



# The Victoria Rhododendron Society

## Newsletter

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

January 2016

[tkmcmillan@gmail.com](mailto:tkmcmillan@gmail.com)

Thirty-Sixth Year of Publication

<http://victoriarhodo.ca>

Doors open 7:00

MEETING 7:30

**MONDAY, January 11th**

**GARTH HOMER CENTRE**

**813 DARWIN AVENUE, VICTORIA, B. C.**

**Topic: Video of Exbury Gardens from Lionel de Rothschild**

### January Meeting Highlight

Exbury Garden is a 200-acre (81 ha) informal woodland garden with very large collections of rhododendrons, azaleas, and camellias and often considered the finest garden of its type in the United Kingdom.

David Lionel de Rothschild was a speaker and participant in May at the 70th ARS Convention in Sidney.

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### **REFRESHMENTS**

**for the next meeting to be provided by:**

Lynne Ferrie

Jennifer Ferris

Elaine Fisher

Paul Frost

Carrie George

Joan Gibb

Please email Betty Gordon at [bbgordon@shaw.ca](mailto: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.



**Betty Gordon—we so appreciate all your help Betty. Thank you.**

## VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY BOARD

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Volunteers working on Center Pieces



Center Piece & Wreath Volunteer Group

## History of Mary Winspear Centre

The Mary Winspear Centre has a long history of community support and pride which continue to be strong foundations of our facility. Let us share a bit of our wonderful history...

### Sanscha Hall - The Beginning

In 1921, a 12-acre North Saanich War Memorial Park was established by the Memorial Park Society in dedication to the local men lost in the First World War. The park also included an athletic field and children's playground. In 1958, the non-profit Sidney and North Saanich Community Hall Association (SANSCHA) built the Sanscha Commu-

nity Hall on this land. The association adopted the financial responsibility for the hall largely through volunteer fundraising. Groups such as the "Sanscha Suzies" dedicated their time to raising funds through bake sales and other activities.

Clearly, Sanscha Hall was undertaken by the community, for the community. A strong spirit of volunteerism from SANSCHA members supported the services of the community hall for many years, with little outside funding assistance. During the 1960s, these efforts were tried, but fortunately, the founding of the community event "Sidney Days" as a means of funding enabled the hall to continue to serve the community.

Also in the 1960s, the Sanscha Hall, athletic field and surrounding lands were named as "The North Saanich Memorial Park" (NSMP). The property was placed under the management of a Public Trust with the residents of Sidney and North Saanich as the beneficiaries - a testament to the founding and servicing of the lands and hall by the community. The Town of Sidney released the Memorial Park of property taxes (and currently has a similar agreement in place).

SANSCHA members continued to operate Sanscha Hall for seven decades. In 1993, the board mem-



bers dissolved their association and turned the responsibility for the hall over to the Memorial Park Society (MPS) Directors. The development of the lands was continued and new opportunities considered. In 1994, the Sanscha Site Re-Development Study for MPS considered the replacement of Sanscha Hall.

## Building the Mary Winspear Centre

In 1995, a proposal call went out to build a new 30,370 square foot facility, with an estimated cost of \$6 million. Through an impressive "Honouring the Past - Building the Future" fundraising cam-



paign by the newly formed Sanscha Community Cultural Centre Foundation and the involvement of several generous donors, the re-development project was successfully completed. To honour the rich past of Sanscha Hall and its volunteers, the new centre was built around the original hall, upgrading it acoustically and seismographically.

In September 2001, the Mary Winspear Centre opened its doors to an excited, proud community. The new facility was named after the inspirational Mary Winspear. William Winspear, her nephew, was a very generous contributor to the campaign in honour of Mary. She dedicated her life to educating youth and retired to the Peninsula where William would visit in the summers.

Like Sanscha Hall in the early years, the Mary Winspear Centre has continued to evolve since its opening into a mainstay conference and cultural centre in the community.

## *Mary Winspear Legacy Rhododendron Garden*

While cleaning up from the very successful 2015 ARS 70<sup>th</sup> Convention this May at Mary Winspear Centre, the VRS members noticed a large grassy area between the highway and the building that seemed perfect for a rhodo garden. At the same time, we were talking about how well we were



treated by the staff at Mary Winspear. They were spectacular in supporting our many efforts and changes we inflicted on them. We approached the Executive Director, Brad Edgett, and our fabulous planner, Patti Sanders, about the possibility of donating rhodos for a legacy garden at Mary Winspear. They were very keen on the idea as it coincides with the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II which is observed yearly by the organization that operates Mary Winspear. We are now ready to proceed with planning a Legacy Rhodo Garden. We have a planning committee in place to develop and implement our plans. We already have 42 rhodos that the presidents of District #1 donated to this project after the May convention. We are initially wishing to have up to 70 rhodos donated for the Legacy Garden.

### Costs to VicRS

1. Volunteer time for design and implementation.
2. Donation of rhodos for the garden.
3. Irrigation to be supplied and maintained by Mary Winspear Centre.
4. Bark mulch: will seek community donations of 15 yards of mulch.

### Donations

We will be looking for donations of rhodos, large and small, that you may have surplus to your needs or rhodos that may be too big for your garden. We will have volunteers to dig out your donated rhodos if necessary. Please inform Lois or Calvin if you have a rhodo to donate. We will collect the donations once the rhodo bed has been prepared by Mary Winspear.



### The Mystery of the McNeill Bay Stock

Joe Harvey

A trip to Abkhazi Garden on Easter Monday revealed it was closed on statutory holidays, so we walked along McNeill Bay. Along the seafront my eye was caught by a discordant purple colour, the same colour as the popular *Erysimum* 'Bowles Mauve', but on plants stockier and wider.

The colour immediately brought on a Proustian moment: this particular reminiscence was of my parents' garden in England; of the Brompton stocks they must have planted in the 1930s after moving into their new house. Those stocks were a mixture of single and double-flowered plants, all in the same vivid, somewhat acid mauve. They seeded around without any help.

So what is the Brompton stock? It is a stock (more later), widespread as a wild plant on cliffs around the Mediterranean: *Matthiola incana* (mat-ee-OH-la in-CA-na).

The generic name honours Pierandrea Mattioli 1500-1577, Italian physician and author of a famous treatise on medicinal



**Matthiola incana**

plants. The descriptor *incana* means hoary, from the covering of grey hairs on the leaves which presumably aid the plant in droughty conditions.

In mediaeval times the term 'gilliflower' was used rather generally for herbs with scented flowers (gilli, cloves). It included pinks, wall-gilliflowers and stock-gilliflowers. Why stock-gilliflower? Because it was more difficult to cut the 'stock' (stalk) at the base which becomes woody in these perennial plants.

Why Brompton? There are several towns called Brompton in England but the village after which the Brompton stock is named has vanished. It is now called South Kensington - but you still get there along the Old Brompton Road. Brompton Park House was demolished to build the Victoria and Albert Museum.

To go back in time, the city of London, before the building of the railways, was supplied with meat, fruit, vegetables and flowers from surrounding farms. Flowers were quite important because before Thomas Crapper, commodes and drains were quite stinky even in the best houses. Gilliflowers were in demand as is recorded in old diaries. (Nell

Gwynn and Eliza Doolittle both sold flowers.)

In 1681 George London and Henry Wise bought about 100 acres of farmland and founded the Brompton Park Nursery. This very influential nursery supplied many of the landscaping and fruit trees used to lay out the large gardens and estates in England. The nursery also originated an improved vigorous stock-gilliflower – the Brompton stock.

The British loved Brompton stocks. The single purple wild form was first improved with the discovery of double forms, but this was a puzzle because the double-flowered specimens produced no seeds, but some of the single-flowered plants produced a mixture of single and double forms. With the rediscovery of Mendel's Laws of Genetics in 1900 it soon became clear that the doubles were the homozygous recessives. The doubles were the more desirable because the plants lasted longer, not having to put energy into seed production.

About the turn of the twentieth century the Brompton hybridised with some other stock spe-



cies and soon a variety of colours became available in various heights. A short life-cycle variety was bred which could be sown in the spring to flower that summer. It was called the Ten-week Stock and took over as a mainstay of flower beds, particularly in the 1930s to the 1950s.

I remember with fondness the perfume wafting

off the flower beds in the local municipal parks.

Is there anything special about the McNeill Bay stocks? Yes, they are very, very plain, in fact outstandingly, boringly - plain. The population contains no hint of alternative colours, nor any doubles. This gives a hint as to their date of origin.

This gets us into the subject of horticultural archaeology. The likely source of the McNeill plants is garden debris dumped on the shore from a nearby garden. But when? This needs a bit of research of local diaries and old seed catalogues but anything dumped from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century would show its genetic origin with a few extra colours and double flowers. With these forms absent it may be supposed that these are likely the earlier unimproved form from early Victoria times and the Hudson Bay farms when the earliest houses were being built. These may be heritage plants, present on the shore for – how long? – maybe 150 years.

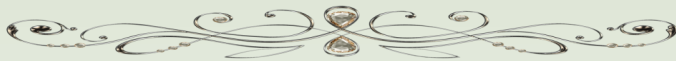
Point Ellis House 1861, Ross Bay Villa 1865 and Carr House on Government St. would likely have grown these unimproved plants during their earlier times. Some of the curators want to restore their gardens to show older plants; here is one. The Brompton stock persists at what was called Foul Bay (the anchor slipped on the bottom) because the habitat perfectly fits the requirements of the wild species. Rejoice that it is still there.

**Notes:** Brompton translates 'enclosure where broom grows'. Broom was introduced to the west coast at Sooke. We should change its name to Brompton.

After the very dry summer of 2015 the McNeill Bay plants resumed flowering in October. This is one tough plant. I have seeds and seedlings, just ask. They do well in sunny sites and in pots: the scent is wonderful.

I have a couple of wood engravings from the Illustrated London News May 1871. They show that Exhibition Road had been cut straight north through the former Brompton Park Nursery. The Albert Hall is shown and just south are gardens and conservatories of the Royal Horticultural Society. The RHS later moved and the Natural History

Museum and other museums were built over the gardens. Some members may have visited the area without knowing its history. I will bring the engravings to a meeting.



**Charles Sale**

**604-929-5706**

**[buckethill@gmail.com](mailto:buckethill@gmail.com)**

**UBC BOTANICAL GARDEN SHOP GARDEN  
CENTRE**

**2016 SPRING MAGNOLIA OFFERING**

Once again the UBC Shop in the Garden is offering a large variety of interesting and typically unavailable magnolias species and hybrids for next spring. The hybrids include many recent introductions from New Zealand and Europe. Quantities are quite limited - in some cases just one or two trees.

For our **Vancouver Island customers** this coming year we have arranged to make your orders available in Nanaimo. Dr. Craig Clarke has kindly offered to hold these for pick-up one weekend next spring. The transportation charge is **\$10.00 per tree**.

**All Plants in 5 Gal Containers.**

**Price ea. \$67.00, +tax, payable in advance when order is confirmed.**

***M. campbellii* 'Betty Jessel'** A nearly crimson form of campbellii. Rarely offered. Flowers later than other campbellii z8 50' in 50 yrs

***M. campbellii* 'Borde Hill'** flowers lilac purple red z8, 50' in 50 yrs,

***M. campbellii* 'Charles Raffil'** Big pink flowers, slightly scented, vigorous grower

***M. campbellii* var. *alba* 'Ethel Hillier'** A vigorous hardy campbellii with very large flowers. Selected by the Hillier nursery. Petals white with a faint pink blush at the base on the outside

***M. campbellii* 'Lanarth'** similar to Borde Hill

***M. campbellii* 'Piet van Veen'** "Cup and saucer" type campbellii. Flowers are red purple outside with inside fading from red purple rim to pale chamois. Very attractive and rare.

***M. denudata*** Early flowering tree, the yulan tree native to China. Ivory white flowers,

***M. sargentiana* var *robusta* 'Alba'** Very large flowers, 20-30 cm wide, bowl shaped, up to 16 tepals (magnolia "petals"), erect when opening, then horizontal. This form has white with pale pink undertones. Z7 50'





***M.sargentiana* var *robusta* 'Blood Moon'** superior selection with flrs a deeper pink; z7, 50'

***M.sprengeri* *diva* 'Claret Cup'** Scented saucer-shaped rosy purple flrs; z7

***M.sprengeri* *diva* 'Eric Savill'** Dark cerise-pink flrs; z7

***M. stellata* 'Jane Platt'** superior star magnolia selection, rich pink flrs., one of the best pink stellata 10-15', z6

***M. wilsonii*** Pendant white flrs with dark crimson stamens. Multi-stemmed to 10'in 10 yrs & 18'in 25 yrs. z6

***M. zenii*** floriferous; frs. fragrant, white - purple base; 16' to 24'; rare in cultivation z5

***M. 'Alexandrina'*** a soulangeana. Flowers white flushed with purple, freely produced at a young age. Old shrubs are loaded with flowers.

***M. 'Atlas'*** . x soulangeana 'Lennei' "Cup and saucer" flowers, up to 35 cm diameter, flowering at an early age. Tepals pink outside, white within. Has one of the biggest flowers to be seen on a magnolia

***M. 'Barbara Cook'*** produces masses of spectacular pale pink flowers Exceptional pink flower color. The greater fullness of the flowers is due to the much wider tepals. Alleyne Cook introduction

***M. 'Brozzonii'*** . a soulangeana with white flowers with some green stripe at the base of the outer tepals. Looks like a big *denudata*, but flowers are latest of all soulangeana. Often, a second flowering in July and August; one of the best *M. soulangeana* selections

***M. 'Butterbowl'*** Yellow Bird' x 'Sundance', The 17mm dia. yellow flowers stand upright, cup-like, on the end of its branches. The flowers appear before the leaves and spread a soft sweet smell somewhat reminiscent of papaya. The tree has no central leader and therefore has a nice perfectly round shape.

***M. 'Caerhays Surprise'*** *M. campbellii* *mollicomata* x *M. liliiflora* 'Nigra' Bright violet flower buds, pinkish purple when open, 20cm. diameter. Prolific bloomer, at an early age, a good hardy plant of outstanding merit. Medium size, Suitable for smaller gardens; z7

***M. 'Daphne'*** A recent introduction. What first attracts attention is the small size, the dark green leaves and the vivid yellow flowers. The bush grows more or less spherical,

***M. 'Edward Messel'*** stellata 'Rosea' x *kobus* Tepals purple pink outside, white inside. Flowers are the

most frost resistant of all magnolias. One of the best magnolia available.

***M. 'Genie'*** flrs. black red, tulip shaped ; columnar; striking for a small space; to 10'; z5

***M. 'Golden Endeavour'*** 'Miss Honeybee' x 'Sundew'. A tetraploid, deep yellow flowers with a heavy texture. Nice foliage.

***M. 'Hawk'*** *campbellii* x *sargentiana* var. *robusta* Flowers rose red similar to *campbellii* var. *mollicomata* 'Lanarth'.

***M. 'Heaven Scent'*** *liliiflora* 'Nigra' x *veitchii* Dark rose tepals. One of the best Gresham hybrids. flowers frost tolerant.

***M. 'Janaki Amal'*** A hardy tetraploid clone of *kobus*. with broad white tepals.

***M. 'Leda'*** *M. Pegasus* x *M. campbellii* 'Alba' A chance seedling from *Pegasus* probably pollinated by *campbellii* Alba, at Chyverton in U.K. Flowers at an early age. Formerly named 'White Lips'

***M. 'Limelight'*** *M. acuminata* ssp. *subcordata* x *M. 'Big Pink'* (Japanese Form) Long greenish yellow to chartreuse pointed, tulip shaped flower buds. Vigorous multi-stemmed tree. One of the best new magnolias.

***M. 'Lucy Carlson'*** Leonard Messel' x *salicifolia* Upright growing little tree with small leaves. Flowers quite deep pure pink in bud and gradually lighter in color as the buds expand, becoming a mixture

***M. 'Olivia'*** 'Miss Honeybee' x 'Gold Crown'. Sister seedling of 'Daphne' and is more fastigiate with bigger flowers. A very good yellow.

***M. 'Princess Margaret'*** *M. campbellii* 'Alba' x *M. sargentiana* var. *robusta* Tepals rose coloured outside, cream coloured inside

***M. 'Pristine'*** *M. denudata* x *M. stellata* 'Waterlily' Flowers a superb white. Like *denudata* but has more tepals. Small tree, fast growing.

***M. 'Ruth'*** *M. campbellii* 'Lanarth' x *M. liliiflora* . Large 'Lanarth' like flowers It has a much longer flowering season than *M. 'Lanarth'* Large cup shaped rich deep rosy purple flowers.

***M. sieboldii* x *grandiflora*** Floriferous. The flowers are similar to *M. grandiflora*, but have orange/red stamens. The plant remains evergreen and has rust colored indumentum.

***M. 'Snowgoose'*** *veitchii* x soulangeana Pure white flowers

***M. 'Star Wars'*** *campbellii* x *liliiflora* Fast growing *campbellii*-like flowers. Bright pink. Tepals are similar to *liliiflora* in colour. Strong growing.

**M. Sunspire** . 'Woodsmen' x M. 'Elizabeth' Very upright small growing with large deep yellow flowers which come late after the frosts. 2-5m. Z6.

**M. 'Tranquility'** An elegant magnolia with stunning fragrant white cup-shaped flowers with buttery yellow overtones and rose eyes. Matures to a large rounded shrub, effective as a solitary specimen in the garden

**M.x wieseneri** (sieboldii x hypoleuca) small shrubby trees to 10' with 6" creamy white flowers Z6 or warm Z5

**M. 'Wada's Memory'** kobus x salicifolia. Free flowering, with 6 very large pure white tepals. The tepals droops, which gives the plant a unique appearance. It is an upright tree with large fragrant white flowers and willow-like foliage. Highly regarded

**M. x thompsoniana'** virginiana x tripetala Semi evergreen magnolia, with leaves similar to virginiana. Large virginiana flowers with some fragrance. Shrub with dense twisted growth.

**M. 'Wharton's Pegasus'** Flowers candle-like, white with pink base 8' in 10 yrs & 20' to 30' at maturity. Selected by Peter Wharton. A beautiful tree at the entrance to the UBC Botanical Garden. Z5

**All Plants in 5 Gal Containers Price ea. \$67.00, +tax, payable in advance when order is confirmed.**



Jacq and Norma



Heather won this HUGE pot of greenery

## 2015 Christmas Celebration



Puzzling—for our dinner





www.victoriarhodo.ca

## 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**  
 Plant sale at Marquardt's  
April 30, 2016


 Truss show, Mary Winspear  
May 6, 2016

**Summer Picnic**  
 See May Newsletter for  
details on location and time

January							February							March						
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						 Sale														
SUMMER BREAK																				
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 **ARS Convention**  
Williamsburg, Virginia  
April 20-24, 2016

# Upcoming Events

2016	Event	Place	Fee
			
Jan 11 7:30	General Meeting	Garth Homer Cen- tre	
Jan 18 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting	TBA call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	
Feb 1 7:30	Rhodo Panel Hot topics on rhodos – very popular!	Garth Homer Cen- tre	
Feb 15 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting	TBA Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	
Mar 14 7:30	Gardening with Rainwater: rain gardens & managing rainwater	Garth Homer Cen- tre	
Mar 21 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting	TBA Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	
Apr 11 7:30	Gordon MacKay The Two Georges: Plant Introductions of George For- rest & George Sheriff	Garth Homer Cen- tre	
Apr 18 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting	TBA call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	
May 9 7:30	Members' Truss Show Bring your trusses	Garth Homer Cen- tre	
May 16 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting	TBA call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	
Jun 13 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting	TBA call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	
Jun 26 NOON	Sunday BBQ Location: TBA	TBA	