

# The Victoria Rhododendron Society



## Newsletter May 2014

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May 2014

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Thirty-Fourth Year of Publication

web page – <http://victoriarhodo.ca>

NEXT MEETING at 7:30

**MONDAY, May 12, 2014**

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

**Michael Peterson, "Update on Sudden Oak Death (SODs)"**

Michael Peterson will give us an update on the status of Sudden Oak Death on the west coast. Michael is President and Principal Scientist of Applied Forest Science Limited, which was founded in 1985 to study the effects of forest nursery practices on seedling diseases.

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REFRESHMENTS to be provided by:

**John and Judy Gordon**

**Dorothy Griffin**

**Radoka and Les Harris**

**Joe and Linda Harvey**

**John and Alison Hawkins**

**Lorraine Hoy**

**Please email** Betty Gordon at  
[bbgordon@shaw.ca](mailto:bbgordon@shaw.ca) (or phone 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.

### Our April Meeting

**Theresa McMillan**

Norma Senn began the meeting with a talk and picture show on the 2013 Chelsea Flower show in London, England. There was an astonishing variety of plant material, artistry, and displays. The Show is very popular, with thousands of visitors.

Many Victorians are familiar with February's big North West Flower and Garden Show in Seattle. It pales in comparison with the one in London.

For the second part of our meeting, many members brought flowering rhododendron trusses to be turned into show-worthy entries.

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John Hawkins, who has exhibited for years and won many trophies, brought in many trusses set up in their green bottles and labels.

After Norma's talk, Ken Webb demonstrated how he prepares his trusses for our Show and Sale.

First, he notices the natural shape of the flower head and whether the leaves below form a symmetrical pattern or not. Then he removes several leaves so that the flower show to best advantage. Some rhodos have bud scales or old seed heads around the flowers, and these are also removed for aesthetic reasons.

Then Ken checks the stem holding the truss to see whether it is upright (grown from near the top of the plant) or slanted (growing from the side). Then he places it in a green bottle with pieces of cork around it to try to stabilize the plant, making the whole flower face upward for best effect.

Then the meeting broke up into groups around tables. We had flowers, secateurs, knives, cork, and green bottles to prepare our show entries. There was a lot of chat while people were cutting pieces off plants, shaping corks, finding the names and classes of the rhodies. It seems the "hands on" experience with "old hands" to help was a really good idea!

In the next step, bottles, trusses, and some labels were lined up on a table for the mini show.

Jacqui Bradbury, an experienced judge, went through the display and explained how she would judge the entries and why she would rank the trusses within in the class as she does.

We hoped this demonstration and practice will increase the number of entries for our Show and Sale at Westshore Mall on Saturday, May 10.



Rhodo Show, 2012, Tillicum Mall

## Some Tips on Exhibiting Trusses and Sprays

by **Alec McCarter** (from our Newsletter, Spring 2008) and additions from Theresa McMillan (2014)

The success of the spring show depends on you and your exhibits. Your entry may be just what the judges are looking for to award a trophy or a ribbon. Even if your entry wins nothing there is a great deal of joy and satisfaction to be gained from having participated in this annual event. The first show was held in 1990 in response to **Edmund de Rothschild's** challenge to the society to hold a competition for the silver cup that he gave us - 'The de Rothschild Challenge Trophy'. Enter your exhibit to try to win it!

What follows is an article taken from the Vancouver Rhododendron Society's Newsletter of March 1996. They, in turn, reprinted it from the newsletter of the Eugene Chapter, who got it from the March 1995 Cascade Chapter Newsletter. It has been edited to correspond with our particular needs.

A day or two before the show, go around and make a list of the blooms you will pick on Friday morning, the day before the show. Note whether they will be trusses or sprays. Then tentatively figure out which class they are in using the show list of class names, which will be available on line in our Website.

Also, organize whatever containers you will be using to transport your blooms to the show. They needn't be elaborate. Empty bottles or cans work well. Be careful to avoid crushing the blooms. Fill the containers with water almost to the top. Bottles in six-pack cartons are great for transporting blooms.

Picking blooms always takes more time than you think it will! When choosing trusses, select ones that have straight stems with the bloom at the top. Don't choose ones with crooked stems that are growing at odd angles (e.g. pointing straight down). When choosing sprays, look for ones that will present themselves gracefully in a bottle. We use our green Jamaican Ginger Beer bottles, but other small bottles will do.

Prune judiciously if need be to enhance the shape of a spray. Avoid choosing entries with bruises. Sometimes rain damage is inevitable, but avoid it if you can. Look for freshness. In a spray, it is better to have one or more unopened flower buds (for they frequently open after they have been picked) than to choose blooms that are already open and going over. Some judges like to see one or two unopened or partially opened buds. Hammerheads, trusses from more than one bud make very full blooms, but they are in a class of their own.

Choose blooms with good-looking foliage. Avoid ones with chewed or otherwise damaged leaves. Once again, some judicious snipping of damaged leaves can be done - but don't go too far because some foliage is needed (and you must NOT trim off the bitten parts of a weevil-chewed leaf!) For a truss, one nice whorl is best - with flowers from one bud only. For sprays, more foliage will often be needed for balance, and of course, more than one flowering bud is allowed. Do notice the restriction, on height and width of a spray.

After cutting your truss, to make it last longer, plunge it deeply into lukewarm water in a large container. You don't want to crush the flower. Later you can make an oblique cut across the stem leaving the right length to make the exhibit look balanced - and do this under water. Some exhibitors even peel the bark

back from the cut then make a vertical cut up the stem to aid water absorption This will help the truss to take up water and keep it fresh all day. You may then store your exhibit in its water-filled bottle in the refrigerator (if you have space!) until it is taken to the Show.

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## Rhododendrons as Cut Flowers

by Theresa McMillan

I have been a “rhodoholic” for years. I began paying really close attention to the plants in Stuart Holland’s garden in Oak Bay since our children were small. I have continued admiring rhododendron blooms in various gardens, especially our own garden (it’s closer!). I have also been using the blooms as flowers on the kitchen table (where they get lots of attention) and in the living/dining area.

A remarkable aspect of using rhodos as cut flowers is how variable is the time that the flowers last. For example, last week I picked an early truss from “George’s Delight”, a fine yellow/pink hybrid. I put it into a vase with lots of water, and it looked beautiful for about ten days.

Two days ago, Bill brought in an early truss of “Point Defiance”, a hybrid with big white flowers tinged with pink at the edges. It was put in a holder with lots of water. But by the very next morning, the whole truss was sagging in a pitiful way. Bill ended up floating individual flowers in an oval bowl. They have perked up and are looking very fine.

It is a pity that the hundreds of trusses in green bottles that we see at the end of the Victoria Rhododendron Society Show are often thrown into big black garbage bags. What a waste!

We collect our green bottles and the best looking trusses from the Show and bring them home. They are placed on the kitchen table and other places to be further admired. We might have a rainbow of 10 trusses on the kitchen table. Then we notice how well they last.... It’s an ever-changing show.

Sprays of mauve augustinis and red cinnabarium can last for weeks. Some rhodos with tiny flowers last even longer. Fading flowers can be saved by floating them in water. With the variety of flowers from the show, I get striking effects by floating blooms in oval bowls. Sometimes I place a tiny rhodo in a bud vase for an elegant look. Rhodos do very well in ikbana displays.

Unfortunately, nothing seems to keep the flowers of Loderis looking good once cut. You will just have to go outside to the plant and see and smell them in all their beauty.



Separate blooms of “Point Defiance” in a bowl and a flower of “Albert de Mazy” in a bud vase.

A note from one of our members, **Joan Gibb**

The Friends of Dominion Brook Park are sponsoring a photo contest from May 1 to July 15 entitled 'In The Park'.

(Dominion Brook Park is off East Saanich Road to the south of Bazan Bay Road. )

See attached poster.

Details available for participants at [www.dominionbrookpark.ca/photographs.html](http://www.dominionbrookpark.ca/photographs.html).



**NOTE from another of our members, Agnes Lynn.**

Agnes has given us several talks on our native wildflowers. She is active in the Victoria Natural History Society, is an avid birder, and with her husband Dave goes on many field trips. As Agnes says, "we just open up the Garden for everyone on the same day so I don't have to give up any more Sundays when I want to be out in the wild!"

**The Lynns have their Open Garden just once a year.**

**This year it is on Sun May 11 from 1 till 4. Address is 3913 Woodhaven Terrace, off Tudor.**



A Note from yet another member, **THURSTON LACALI.**

I have a pink azaleodendron that's surplus to my needs. It is almost certainly either Ria Hardijzer or Hardijzer's Beauty. It's about 3 feet tall with multiple stems and a reasonable rootball that I've wrapped in burlap. It is not from a pot, and it's too big to drag in for the lottery. It is free to anyone interested. They can phone me at 598-9859. I have a second one as well that I might part with if there's sufficient interest.



Azaleodendron "Ria Hardijzer"

## Upcoming Events

2014	Event	Place	Fee
May 7 - 12	California and Oregon Garden Tour Redwoods, rhodos, wine and west coast All inclusive tour, wedumont@hotmail.com		\$US 1000 /PP
May 10 9:30-3:30	VRS Show and Sale	Westshore Town Center	Free
May 11 1 to 4 pm	Open Garden - Agnes and Dave Lynn	3913 Woodland Terrace off Tudor	Free
May 15 - 18	<u>2014 ARS Annual Convention</u>	Cleveland, Ohio	Registration \$US 55
May 18 10 am- 2 pm	<b>Plant Sale &amp; Garden Open.</b> Carmen Varcoe & Friends. Wide selection of woodland perennials, hydrangeas, & Pacific Coast Iris hybrids.	5450 Old West Saanich Rd.	
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>70<sup>th</sup> 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