



# The Victoria Rhododendron Society

## Newsletter

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

December 2015

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Thirty-Fifth Year of Publication

<http://victoriarhodo.ca>

**MEETING 6:30**

**MONDAY, December 14**

**GARTH HOMER CENTRE, 813 DARWIN AVENUE,  
VICTORIA, B. C.  
Christmas Dinner**



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### Photography Night

by Theresa McMillan

On Monday, November 9, in a darkened room, our membership sat looking at a fantastic group of photographs of plants and gardens. It was hard to choose the best from so many, especially with the light available.

However, the members of the board on November 14 added up the votes (which was easy!) and the results and the best pictures appear on Page 5.

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## How to make 1000 bucks from Ramonda

by Joe Harvey

Remember the African violet craze of, um, 50 years ago? Well I have come across a cute, very hardy outdoor version of the popular indoor plant. This has similar flowers in blue, pink or white and can take frost down to -20C, Zone 6. And yes it will grow from leaf cuttings.

Where does this marvel come from? It is a mountain plant growing on rocky slopes and ledges in the Pyrenees. The plant is *Ramonda myconi* (rah-MON-da me-KO-nee)

The name honours Louis Francis Ramond, Baron de Carbonniere, 1753-1827, French explorer of the Pyrenees; and Francisco Mico, b1528. Spanish physician and botanist.

I have had one, blue-flowered specimen for several years but, frustratingly, it has never set seed. Why not? As a suspicious plant geneticist it occurred to me that it might be self-incompatible.

Now I have a friend called Karen who has two plants, a blue-flowered one and a pink one, so in May 2015 we arranged to introduce our plants to each other. In other words I took pollen from my lonely plant and put some on the stigmas of her blue one, and vice versa. The pink one was sulking.



Ramonda Myconi - La Corriu

Capsules ripened in July but I nearly lost the seeds. It turns out that the wild plants depend on updrafts on the mountain slopes to blow the

seeds across the cliff faces. These are some of the smallest seeds in the plant kingdom, just dust, even smaller than Begonia seed.

The capsules start to gape while still green and the least gust blows out seeds. After I lost some seeds I picked off the other capsules and let them shed in envelopes.



Ramonda Seedlings  
Courtesy of Wikimedia

How to germinate the seeds? I had previously had great difficulty with NARGS seed which would have been almost a year old. This seed took almost a year to reluctantly start. So I was ultra-cautious. I tried four seed mixes: pure peat, peat-Perlite, peat-Perlite-dusted with dolomite and Sunshine #4. All worked.

I used fern-spore technique. That is, put the media into plastic tubs, sprinkled seeds on the surface while holding my breath and covered the pots with Saran film.

In ten days, they started to germinate. Every seed came up; there was a green fuzz on the soil surfaces. I probably have more Ramonda plants than anyone else in BC.

How to cultivate? They do well in pots in a well-draining mix. Otherwise try troughs, the rock garden, holes in tufa, even the garden so long as nothing shades it, I shall try some in an old strawberry pot.

Wrightmans Alpines, St. Andrews offers plants for \$9 each. I have an estimated 1000 seedlings, some almost 3mm across. If I can sell 1000 at \$1 each I shall be rich, rich!

V

*olunteers are  
needed* to make

Christmas centre pieces for the potluck tables and for the raffle. Jacq Bradbury as once again kindly agreed to let us use her driveway and carport on the morning of December 14th, starting at about 9:30. We usually finish by noon. As we work outside, dress for the weather.

**When:** Monday morning, 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. start.

**Where:** Jacq Bradbury's home, 2959 Irma St

**Bring:** Pruning shears, and if you have any decorations suitable for the centre pieces that you'd like to use, feel free to bring them along. Jacq provides many types of greens for the arrangements, but you may also bring along interesting foliage for use in the arrangements.







## *Invitation*

*The Victoria Rhododendron Society's*  
*Annual Pot Luck Christmas Dinner*

*Garth Homer Center*  
*Monday, December 14 @ 6:30 p.m.*

*Members A to L, please bring a savory*  
*Or a salad*

*Members M to Z, please bring a dessert*

*The Club will provide a cooked ham & turkey*  
*Punch, serviettes, tea, coffee. sugar. Milk & cream*  
*Please bring your own dishes, cutlery and cups*

*Raffle donations of*  
*crafts and plants*  
*would be much appre-*  
*ciated, as well as non-*  
*perishable foods. All*  
*proceeds will be donat-*  
*ed to the Mustard Seed*  
*Food Bank*



## 2015 Photography Contest Results

### Single Truss

First Place: Lois Blackmore, 'Honey Mist'

Second Place: Peter Barriscale, Finnerty

Second Place: Bill McMillan, R. cinnabarium

### Whole Rhodo

First Place: Norman Senn, R. thallopian

Second Place: Anne Allen, R. PJM

Third Place: Lois Blackmore, R. 'Carol's Candy'

### Foliage

First Place: Peter Barriscale, , R. pachy X pachy

Second Place: Bill McMillan, R. 'Lucy Lu'

Third Place: Kathy McKay, R. valentianum

### Companion

First Place: Anne Allen, Magnolia

Second Place: Bill McMillan, Heleborus

Third Place: Norma Senn, Arisaema & Kathy McKay, Magnolia

### Garden Scene

First Place: Lois Blackmore, Garden

Second Place: Norma Senn, Tresslick & Bill McMillan, Lewis Garden

Third Place: Anne Allen, Rainy Day

### Altered/Creative

First Place: Carrie Nelson, Crocuses

Second Place: Bill McMillan, R. dauricum

Third Place: Anne Allen, Reflections

### Best In Show

First Place: Anne Allen, Reflections

Second Place: Peter Barriscale, R. Pachy X Pachy & Norma Senn, R. thallopian

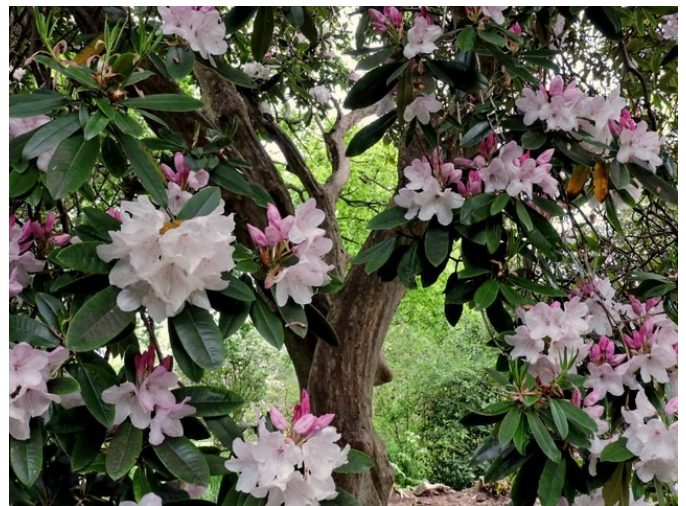
Third Place: Lois Blackmore, Garden

### Single Truss



Honey Mist

### Whole Rhodo



Thallopian

### Foliage



R. pachy x pachy



**Companion**



Magnolia

**Altered/Creative**



Crocus

**Garden Scene**



Garden

**Best In Show**



Reflections

## HAVE A NICE DAY, GIVE A PLANT A SMILE

by Norman Todd from our Newsletter, January 1999

Several weeks ago, a couple of newspaper articles got me thinking about smiling. One article was about the way check-out clerks in a large grocery business were being instructed to treat customers. They were being cautioned by their employer that failure to look customers in the eye and smile would result in disciplinary measures being taken. The second was in the same vein and applied to cabin personnel in airplanes. Evidently the captains of industry figure a smile is worth a million dollars whether sincere or not.

Our culture is full of songs and poetry about smiles being sunshine and sweet and all that. I'm not one of these people 'of such vinegary aspect that they'll not show their teeth in way of smile'. I like to smile. But my sensibilities get riled when a human behaves like a robot. Why not just have a computer give you a smile? – and it could give you a pat on the butt at the same time – without the risk of being hauled up for sexual harassment.

I really quite like supermarkets too. They are among my favourite stores. Some days, however, when I know I have only \$50 in my wallet and am scared that the contents of the cart are going to total more than that, I feel like abandoning the buggy and fleeing the store when I see that gingival excess bounded by perfect ivories and hear this recording which emits from them ..."and how is the world treating you today?" I have the same reaction when tied in a too small airplane seat and think I can smell smoke coming from the cockpit and the steward says, 'Enjoy'. And isn't it strange that gasoline companies are so keen for a buck that they all price their product to the tenth of a penny, and still order us to 'have a good day' when they hand back our credit card.

What I'm trying to get around to is important. It's about smiling at your plants. There have been many speculations and indeed some serious claims that plants respond to conversation, music, good feelings and maybe even to "have a good

day", or 'take care". I admit I may be biased but I think rhododendrons are among the most sensitive of plants and do respond to this kind of treatment. And among rhododendrons there is one that I certainly go out of my way to be nice to. This is *Rhododendron ririei* – the smiling rhododendron. It is called after the Reverend Ririe who worked the Chinese Inland Missions and was a friend of Chinese Wilson. I don't know if he spoke French as well as Mandarin but likely his ancestors came from France and they were always happy and that is how they got the name Ririe. Rire means 'to smile'.



Ririei

What better to make you smile in our January gardens than the large luxuriant flower of *ririei*. They are a kind of pinky-mauve (the same colour as the dentated gums of our favourite check-out clerk) and really quite showy so early in the year. A feature of the flowers that, to me, is remarkable, is that they have huge dark violet nectar pouches which are just replete with flowing goodness. I have never seen insects on the flowers and it could be that with us all this sweetness gets wasted but maybe there are insects buzzing around in its native land of Sichuan at that time of the year. Maybe I'm so busy smiling that my vision gets impaired and I can't see properly but I don't see them being pollinated. The nectar must have some utility other than to sweeten the flower's smile – and mine.



Ririei keeps its smile, without any orders from corporate headquarters, until we get a frost. Then, the opened flowers brown and I have to admit, despite my great admiration for the good Reverend Ririe's rhododendron, that this browning happens with less intensity of freezing than some of the other early bloomers. 'Rosamundi' and 'Lee's Scarlet' and certainly 'Snow Lady' will take minus two degrees Centigrade of frost without browning.

Ririei lives up to its name also because it smiles wherever you put it in the garden. It is happy to please and it is easy to please. Ours is in quite deep shade but still grins away. It lost some of that grin in the great Christmas blizzard of 1996 when several of its limbs were amputated. It showed that that disaster had not caused it to lose its good nature for long as it bloomed last January (1998) more profusely than ever. I'm sure I could make it even happier by giving it a bit more sunshine but its too big to move now. It's a

big plant and can get to ten meters eventually.

The Thais are a smiling people. They always smile no matter the subject. It is said that Thais have ten different smiles, all recognizable. Just like our rhodos are graded 5/5 or 2/4, so the Thais grade smiles from 1 to 10. If a Thai says to you, "what a lousy hair-do you got this time", you can tell by a No. 1 smile that the remark is sincere. Here's a culture where how sincere the "have a good day" is can be detected immediately by grading the grin.

But when we get a gratuitous No. 10 smile every time we spend money at the grocery store then we have lost one of our means of being spontaneously pleased and pleased. I would rather pass up the imposed smile than have to smart at myself as I say, "And you too" for the umpteenth time. When I pass *Rhododendron ririei* it always gets at least an impromptu, sincere No. 5 – at least.



## Upcoming Events

2015	Event	Place	Fee
Dec 14	Christmas Party and Potluck	Garth Homer Centre	
	<b>2016</b>		
<b>Jan 18, 2016</b> <b>7:30</b>	Propagation Group Meeting	TBA call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	





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## VRS 2016 Calendar

### Key to the Symbols



**General Meetings**  
Garth Homer Center  
813 Darwin Street  
Saanich





**Propagation Group Meetings**  
(contact Ken Webb  
to be added to the email list)



**Conflicting Statutory Holiday**

### Activities

 Truss show, Mary Winspear  
April 30, 2016

 Plant sale at Marquardt's  
May 6, 2016

### Summer Picnic



See May Newsletter for  
details on location and time

### January

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

### February

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29					

### March

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

### April

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

### May

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

### June

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

### SUMMER BREAK

### September

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

### October


S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

### November

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

### December

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

 ARS Convention  
Williamsburg, Virginia  
April 20-24, 2016