



# **The Victoria Rhododendron Society**

## ***Newsletter***

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

**November 2013 Thirty-Third Year of Publication**

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web page – <http://victoriarhodo.ca>

**MEETING 7:30**

**MONDAY, November 4 , 2013**

**GARTH HOMER CENTRE, 813 DARWIN STREET, VICTORIA, B. C.**

**PHOTOGRAPHY EVENING**

Every November, our garden club features photographs by our members of rhododendrons and companion plants to brighten up the fall and winter seasons.

### **REFRESHMENTS**

**Will the following members please let Betty Gordon at 250-479-0210** if you are coming to the meeting and can bring snacks.

**Ken and Madeleine Webb, Sue Grant and Ellen Wellborn, Don and Joyce Whittle, Ann and Tom Widdowson.**

Please wrap your cookies or snacks.  
Coffee and tea are supplied.  
Assistance in setting out the food, and helping Betty in the kitchen cleanup is really appreciated.

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### **Meerkerk Gardens on Whidbey Island, Washington State**

Susie Reynolds from Meerkerk Gardens and Woodlands gave us a talk on these beautiful gardens, along with a slide show as illustration.

The gardens began in 1961 with Ann and Max Meerkerk collection of rhododendrons, which was bequeathed to the Seattle Rhododendron Society in 1979.

Meerkerk is also a research facility creating new and improved hybrid rhododendrons. A beautiful arched wooden gatehouse is the opening to the Gardens. Some special

## **VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY BOARD**

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features are the Big Leaf Valley, featuring rhododendrons such as Rex. There is a long rain garden, outlined in season by blue irises. Hundreds of fox gloves (digitalis) in various colours spread from the formal gardens into the woodlands. Many kinds of dogwoods are other highlights. Of course, there are hundreds of rhododendrons and azaleas, and mounds of alpine rhododendrons in sunny areas.

The Gardens are very popular, beginning with the Spring Opening Sale, Mother's Day concert, picnics and families, other summer events, concluding with a Bluegrass Festival.

## **SAD NEWS FROM THE BOARD**

**Gareth Shearman, September's winner of the American Rhododendron Society's BRONZE MEDAL, our club's highest award, passed away on October 14.**

**He was so pleased to get the Bronze Medal award that he told everyone about it and we are sad that we did not recognize his many contributions to the club sooner.**



Photograph provided by Gareth's wife, Mae.

## **Photography Evening November 4**

**Every November, we have a photography evening. This gives us a chance to remember spring and summer, and what our gardens look like in their prime. Please look over your pictures, pick out some that you enjoy, label them, and email them to Calvin Parsons ([waterlily@shaw.ca](mailto:waterlily@shaw.ca)) by Oct. 30**

### **Prints**

The hard copies will follow the same format as was used in the past shows namely a **black and white** section, and a **colour** section. All entries to be 5"x7" mounted on a black mat, no frame. Mounted pictures are to be entered the night of the show, November 4, 2013.

Subjects can be rhododendrons or garden scenes in colour or black and white.

### **Digital Entries**

To make it easy to enter photographs for our meeting, we ask that you email your digital photos to Calvin at [waterlily@shaw.ca](mailto:waterlily@shaw.ca). Calvin will prepare a PowerPoint file with all the entries.

On the subject line, please enter the category the photo is intended for and the name of rhododendron or plant or scene:

1. Single Truss Rhododendron
2. Whole Plant Rhododendron
3. Foliage Rhododendron
4. Companion Plant
5. Garden Scene

Example of a Subject for 3. 'Foliage Rhododendron' would be **Sinogrande**



**Please enter only two photos per category. Deadline for digital photos is October 30, 2013.**

## **MORE NEWS FROM THE BOARD**

At the last Executive meeting, the Board discussed the issue of shows and sales.

We decided to continue with two shows and sales, one in April at the Westshore Mall and the other in May at Tillicum. We will not be selling rhododendrons at Abkhazi Gardens in 2014.

Only one of our two shows will be judged this year,. The other will give you a chance to show off your plants without the concern that they will be judged and criticized. It will also simplify trophy presentations.

(continued on p. 4)

Advertising for our District One American Rhododendron Society Convention in May 2015 has been well-received at other ARS meetings, like the one in Newport, Oregon

You can see it for yourselves on our Website, [victoriarhodo.ca](http://victoriarhodo.ca), by spacing down the page to the '70th ARS Convention'. You will be routed to the site for the Mary Winspeare Community Cultural Center. Click on the link and you will find the many reasons why we chose Sidney for our next big Convention. The last Convention we had was in 2005 at the Empress Hotel in Victoria.

### **HANDS ACROSS THE BORDER**

By Lois Blackmore

With gratitude and appreciation the Victoria Rhododendron Society acknowledges the receipt of 733 cuttings of Jim Barlup hybrids.

I have been, and continue to be a collector of Jim's hybrids, as many of our club members are aware. With a hint of suggestion on my part, especially related to the 2015 Conference in Sidney by the Sea, Jim has kindly donated these cuttings for our club to grow on and to sell at the Convention and, eventually at our club sales. Ken and Madeleine Webb have the majority of cuttings in their propagator, while Roy and I have the remaining cuttings.

A huge thank you goes to Jim, and his wife Judy, for their contribution to our club. This gesture is what makes it so special to be a club member, as goodwill and gestures such as this makes friendships across borders a reality.



R. "Fire Rim"



R. "Windsong"

NOTE: I bought both of these plants at the Newport conference to plant in the HCP Rhododendron Garden—Come on out and see them in the spring—both are well budded.

Bill McMillan



## Confused or What? By Bill McMillan

The odd weather this spring, summer and fall has a number of rhododendrons confused. It is normal to have a few flowers on lapponicas at this time of year but at the Horticultural Center of the Pacific in Saanich, and here at home in Colwood, some plants are blooming more than usual and some that rarely do.

At the HCP, R. 'Lillian Peste' often has a few fall blooms but is in full flower this year, R. 'Lee's Scarlet' has a few flowers now but generally waits until December, and R. 'Ruby Hart' and R. 'Looking Glass' are close to being in full bloom, which has not happened before. Even one R. *luteum* plant has a few delightfully perfumed flowers open.

At home, R. 'Cunningham's White' and 'Songbird' have about a third of the buds in bloom, R. *trichostomum* is two thirds in bloom and R. 'Bob's Blue' and R. 'Ramapo' have a few flowering trusses. R. 'Nobleanum', normally a March bloomer has some flowers now and R. *glaucophyllum*, which has never flowered at this time of year in the past, has half a dozen trusses open.

Brenda McDonald, in the South Fraser Chapter newsletter, The Yak, describes similar phenomena in the Vancouver area - is this a trend, can we expect flowering in the fall from now on? Wouldn't that be lovely!



R. trichostomum



R. glaucophyllum



R. "Looking Glass"



R. "Lillian Peste"

## Canadians at the ARS Fall Convention September 27-29 in Newport Oregon



**Back row:** Tony Marquardt, Burns Morrison, Bob Blackmore, Lois Blackmore, Earl Daneluk, Ken Webb, Bob Wright, Joe Ronsley, Brenda Macdonald, Sean Rafferty, Sue Wedemire, Garth Wedemire, Siggy Kemmler, Madeline Webb, Barbara Kulla, Lynn Wurz, Kathy Loyer, Paul Wurz, Barb Staton

**Middle row:** Carolyn Marquardt, Karen Morrison, Jo Wright, Joanne Ronsley, Marilyn Dawson, Norma Senn, Linda Derkach, Brian Staton

**Front row:** Glen Jamieson, Bill McMillan

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### Newport, Oregon ARS Fall Convention

By Bill McMillan

The forecast was favourable so we decided to follow the Washington-Oregon coast to get to Newport. It was glorious. We took the Coho and made it to Long Beach, Washington the first night. After a nice walk on the beach Thursday morning, we headed south and were treated to grand views of the coastline with the bonus of many hundreds of Brown Pelicans and even a grey whale cruising back and forth along the wave foam line in one bay. It was a leisurely day with great memories.

In Newport, the forecast for Friday was not promising - and it was accurate. I went for a hike through the dunes and along the beach. The rain started as I reached the far end and increased in intensity as I walked back. The wind also picked up. The morning was free so we braved the weather and soggy toured the touristy downtown area in the wind and the rain and had a delicious bowl of clam chowder and fresh bread at Mo's Restaurant.

From then through the weekend it got progressively worse. The forecast was for 5 to 9 INCHES of rain and winds of 50 to 90 MPH! Lots of those seemed to happen Saturday afternoon when the self-guided garden tours were scheduled. I opted out but Tony and

Carolyn Marquardt braved the elements and dodged the falling branches to go. Unfortunately, it was too miserable to enjoy the gardens.

The plant sale started after registration at 3 PM Friday, officially. I erred, assuming that was accurate and missed the early rush completely by arriving at 2:45. However, there was still a great selection of very well grown plants from several growers so there was lots of choices, with the exception of a couple of eagerly sought hybrids, notably R. 'Cherries and Merlot'.

After a welcome and dinner, Friday's opening ceremony focused on rhododendrons around the world with short talks by John Hammond (southern England), George Woodward (eastern US), Mike Stewart (western US), Andrey Karpov (Russia) and Dave Eckert (New Zealand). Then of course the plant sale was open again.

Saturday started with a buffet breakfast, then a series of talks. Each session offered 4 choices and some were repeated in other sections. I opted for "Go-Fer" Mole Control, thinking of a daughter in Surrey, to start. Dick "Red" Cavender talked about techniques but admitted he was mainly keyed on 'body count'. Let's hope these critters stay on the mainland.

In the second section I chose to listen to a lecture on "Compost Tea" by George Woodward. Soil is alive and compost tea renews it. The compost has to reach 130-160 degree Fahrenheit to remove deleterious components but not so hot as to kill desirable components. The method of using compost plus rolled oats and molasses and dechlorinated water plus Sanctuary 3-020 that contains bacteria and trichoderma to make compost tea. Information about compost tea is given on [soilfoodweb.com.au](http://soilfoodweb.com.au) and a recipe for making it on <http://>

[www.finegardening.com/how-to/articles/brewing-compost-tea.aspx](http://www.finegardening.com/how-to/articles/brewing-compost-tea.aspx).

I continued with the esoteric topics by sitting in on "Stealing the Green: An Introduction to the Azalea Lace Bug" by Robin Rosetta next. I wanted to know how to identify these pests. Their feeding sucks chlorophyll from leaves which become white or mottled. Eggs are laid on the margins of the leaf mid-rib and covered with a shiny layer of excrement. There are 60 species but the Andromeda lace bug is the one found in BC. The Azalea lace bug is now present in Oregon and Washington. Since it has multiple generations each year, it is becoming a noxious pest. Let's hope this bug does not make it to the island.

For the last session of the day I sat in on an entertaining discussion by Mike Stewart and Kathy Van Veen on propagating deciduous azaleas. When trying to root azaleas, Mike takes the cuttings before mid-May. He uses bleach and water to ensure cleanliness, then soaks the softwood cuttings in Epsom salts (1 tablespoon/US gallon) for 4 to 8 hours to stiffen them up. They must never dry out. Mike takes the new growth even while the plant is still flowering. Kathy takes firm but not woody cuttings in June or July. Mike uses peat, fine bark and pumice, Kathy peat moss and coarse pumice. Kathy wounds both sides of the scion, Mike only one. Kathy leaves a 1/3" uncut base on the scion to avoid having the bark peel back when it is being inserted into the rooting mix. Mike does not use bottom heat in the first year but Kathy uses heat from December onward. No lights are used because they want to encourage root growth. They use 10-4-3 fertilizer once good roots are established. Take the cuttings in the early morning or late evening. The approaches varied but both methods work very well. This illustrates a saying common in the propagation group. There is no one right way or time - try it and see if it works!

John Hammond also handed out a sheet on air layering techniques for propagating rhododendrons and azaleas. I can scan it and E-mail it to anyone who is interested.



After the no host social, and a buffet dinner Saturday , George Woodward talked about the "Wonders of New Hybrids". George is one of the most outstanding hybridizers on the East Coast and a fine photographer. This was followed by a video put together by Howard Greer titles "Rhododendron Foliage to Delight" . The photography was outstanding and the video inspirational. I hope at some point we can borrow a copy to show at one of our meetings. We often overlook the importance of foliage when we choose plants but we should not.

After another buffet breakfast Sunday morning, I attended two sessions. The first by Dennis Bottemiller was on "Identifying Big Leaf Species". Again I have a general set of notes that Dennis handed out. Identification is very tricky and a good hand lens (or better still microscope) is pretty much a necessity to check out the hairs.

After that there was a session on "Garden Photography: When the Shot Really Matters" by Dave Eckerdt. Dave stressed the importance of always having a camera at hand for those opportunistic shots and also the importance of understanding your camera settings and what they do. For example, larger 'F' settings increase the depth of field, so for a blurred background, choose a smaller number (say F2.8). Use the settings on your camera to have more control over your photos.

We skipped the final summary talk to see if we could get back to the island Sunday night. The result of the storm weather and traffic conditions helped us decide both to stop as it got dark and to take the Coho from Port Angeles rather than the ferry from Tsawwassen to get home - both good decisions! I would give the conference and its organization an A rating - it was a shame that the weather shifted from A to F minus!



Oregon Coastal scenes on Thursday, a great day.



View from the hotel window in Newport on Saturday, NOT a great day!