

The Victoria Rhododendron Society



Newsletter June 2014

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Thirty-Fourth Year of Publication

web page – <http://victoriarhodo.ca>

JUNE POTLUCK PICNIC

12 P.M. SUNDAY, JUNE 29, 2014

**At Ken and Madeleine Webb's Rhododendron Garden
5008 Old West Saanich Road**

VRS PICNIC JUNE 29

A picnic lunch in a lovely garden on a summer day is not to be missed!

Our June picnic will be held at the Webb's at 5008 Old West Saanich Road. There is parking on the property and along the Road itself.

For the Potluck, you are asked to bring a wrapped savory, salad or dessert. Tags labeling eggs, dairy, nuts or flour for people with allergies will be much appreciated.

A fruit punch, tea and coffee are provided.

Lunch will be served about 1 p.m. and will feature barbequed salmon grilled to perfection by our volunteer chefs.

Please bring your own cutlery, plates and mugs and don't forget chairs to sit on! There are tables and chairs at the Webb's as well.

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Picnic Raffle

Donations of rhododendrons, companion plants or other plants are welcome for our raffle. Each person will receive at least one plant.

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Review of May's talk

by Bill and Theresa McMillan

Michael Patterson's "Update on Sudden Oak Death" gave us more information on a devastating plant pathogen that appeared in 1995 in both Europe and the United States. Oak trees on whole hillsides near the California coast gradually died. Those in drier areas were not affected. The culprit was *Phytophthora ramorum*, a water mold, which has similarities to an algae. It is possible that climate change is partly responsible for the spread of the organism but some sources think it represents a mutation of a less harmful organism.

Spores of phytophthora can live and move in water, some can even 'swim' and, worse, spores may also be transported by wind. When infected plants are moved to other areas, they become a real scourge for nurserymen and gardeners. Transfer from wholesale to local nurseries has been a major problem and some nurseries have gone bankrupt.

The West Coast of North America provides a suitable habitat for phytophthora. *Phytophthora ramorum* has been found in British Columbia, but fortunately is not abundant. We have been fortunate in that, so far, Garry Oaks have not been affected. Typically in rhododendrons, arbutus, and kinnikinnick the leaves are affected, showing discoloured areas along the leaf margins, but the plants survive. However, because there are many other causes for leaf browning, DNA testing is needed to confirm a phytophthora infection.

We can generally avoid phytophthora by buying plants only from certified plants nurseries. Unhappily, there are many other host plants, like camellias, viburnums and pieris, that can be infected. If you have an infected plant, prune and destroy infected leaves. Be sure to sanitize your pruning tools before and after pruning. To avoid infection, keep your plants physically separated from other potential hosts, water and fertilize to keep the plant healthy and ensure that drainage is excellent because spores can move in subsurface water.

Seasons for concern are spring and fall, especially if your water source is a pond or reservoir. City water is no problem.

Rhododendron Species Garden Proposal, from the meeting on May 12

- Milner Gardens and Woodland and the District 1 Vancouver Island Rhododendron Society chapters are jointly proposing the creation of a rhododendron species garden within Milner Gardens and Woodland.
- The species garden would highlight the tremendous diversity found within the genus Rhododendron, including many unique and rare species which are threatened in the wild.
- We are proposing the planting of approximately 250 Rhododendron Species plants over time.
- Suitable areas for the species garden within MGW have been selected.
- The species garden would include trails, signage, and an irrigation system as well as a selection of appropriate companion plants.
- With disease and climate changes, Great Britain has already started 'safe gardens' to collect rhododendron species that are under threat.
- Vancouver Island University provides governance of Milner Gardens and Woodland. And funding!

On the May 12 meeting, Calvin Parsons put forward two motions to the membership:

1. That VRS or VicRS support the creation of a Rhododendron Species Garden at Milner Gardens and Woodlands in Qualicum Beach.
2. That VicRS contribute \$7,000.00 to the creation of the Rhododendron Species Garden at Milner Gardens and Woodland under the auspices of ARS District #1.

After many good questions, both motions were passed.

COMMENTS ON OUR SHOW AND SALE FOR 2014

Firstly, we would like to thank those members who gave their time and effort in making this year's show and sale successful. We would also like to thank all those folks who brought in trusses for display at the Westshore Town Centre on Saturday, May 10.

Our sales this year totaled \$3,089.00. At this time, the sales for Nanaimo are not yet totaled. We sold 262 plants to date.

The total cost of our plants was \$968.40 for a profit of \$1120.60. There will be no show and sale in 2015 as our 2015 Convention will be taking place.

Each year finding an appropriate and cost effective venue for our yearly show and sale proves difficult. It is our recommendation that this process be reviewed by the executive, and other options be presented to the members for their consideration. If you have suggestions or ideas about our shows and sales, please contact Madeleine Webb or Lois Blackmore.

Madeleine Webb and Lois Blackmore

VRS Show and Sale, May 10 2014, at West Shore Town Center



Winners with their blue ribbons, at West Shore Center



Wonderful tones of yellow, orange and pink for mid-season blooming rhodos



Midnight Mystique, entered by John Hawkins, Best in Show, May 10, 2014



Roy and Lois Blackmore enjoying a rest after working hours on the Show



70th ARS CONVENTION *May 6-10, 2015.*

District #1, Victoria Rhododendron Society
Sidney-by-the-Sea: Vancouver Island's Hidden Little Treasure

Come join the spectacular seventieth celebration of the American Rhododendron Society, members worldwide, international speakers!

2015 Updates & Info:

1. Check out our website for more details at **www.2015rhodo.ca**
2. Members Billeting: Please consider having one or two of the 2015 attendees stay at your home. We are trying to encourage participants to stay with local members so that they experience our hospitality instead of sitting in a hotel room by themselves. We will have a sign-up sheet available for September for those that can accommodate some guests during our convention.
3. Photos: please keep collecting photos of rhodos and your garden. We would like to have many photos to use on our website to promote the garden tours and the variety of rhodos available in our area.
4. Volunteers: Volunteers will be needed to make this convention a success. Consider signing up in September for many opportunities like: bus captain, greeter, hospitality desk, flower arrangements, info desk, rhodo selling, keynote speaker guide, and many, many more!

Mill Bay Garden Club's 67th Annual Community Flower & Garden Show

Cobble Hill Hall, 3550 Watson Avenue, Cobble Hill

Saturday, June 14th, 2014

9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Admission: \$2.00 Children Free

More details can be obtained from our web site www.millbaygardenclub.com

A Rhodo Celebration

On the weekend of April 25 and 26, one hundred and fifty people from around the world gathered at the Rhododendron Species Foundation, Federal Way, Washington to celebrate the Rhododendron Species Botanical Gardens 50th Anniversary.

We gathered at the Hampton Inn for the events, where Mike Stewart and Steve Hootman welcomed everyone. The noise level in the meeting room continued to rise as old and new friends greeted each other. The energy level was palpable.

Friday morning Harold Greer gave a presentation on the History of the Species Foundation. Harold has the history in his genes as he was secretary for the very first discussion meeting to create the foundation. He was 19 years old at the time. During the presentation Harold discussed the “WEED, SEED, GREED, THE BLEED and finally THE WILL TO SUCCEED” in the RSF creation. The history was new to many of us. For example the problems with finances, with finding a permanent home for the collection and the problems around importation of recognized species were presented. He emphasized the critical role that Evelyn (Jack) Weesjes played in the creation and protection of the initial collection.

At the time plant material could not be imported from Great Britain to USA due to quarantine regulations. However, rhododendron cuttings could be sent to Canada, rooted and grown on and then exported to USA. Evelyn Jacks was a recent UBC graduate working in the department of Plant Sciences. In corroboration with UBC, Evelyn rooted and grew on the cuttings which eventually became the foundation of the Rhododendron Species Foundation in the US. Without her skill as a propagator and grower and her work at keeping the plant material together the collection would not have survived.

Harold went on to describe how the collection was moved from one location to another until a permanent home was offered to the RSF by the Weyerhaeuser

Company in 1974. And here, we were celebrating this important achievement on its 50th Anniversary.

Harold presented the history and then Steve Hootman spoke about the RSF's Role Today and the RSF's Vision for the Future. He addressed the importance of the existing collection in respect to the global protection of the species and the need to save all species of rhododendrons, not just the pretty ones.

On Friday, the attendees had the option to visit, with guided tours: Soos Creek Botanical Garden, Lake Wilderness Arboretum or the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden.

They tried something new and different for Friday evening's dinner. Attendees were invited to sign-up for one of four different restaurants. Just before leaving it was announced that a surprise host would attend each restaurant. The hosts were Steven Hootman, David Chamberlain, Harold Greer and Denis Bottemiller. This provided the participants the opportunity to meet with world- renowned experts in an informal way.

Saturday morning started with the AGM of the RSF at the Weyerhaeuser Assembly room. The meeting provided an excellent understanding of the finances and the administration of the Rhododendron Species Foundation. The new board was nominated and elected with addition to the naming of Harold Greer and David Chamberlain to the Board. Following the meeting UBC's Doug Justice gave a presentation of the History of

UBC's Botanic Garden and its connection with the Rhododendron Species Foundation.

Saturday afternoon the attendees again had the choice of visiting the three guided tours offered on Friday. As well, species rhododendrons were available for purchase as were the phytos to feed our addiction.

After the banquet Saturday evening David Chamberlain spoke on the challenges facing the annihilation of the rhododendron habitat around the world. He closed on a positive note with suggestions on how we can work with local governments and peoples to save the species.

In order to achieve the changes there was a request for pledges from the attendees and over \$58,000 was raised spontaneously.

It was nice to meet the second generation of the Walker family who continue to follow in with their parents' passion for rhododendrons.

Harold Greer closed the event with a fabulous slide and musical presentation featuring The Beauty of our Favorite Genus throughout the Year.

In closing, Mike Stewart facilitated the entire conference moving through the agenda flawlessly with graciousness, warmth and humor. We enjoyed seeing beautiful gardens and the plant material in beautiful sunny spring weather. We appreciate all the staff and efforts put forth to make this weekend most memorable.

Written by Sandra Stevenson in collaboration with Norma Senn and Rhonda Rose . Thanks to Keith White for the Photos



Mike Stewart and Harold Greer



Steve Hootman and his mother





The Rhododendron Species Garden

Upcoming Events

2014	Event	Place	Fee
Jun 29	VRS Summer Picnic	The Webbs'	
Sept 26 – 28	ARS Western Regional Conference, District 2	Everett, Washington	
Oct 12 – 19	<u>Pre-conference Tour</u> New Zealand International Conference 2014	Dunedin, New Zealand	\$NZ 2700 share pp-3300 single
Oct 20 – 24	New Zealand Rhododendron Association <u>70th International Rhodo Conference 2014</u> Registration <i>Registration After Sept. 1 = \$NZ100</i>	Dunedin, New Zealand	\$NZ 455
Oct 25 – 27	<u>Post-Conference Tour</u> New Zealand International Conference 2014	Dunedin, New Zealand	\$NZ 770 share pp-1000 single