



# The Victoria Rhododendron Society

## Newsletter March 2014

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April 2014

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Thirty-Fourth Year of Publication

web page – <http://victoriarhodo.ca>

NEXT MEETING at 7:30

**MONDAY, April 14, 2014**

GARTH HOMER CENTRE, 813 DARWIN AVENUE,  
VICTORIA, B. C.

**Panel: How to Display Trusses (rhododendron flowers)**

Panel: Bring a few of your rhodo trusses and find out how to display them to their best. See Norma's article on the right for hints.

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### Our April Meeting

#### By Norma Senn

Your executive has decided to try something a bit different for part of our April 14<sup>th</sup> meeting and we need your participation to make it work. Our goal is to encourage as many of you as possible to enter at least a few trusses in the up-coming May 10<sup>th</sup> show at Westshore Mall. To whet your appetite, we're going to have a "mini" show at Garth Homer on April 14<sup>th</sup>.

So, for the April meeting, we'd like everyone to bring in at least one truss, (more would be better). Also bring: pruning shears, tweezers, a bottle or two to use for your entries and, if you've got some, wine corks. We hope to have

REFRESHMENTS to be provided by:

Jennifer Ferris Paul Frost

Carrie George Joan B. Gibb

Dean Goard Lloyd & Linda  
Gilmore

Please email Betty Gordon at  
bbgordon@shaw.ca (250.479.0210) if you are  
coming with your wrapped goodies/snacks.  
Coffee and tea are supplied. Assistance in  
setting out the food, milk and sugar, napkins  
and helping Betty in the kitchen cleanup is  
really appreciated.

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extra trusses available for those of you who really don't have access to flowers or anything in bloom at the time.

Ken Webb has kindly agreed to do a demonstration on how he prepares his trusses for shows before we break up into small groups to prepare the trusses you've brought. Then we're going to set up a "mini" show for judging. We'll have a couple of experienced judges go through a few of the classes to explain how they would judge the entries and why they would rank the trusses in the class as they do.

We expect this to be fun, but as mentioned above, hope it is an incentive for more people to enter the May show. As well, it will give us all a chance to see some of the varieties in bloom in mid-April. Norma Senn will also give a short presentation on the 2013 Chelsea Flower Show.

We'll have bottles and entrance forms available to take for the May 10<sup>th</sup> Show and Sale, plus sign-up sheets for volunteering. The usual raffle and plants for sale from the Plant Propagator's Group will wind up the evening. We look forward to seeing you on April 14<sup>th</sup>, trusses in hand.

## Members Sale of our specially ordered rhododendrons.

Where: Carolyn and Tony Marquardt, 4640 Cordova Bay Road.; Dates: Saturday, April 19 and Saturday, April 26.

There will be a 10% discount on sales to our members.



R. schlippenbachia, one of the plants we ordered





Our booth at the Victoria Home Builders 2014 Home Design and Renovation Show Feb 28, March 1 & 2. Archie Brown and Burns Morrison working on the layout.

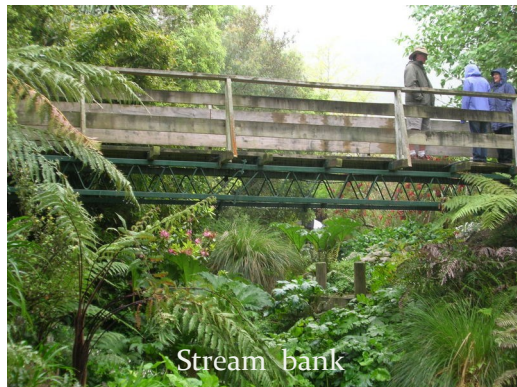


Marjory and Stephen Brice answering questions for visitors



## New Zealand Conference, November 2013

By Norma Senn



Stream bank



Echiums



Magnolia "Yellow Bird"

The city of Taupo is in the centre of the North Island, and is located along the banks of Lake Taupo, the largest lake in New Zealand. The region is very picturesque, with rolling hills, green pastures and when it was clear, we saw some active steam vents "smoking away" on the nearby volcanic peaks. The weather had been unseasonably warm, so the early rhododendrons were completely past, but while we were there, it cooled off and there was lots of rain. The sun poked through the clouds just often enough to tease, but it kept us happy.

The Taupo folks welcomed all of us and made sure we had a very enjoyable time. Their conference registrar was originally from Toronto and even in New Zealand, Rob Ford had made the news, so we had fun teasing Howard about actually being willing to admit he was from Toronto. The New Zealand Rhododendron Society conferences are mostly based on garden visits and socializing. There were no speakers, and attendees are spread out among the host cities' hotels and motels. People gather at the conference venue each morning to board the buses and again for the evening meals. And, diet alert! There is lots and lots of eating at these meetings and most things seem to be served with butter and cream.

On our first day of touring, we visited some of the larger gardens in the greater Taupo area. We were greeted by a spectacular stand of Echium (Pride of Madeira) at Lorna Henry's garden, our first stop. This large property has a nice stream running through it with dense plantings along the banks, and since it was raining while we were there, the sound of water was everywhere. In addition to Echium, outstanding plants included *Pandorea*, *Azara*, *Magnolia* 'Yellow Bird', *Rhododendron* 'Floral Dance' (one of my all-time favourite *edgeworthia* hybrids), *Rhododendron* 'Black Sport' and a stunning *R. nuttalli*. Close by was the garden of Richard and Lynne Jones which had an avenue of cherries lining the driveway. They were obviously "rhodoholics", and right away, I spied a Jury hybrid, *R. 'Lemon Lodge'*, another great NZ favourite of mine. This garden had a wide variety of trees and shrubs and the *Ceanothus* was particularly eye-catching as it was at its peak of bloom.



*R. nuttalli*

The Jan and Brian Batson garden has lots of Rhododendrons as well as a variety of interesting trees and shrubs, including *Michaelia yunnanese* and the Chinese Toon Tree (*Cedralia sinensis*). Pathways wind through these plantings, but nearer the house, the beds become formal with boxwood clipped to enclose the roses. We were too early for the roses, but their potential was obvious.

The last garden of the day was wonderful and had it all: a large water garden, perennial beds, vegetables, fruit, and lovely tree and shrub borders. This country/farm garden is owned by Lynda Peat and Tim Birdsall. Their perennial borders feature soft shades of white, pink and blue, but there is just the occasional bit of yellow to add sparkle. The Korean dogwoods, *Cornus kousa* 'Satomi', and *C. capitata* were outstanding. *Rhododendron* 'Rubicon' was used to make a border near the front door; it was just past, but must have been stunning a week earlier, leading us all to that common garden comment "if only we'd seen it last week." As well as being a passionate



Chinese toon tree

gardener, Tim also loves collecting duck decoys and we were invited in to see his collection, probably the largest in New Zealand. Every imaginable duck species seemed to be represented.

The next day's tours featured "town gardens" and all were as different as different can be, but each was fun to see. We started at the home of Annette and Gordon Collier. Gordon is a well-known New Zealand garden writer, and he has the most amazing numbers and varieties of plants tucked into his ¼-acre property. He gave us a partial plant list that was helpful since he grows many unusual species. *Corokia* hedges divide the garden into various areas. Among my favourites was a double Hellebore (*Helleborus dumetorum*), some fine Trilliums and a very good *Cypripedium formosanum*. It's hard to do justice to his plants in a short article as there were so many to see. He gave me some hints on germinating the Marlborough Lily (*Pachystegia*) as I'd bought some seeds from a local souvenir shop. I suspect I won't have much luck as he said that for success, the seeds should be sown when very fresh and they do take time. Who knows how long my seeds have been in their packet?

We knew we were about to see a spectacular garden when we pulled up to the home of Judith and Malcolm Flowers. There is a raised brick retaining wall planted with Rhododendrons along the street front of their property. The owners do a lot of entertaining, so their garden has lots of hard landscaping made of red brick and tile throughout to create patios, mowing edges, pathways and outdoor cooking spaces. Planting beds contain many Rhododendrons and Camellias, as well as other shrubs and trees. They have a lovely rose garden, again not in bloom, and as with all the roses I've seen in NZ, there wasn't one hint of any leaf spot disorders. At the back of the garden they have a nice vegetable garden too.

Elizabeth Buchanan has a tiny, but ultra modern garden that shows what good design and a carefully chosen palette of plants can do. Her front garden contains a small water garden, surrounded by flag stones. The narrow side beds around the house featured broadleaved evergreens such as Lonicera, boxwood, Escallonia and the Chilean plant, *Mytus apicula*, to give her privacy. She has also planted some of her favourite perennials, but all of the varieties chosen are in shades of green. The subtle palette makes this tiny garden seem larger and is very restful.

Sue and Simon Kirk's garden was the last small garden we visited that morning. It is only 4 years old, but the Kirks own a nursery that specializes in boxwood topiary and they've used their own nursery specimens to create their new garden. Since they were able to bring in large specimens, the garden seems older than it is. Boxwood and lawn pre-dominate and the garden is designed so that it offers interesting patterns when viewed from the house which is slightly higher in elevation. There are a few *Photinia* and an old Meyer Lemon tree for additional interest. I had no idea about the numbers of named box varieties available.



Hard landscaping

The next stop of the day was at the Waipahihi Botanical Reserve. This 35-acre reserve is home to hundreds of Rhododendrons and native trees and shrubs. It is maintained by volunteers and we were fortunate in having several volunteers available to guide us through the reserve since the paths wind and cut back on themselves. It would be easy to get lost there. If you're in the area, it is well-worth at least a half-day visit. Plants

are well labelled.

The last stop of the day was at Whakamoenga Point which juts out into Lake Taupo. We visited Jenny and Ian Bishops' garden. Jenny does a lot of floral work and she has planted things that provide her with interesting floral materials. (She made several stunning arrangements for display in the conference registration area and I think this is



something we should plan on doing at our convention in 2015). Her garden has changes in elevation and there is a wealth of plant material to be seen. I know the New Zealanders consider Calla Lilies to be a noxious weed, but Jenny had a stand of Calla 'Green Goddess' that I adored. I wish we could have a weed like that! The Bishops have been involved in planting much of the communal green space at the Point which is a gated community, and we had a chance to walk through areas of native bush that were inter-planted with rhododendrons.

Our final morning of garden tours brought us to two more lakeside gardens, both of which had lovely views of the lake. Jill and Nigel Lloyd have a 2- acre woodland garden where broad sweeps of lawn lead out into the wooded areas. They have lots of rhododendrons, but also maples, magnolias and roses and there are a number of topiary accent pieces too. As well, pieces of old farm machinery are used as garden sculptures.

Just down the road is the Peter Jarvis and Helene Phillips garden. Peter and Helene are well-known art dealers and they use their garden and home to feature many New Zealand artists. Peter has a keen interest in native New Zealand plants, and I particularly enjoyed his collection of well labelled plants. I was finally able to put names to things that had local Maori names I didn't know, like rimu and totara. They also have a small Citrus orchard, a vegetable garden and along one side of the property there is a native "bush" walk. We were invited into the house to see the art, and really, it was a museum. Everywhere you looked, there was another picture or sculpture to see. It would have taken hours to really do justice to the collection, but we had to get to our final destination in time for the farewell lunch.

The people and events were so much fun. Everyone asked if I was planning on coming to the Dunedin conference to help celebrate their 75th anniversary. I hope I can make it. If you've never been to New Zealand, or haven't been in a while, you really should go. The gardens are fabulous, the people are friendly and there's so much to see!



Boxwood garden



Dunedin Botanical Garden

On October 20, there will be another Rhododendron Conference in Dunedin, N.Z.

To the left is a picture of the wonderful Botanical Garden there.

## Review of March's Talk

by Theresa McMillan

Before giving her talk, Carol Dancer introduced it with a fine collection of flowering shrubs and perennials from her garden and the Winter Garden she looks after at Government House. Their beauty and fragrance attracted a lot of attention. Carol then described the plants, naming reasons why she enjoyed them.

During and after the meeting, members took many samples for rooting purposes or for floral decorations.

Then Carol described why she enjoyed gardening in winter so much. No (well hardly any) weeds! The cold, rainy or frosty or windy, and dark days discourage most weeds. (Ed. Note, except the "pepper cress" plant, a variety of mustard, whose leaves form a green circle and grow on top of mulch, has tiny white flowers, and sets seed VERY early).

Winter flowering plants have a long blooming time, with smaller flowers that come out a few at a time, rarely all at once. They are often fragrant, which gives them a better chance of attracting winter insects and getting pollinated. As well, winter blooming plants with their pollen and nectar help Anna's hummingbirds and early bees survive the season.

The earliest bloomers in the Victoria area are snowdrops. There are several varieties, so the blooming period can start in October and extend well into March. Other winter favorites are the hamamelis or witch hazel trees. Their spidery flowers are usually fragrant, and last a long time.

Carol's collection of hellebore blooms was spectacular; I'm sure gardeners will be looking for more varieties of these plants. Luckily, they are deer resistant.

Carol's favorite plants for winter interest include magnolias, viburnums, daphnes, clematis, mahonias and primulas. We are fortunate to live in a climate mild enough to grow these plants.

## Spring care of Rhododendrons

With all the heavy rain we've had this spring, we must not forget to fertilize, water and prune winter killed twigs or branches from our rhododendrons.

The next fertilization will be after flowering, and dead-heading spent flowers.

## TROPHIES!!!

Please return any of our VRS Show trophies as soon as possible.

Madeleine Webb would like to get them ready for the May 10th Show and Sale, and for the presentation at our summer picnic June 29th.

**UBC Magnolia Sale**. UBC has an exciting extensive list of magnolias for sale. For the list and further information, contact Charlie Sale, <[buckethill@gmail.com](mailto:buckethill@gmail.com)>.

## Help Needed for the University of Victoria's Finnerty Gardens Sale, May 4

The Victoria Rhododendron Society has been offered a spot to set up an information table at the Finnerty Gardens sale, on Sunday, May 4, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. We will not be doing any selling, but this is to answer questions about anything to do with Rhododendrons. We all know that Dean Goard and Bill McMillan do a great job of answering questions as they sell plants for UVic., but we would be there to help out for those people wanting to have longer chats about rhododendrons and about our Society. We need three or four people for this, so please consider volunteering if you have a few hours available on May 4. The Finnerty Garden sale will be held near the garden entrance and the chapel (Lot 6 is adjacent and parking is free on Sundays). There will be a sign-up sheet at the April meeting.

# Upcoming Events

| 2014   | Event  | Place   | Fee  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <b>Apr 19</b><br><b>10 - 12 PM</b>                             | <b>Victoria Chrysanthemum Society</b><br>Annual Plant Sale<br><b>Price of cuttings:</b> \$3.50 (\$4.00 for a few rare varieties). Members will be on site to answer growing questions. For additional information call Sheila Mitchell at 250-598-7876.<br>(Parking and Hall entrance are off Richardson Ave.) | St. Matthias<br>Church Hall<br>600 Richmond<br>Ave. (at Richardson), Victoria | Free   |
| <b>Apr 25 – 26</b>   | <u>Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden</u> (RSBG)<br><br>50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration<br>RhodyGarden.org<br>Garden & Nursery Tours, Reception & Banquet  | Rhododendron<br>Species Foundation<br>Federal Way, WA                         | After Mar. 1 \$US 75   |
| <b>May 2</b> , 1pm<br>to 9pm &<br><b>May 3</b> , 9am<br>to 3pm | <b>The Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Garden Society Spring Show</b> . Spectacular show of rock and alpine plants. Plant and seed sales, members' plant sale 11am Saturday, door prizes, silent auction, refreshments.   | Cadboro Bay<br>United Church,<br>2625 Arbutus<br>Road, Victoria,<br>BC        | <a href="http://www.virags.ca">www.virags.ca</a>               |
| <b>Sunday, May 4</b> 11 am to 2 pm                             | <b>Plant Sale UVic in support of Finnerty Gardens.</b><br>New site, new tours and tea. Good selection of rhododendrons & perennials.   | Finnerty Gardens<br>by the Chapel,<br><b>Note new venue -free parking.</b>    | <a href="http://www.uvic.ca/finnerty">www.uvic.ca/finnerty</a> |
| <b>May 7 – 12</b>  | California and Oregon Garden Tour<br>Redwoods, rhodos, wine and west coast<br>All inclusive tour, wedumont@hotmail.com   |   | \$US 1000 /PP  |
| <b>May 10</b><br><b>9:30-3:30</b>                              | VRS Show and Sale  | Westshore Town<br>Center  | Free   |
| <b>May 15 – 18</b>   | <u>2014 ARS Annual Convention</u>  | Cleveland, Ohio   | Registration \$US 55   |
| <b>May 18</b><br><b>10 am- 2 pm</b>                            | <b>Plant Sale &amp; Garden Open.</b> Carmen Varcoe & Friends. Wide selection of woodland perenni-  | 5450 Old West<br>Saanich Rd.  |  |
| <b>Jun 29</b>  | VRS Summer Picnic  | The Webbs'  |  |
| <b>Sept 26 – 28</b>  | ARS Western Regional Conference, District 2  | Everett, Washington   |  |
| <b>Oct 12 – 19</b>   | <u>Pre-conference Tour</u> New Zealand International Conference 2014   | Dunedin, New Zealand  | \$NZ 2700 share pp-<br>3300 single                             |
| <b>Oct 20 – 24</b>   | New Zealand Rhododendron Association<br><u>70<sup>th</sup> International Rhodo Conference 2014</u><br>Registration <i>Registration After Sept. 1 = \$NZ100</i>   | Dunedin, New Zealand  | \$NZ 455   |
| <b>Oct 25 – 27</b>   | <u>Post-Conference Tour</u> New Zealand International Conference 2014  | Dunedin, New Zealand  | \$NZ 770 share pp-<br>1000 single                              |