. *Falconeri*, a species which can grow well here.

and success. Herein lies some of the allure in growing them. It is a desire to do something difficult, to manipulate nature successfully, to hear someone say, "Oh, you have such a wonderful flowering plant of *Rhododendron difficultii*."

There are some other considerations. In some way one shares the experiences, the romance and the adventure of the plant explorers when one is able to grow these exotics. For indeed, they are all exotics unless



R. yakushmanum, now called *R. degonianum* ssp. *yakushmanum*

they are growing naturally in the wilderness beyond your back fence. Just think how exciting it is that the *R. yakushmanum* in your garden came from high on the island of Yakushima. It went all the way from there to Mr. Wada in Japan, then to Exbury in England, and finally by various channels to your garden. Or perhaps you have a different clone that has been recently introduced from the wild. It has big leaves and bigger flowers. Some “expert” may come along and throw it out of the show competition because it is obviously not *R. yakushmanum*. “It must be a hybrid,” he says, but you know better because you know who collected the seed and where. It was just a short distance down the mountain and was in continuity with the other *R. yakushmanum* plants. It is equally exciting to be growing a species that survives from only a collection, under precarious conditions and risks to the collector, of a few seed capsules from one or two plants. This species may endure only from a few plants that have survived to this day. It may never be collected again. In fact it may be, or soon become, extinct except in gardens.

Another motivation for the species grower and collector may be an intense interest in the botany of the genus *Rhododendron*. A full understanding of the genus cannot be obtained without the observation of species rhododendrons. Where can that be better done than in one’s own garden?

Perhaps there is a snobbishness in growing species. It gives some people satisfaction to have something that the Joneses do not have, something curious, something special, and above all something that is not easy to obtain and keep. To have a large flowering plant of one of the tender, large leaved species in your garden is rather like owning the Hope Diamond. Add to that the fact that your “Hope Diamond” had to be obtained through your skill and effort as a gardener, not simply because you were rich, or at least not rich in the usual sense.



R. spinuliferum , a species rhododendron with most unusual flowers.



R calostrotum Keleticum



R. micranthum, a later bloomer, cropped

SHOWS AND SALES... 2013...

VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

By Lois Blackmore

Our shows and sales this year will be similar to last year. The early show and sale is at the Tillicum Center **April 27**. The sale only is at Abkhazi Gardens **May 11**, and our last show and sale is **May 25** at the Westshore Town Center. We will be looking for volunteers to help with set-up, selling and take-down. We are changing the hours of the shows and sales this year. Events will take place from **9:30 am** until **4:00pm**. **Abkhazi sale is from 9am. until noon.**

This year there will be different entry forms for those who wish to keep their ribbons and trusses. Each year we learn something new and this is an attempt to provide easy distinction between those who wish to keep everything and those who do not. Coloured entry forms will be used for those who wish to keep their materials. This will make it easier for volunteers when taking down the displays. **Entries must be picked up by 4:00 pm. the day of the sale.**

All entry forms, bottles and other materials will be available at the April 8th meeting.

News from the Board

By Calvin Parsons

- The 2015 Conference Planning Committee met at the end of January and a list of international speakers was drawn up. Six speakers have been sent invitations. The format for the convention was discussed and a format will be presented at the next meeting. The next Conference Planning meeting will be on March 10. Please email Lois or Calvin if you wish to attend. (See email addresses on page 2)
- Milner Gardens Species Garden – support for the idea of establishing a species garden at The Milner Gardens in Qualicum was discussed. The board is supportive of this concept, but will await governance details before presenting any funding requests.
- Henderson Recreation Centre Rhodo Garden – support for the idea of working with Oak Bay Parks and Recreation to assist with their garden renovations was discussed. Dean Goard has agreed to chair a committee to work on the details for VicRS involvement. If you wish to be part of Dean's committee please email Dean at deangoard@shaw.ca

2013	Event	Place	Fee
Mon. March 11 meeting 7:30 pm	Art and Sue Lightburn, China	Garth Homer Centre	
Mon. April 8 VRS meeting 7:30 pm	VRS talk, Sean Rafferty, China	Garth Homer Centre	
Sat. April 27	VRS Show	Tillicum Mall, Victoria	
Wed – Sun May 1 - 5	<u>ARS 2013 Convention</u> Hosted by the Olympia Chapter of the ARS	Seatac Airport Marriott Seatac, Washington	Variable
Thur - Sat May 9 - 11	2013 CVRS Tour to Washington State	Gardens in Washington State area and one in BC	\$500/p. dbl or \$600/p. single occupancy
Saturday, May 11	VRS Sale	Abkhazi Garden, Victoria	
Monday, May 13 VRS meeting	Panel discussion	Garth Homer Centre	
Saturday, May 25	VRS Show	Westshore Mall, Victoria	
Sunday, June 23	VRS Pot-luck Picnic	The Massa's in Sooke	