



# The Victoria Rhododendron Society

## Newsletter

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

June 2016

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Thirty-Sixth Year of Publication

<http://victoriarhodo.ca>

### JUNE POTLUCK PICNIC

**12 P.M. SUNDAY, JUNE 26, 2016**

**At Tony and Carolyn Marquardt's Farm  
4640 Cordova Bay Rd**

#### POTLUCK PICNIC JUNE 26

The picnic lunch will be held at **noon** at the Marquardt's Farm at 4640 Cordova Bay Road. Parking will be at the bottom barn area. For convenience, some guests, supplies and items may be dropped off at the house, but please park in the designated area.

Please bring a wrapped savory, salad or dessert with labels of contents, such as eggs, dairy, nuts or gluten for those with allergies.

Grilled salmon lunch will be served about **1 p.m.**

Fruit punch, tea and coffee will be provided.

Remember to

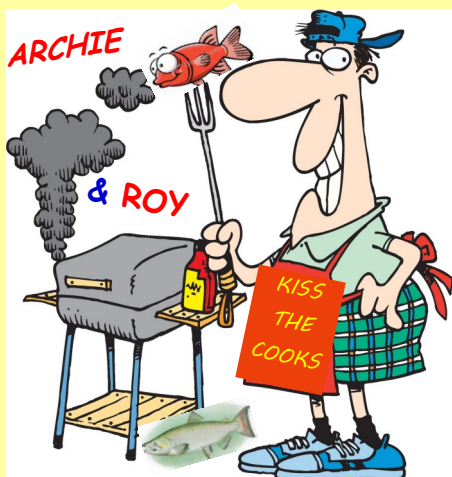
bring your own  
cutlery, plates,  
cups and  
chairs.

Members:

A-M

Savory

N-Z Sweet



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#### Editor's Notes

by Theresa McMillan

The four T's evening on May 9 was unlike any show the Victoria Rhododendron Society has ever had. First, many trusses (flowers) of rhododendrons were brought in by the members and placed in several brightly coloured bottles instead of our traditional ginger beer green bottles.

There were the usual questions about the proper classification (species? hybrids?) and correct placement for the various trophies, and then a rainbow of vases and flowers were put out on

(Continued on page 2)

## VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY BOARD

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several tables to be judged.

But instead of a few expert judges chosen from Victoria's garden community, this year the judging was done by the members of VRS who attended the meeting. The meeting was well attended so there were many and many trusses to choose from.

It was a lot more difficult to choose the best entry in each category than we thought it would be. But finally the choices were made, the beads were in the appropriate cups, then counted by the VRS executive so that the winning entry could be seen for each group.

*(Continued on page 7)*



## NOTES FROM THE BOARD

by Lois Blackmore

The gross total of sales for our plant sale on April 30 was in excess of \$4500. This was the first time that the VRS sold only plants from the propagating group.

The Mary Winspear Centre Legacy Garden is proceeding quickly with many donations from club members. Due to the Sunday gatherings, most plants are in the ground and are waiting for the installation of a watering system.

The truss show at the Mary Winspear Centre was a huge success, overflowing with colorful trusses in the area where the meals were served at the convention. Many members took the time and effort to create a beautiful display that was well received. It was noted that next year, the names of each truss would be a welcome addition. Suggested tentative dates for next year would be April 15 at the MWC for the show and the Rhodo Plant Sale on April 22, 2017 at a yet to be determined location.

The move to have our meetings at the HCP was updated and the contract reviewed before becoming official. Meeting dates will be September 5, October 3, November 7, December 5, January 2, February 6, March 6, April 3 and May 1. The cost per meeting is \$150.

The competitive truss show was well received by our members. As this was the first time this for-



mat was used, we learned some things along the way. Adding names to the trusses and creating categories to simplify the voting process will be features of next year's show.

The open gardens were once again on the agenda of our club. Garden owners and visitors received them as a welcome addition to club activities.

The picnic will be held at the Marquardt Farm on Sunday, June 26 AT 12 noon. For further information, please see page 1.



## Mary Winspear Legacy Garden Planting







## Rhodo Plant Sale





## Rhodo Show at the Mary Winspear Centre





# Members' Truss Show at the Garth Homer Center





# Members' Truss Show Winners



**Ian Back**



**Ken and Madeleine Webb**



**Ian Duncan and Anne Allen**



**Bill and Betty Gordon**

*(Continued from page 2)*

The final stage was for Best in Show and People's Choice trophies, again difficult because of all the beauty surrounding us. I took pictures of winners, their entries and the trophies, and all of us went to get our reward of tea or coffee and Timbit doughnuts from Tim Horton's.

And several trophies went home with their new owners and will no longer be part of the judging in future shows. Traditions change.

In September's Newsletter, there will be a complete list of trophies, winning trusses or plants and the names of the winners.



**Ian Duncan and Anne Allen**



# Members' Truss Show Winners



**Norma Senn**



**Ian Duncan and Anne Allen**



**Ian Duncan and Anne Allen**



**Lois Blackmore**



# New Magnolia Hybrid

Harvey's hybrids

by Joe Harvey

This story starts at the US National Arboretum, DC, in 1955, when two hybridisers, Francis de Vos and William Kosar, devised a breeding programme to produce compact magnolia hybrids more in keeping with the scale of suburban gardens than the tall plants then available.



**Magnolia stellata**

photo by Myrabella / Wikimedia Commons / CC-

They crossed the dwarf, star magnolia, *M. stellata*, with the deep purple lily-flowered magnolia *M. liliiflora*.

In 1965 eight of their hybrids were named and released to the trade. These eight are affectionately named the Little Girl hybrids since the names were chosen from the wives, daughters and assistants of de Vos and Kosar.

All eight hybrids flower in spring before the leaves expand, some slightly earlier than others. The overlapping flowering sequence is 'Ann', 'Betty', 'Judy', 'Randi', 'Rickie', 'Susan', 'June', and 'Pinkie'. Eight were too many for nurseries to stock and 'Susan', the deepest pink, is the one usually offered.

The Girls are excellent garden shrubs, reaching about 15 ft. over many years but eminently printable. They are less promoted than they deserve.

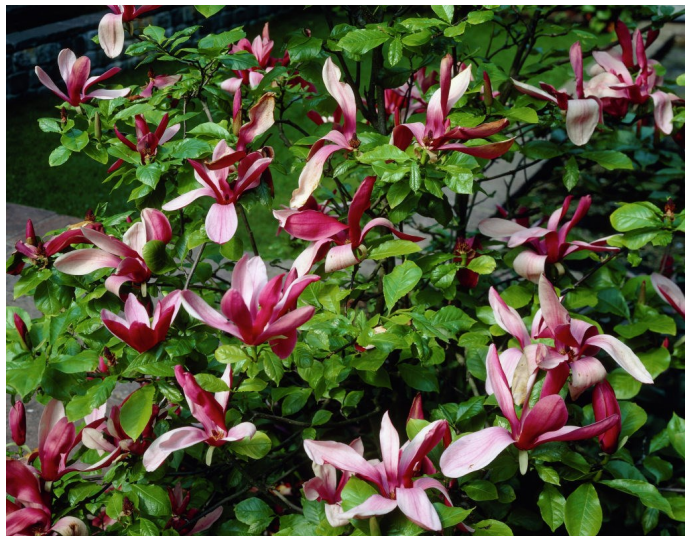


**Magnolia Susan**

by [Sándor](#) from Deventer, The Netherlands

From my point of view of plant breeder they are of no interest because they are completely sterile, both pollen and seed.

The sterility stems from the chromosome imbalance between the two parents, the hybrids are triploids with three sets of chromosomes. This type of sterility can be counteracted by doubling the chromosome number.



**M. liliiflora**

courtesy of 99roots.com

In the 1980's, when I lived in Halifax, I recreated the initial type of cross but using 'Leonard Messel', the pink star magnolia, as my pollen donor. 'Leonard Messel' is commonly used in landscaping around Victoria. The *liliiflora* seed parent be-



longed to a neighbour.

Seedlings were treated with colchicine and about a dozen plants eventually survived. Colchicine is an alkaloid derived from the autumn crocus *Colchicum*; it doubles the chromosome number of plant cells.



**Colchicum crocus**  
courtesy of thepoisongarden.co.uk

Two seedlings accompanied me on the 5-day dash from Halifax to Sooke in 1990; one eventually died. The survivor flowered after a few years and after about ten years produced seed, thus proving the original premise.

Propagated specimens were donated to Finnerty Garden, Abkhazi Garden and Hatley Park to test their performance.

At Finnerty I mentioned that a sunny site was needed. At the time, over 15 years ago, some grand firs had been removed from behind the chapel and the magnolia was planted in the sunny gap. Over a few years the canopy gap closed; the plant is not happy, and has wide-spreading rangy branches bearing scattered flowers.

The Abkhazi specimen was placed at the edge of the lower lawn in a sunny site and has been strictly pruned. It is now about 8 ft. high. It flowers abundantly every spring, starting with the buds showing deep purple in mid-March in mild years and continuing through April. There are sporadic later flowers through the summer, a characteristic it inherits from the *liliiflora* parent.

At Hatley the site is on the south-facing bank below the tennis courts. There is shelter from winds, the soil is rich and never dries out since the springs which feed the streams in the Japanese

garden arise nearby.

These growth conditions at Hatley turned out to be exceptionally favourable and the plant, the youngest of the three, must be over 15 ft. tall. It is growing rapidly, with some branches putting on 4 ft. in a year. This shocked me. It is multi-stemmed. I prefer to keep magnolias to a single trunk but left alone they shoot from the base.

The flowers are slightly larger than the Little Girl group; the cup-shaped flowers are a deep purple on the outside with the inside a pale pink. The Hatley plant flowers about two weeks after the Abkhazi one.

I think this hybrid has a commercial future and will register it with the Magnolia Society International.



**M. Bella Bella**  
Royal Roads Garden  
March 2016

The name I propose is 'Bella Bella'. This is Italian for 'very beautiful', the repeat name signifies the chromosome doubling, and Bella Bella is an ancient settlement off the British Columbia north coast.





# Drought Advice – Part II

## *Lessons Gleaned from Experience*

by Linda Derkach

With 60 collective years of experience, Al Murray and Terry Richmond offer home-grown and time-tested advice on how to keep rhododendrons alive and conserve water.

### **Planting**

Many of us have learned over time the hard way that rhododendrons need moist, well-drained soil. They don't like to dry out and they can't bear to be water-logged if we want them to survive. For some time, we have been told to plant our rhododendrons high. But now Alan says, "I don't even dig holes anymore. I place the plant on the ground and pile the soil mixture around and mound up. Be sure that you have teased the fibrous roots apart or even slit the bottom of the roots so that they have a chance to spread out and flourish. Plants in one gallon pots and smaller pots should be planted in the fall. It is very risky to plant in hot weather even with lots of water.

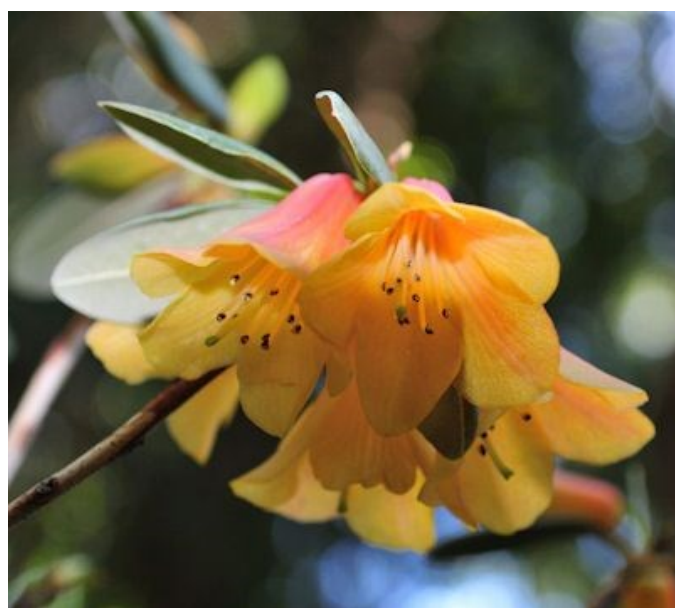
### **Choosing the Best Site for Your Rhododendrons**

Not all rhododendrons are the same. So do some research so that you know the best planting site. For instance, R. 'Conroy' is quite susceptible to mildew so give it good air circulation in dappled shade. Rhododendron 'Ginny Gee' with its tiny leaves can take a lot of sun, while R. 'Cinnamon Bear' will burn in full sun. The williamsianum crosses and the East Coast hybrids are good in sun as well.

### **Pruning**

Generally, hard pruning of a whole shrub is not necessary or desirable. But if you need to do some hard pruning, the best time is in January. You can cut each branch down to one or two nodes. The reason you need to do this so early in

the year is that it will take the nodes about four months to realize they have to grow and produce new foliage that will withstand the cold winter weather. They have probably been sitting there inactive and twiddling their thumbs for ten or twenty years. Hard pruning may be needed if your plant has become tall and leggy with blossoms so high you can't see them any more. Pruning in January will result in no blooms for the current year. If you need to cut one or two branches back a little, doing so immediately after blooming is okay. Rhododendron 'Conroy' needs good air circulation to fend off mildew and some dappled shade to perform at its best – and produce these exquisite orange lax trusses.



**R. Conroy**

**Photo by Susan Lightburn**

### **Fertilizing**

There are many theories on if and when to fertilize rhododendrons. Some folks never fertilize. Some use organic fertilizer while others use anything off the shelf. Alan's routine for fertilizing is Epsom salts on March 1 and organic fertilizer on March 16 and he uses much less fertilizer than he used to use. Terry likes a low nitrogen fertilizer or the Borden's mix for slow growth. Fertilize at the end of March with organic plus Epsom salts. Make sure the fertilizer you use has a low nitrogen number. You want thick and lush foliage going in to summer, not weak, fast growth that will be damaged by winter cold.





# Photography Evening

## November 7, 2016

### 1. Digital Entries

Email your digital photos to Calvin at:

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

Calvin will prepare a PowerPoint presentation with all entries.

### 2. Email instructions

On the subject line, please enter the category the photo is intended for and the name of the rhododendron or plant or scene.

### 3. Categories

1. Single Rhododendron Truss
2. Whole Rhododendron Plant
3. Foliage Rhododendron
4. Companion Plant
5. Garden Scene
6. Creative/Artistic photos altered by technology

**NOTE: Please enter only two photos per category.**  
**Deadline for digital photos is November 1, 2016**



## Upcoming Events

| 2016           | Event  | Place   | Fee |
|----------------|--|---|-----|
| Jun 13<br>7:30 | Propagation Group Meeting<br>call Ken Webb 250-744-1745  | TBA   |     |
| Jun 26<br>NOON | Sunday Potluck Picnic and BBQ<br>Location: Carolyn & Tony Marquardt  | 4640 Cordova Bay Rd   |     |
| Sep 5<br>7:30  | General Meeting-members are invited to tour the gardens at <b>6 pm</b> before the meeting.<br>The Couvelier Pavilion   | Gardens at HCP<br>505 Quayle Road   |     |
| Sep 19<br>7:30 | Propagation Group Meeting<br>call Ken Webb 250-744-1745  | TBA   |     |
| Oct 3<br>7:30  | General Meeting<br>The Couvelier Pavilion  | Gardens at HCP<br>505 Quayle Road   |     |
| Nov 1          | Photos Due<br>Final Day to submit photos for Photography Night at<br><div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">The November 7 General Meeting</div> |  |     |
| Nov 7<br>7:30  | General Meeting - Photography Night<br>The Couvelier Pavilion  | Gardens at HCP<br>505 Quayle Road   |     |
| Nov 21<br>7:30 | Propagation Group Meeting<br>call Ken Webb 250-744-1745  | TBA   |     |
| Dec 5<br>6:30  | Potluck Dinner<br>The Couvelier Pavilion   | Gardens at HCP<br>505 Quayle Road   |     |
| <b>2017</b>    |  |   |     |
| Jan 2<br>7:30  | General Meeting<br>The Couvelier Pavilion  | Gardens at HCP<br>505 Quayle Road   |     |
| Feb 6<br>7:30  | General Meeting<br>The Couvelier Pavilion  | Gardens at HCP<br>505 Quayle Road   |     |
| Mar 6<br>7:30  | General Meeting<br>The Couvelier Pavilion  | Gardens at HCP<br>505 Quayle Road   |     |
| Apr 3<br>7:30  | General Meeting<br>The Couvelier Pavilion  | Gardens at HCP<br>505 Quayle Road   |     |
| May 1<br>7:30  | General Meeting<br>The Couvelier Pavilion  | Gardens at HCP<br>505 Quayle Road   |     |
| Jun<br>Noon    | Sunday BBQ<br>Location:  | TBA   |     |
| Sept 4<br>7:30 | General Meeting<br>The Couvelier Pavilion  | Gardens at HCP<br>505 Quayle Road   |     |
| Oct 2<br>7:30  | General Meeting<br>The Couvelier Pavilion  | Gardens at HCP<br>505 Quayle Road   |     |
| Nov 6<br>7:30  | General Meeting - Photography Night<br>The Couvelier Pavilion  | Gardens at HCP<br>505 Quayle Road   |     |
| Dec 4<br>6:30  | Potluck Dinner<br>The Couvelier Pavilion   | Gardens at HCP<br>505 Quayle Road   |     |





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## VRS 2016 Calendar

### Key to the Symbols

#### General Meetings

Gardens at HCP  
505 Quayle Road  
Victoria BC V9E 2L7

#### Propagation Group Meetings

(contact Ken Webb  
to be added to the email list)

#### Activities

Plant sale at Marquardt's  
April 30, 2016

Truss show, Mary Winspear  
May 7, 2016

#### Summer Picnic

See June Newsletter for  
details on location and time



Conflicting Statutory Holiday

| 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   |
|       |    |    |    |    |    | Sale |

| 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 |
|      | 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 |    |    |    |



#### ARS Convention

Williamsburg, Virginia  
April 20-24, 2016

| 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 |

#### NOTE

In the new venue, meeting  
times are not changed by  
conflicting Statutory Holidays