



The Victoria Rhododendron Society

Newsletter

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May 2016

tkmcmillan@telus.net

Thirty-Sixth Year of Publication

<http://victoriarhodo.ca>

Doors Open 7:00

MEETING 7:30 MONDAY, May 9, 2016

GARTH HOMER CENTRE

813 DARWIN AVENUE, VICTORIA, B. C.

**Members' Rhododendron Flower Show
Four Ts Evening**

THE FOUR 'Ts' EVENING

.... a spring soiree

This is information you will require for our spring get together...a new way of doing things:

Vases will be filled with water on the category tables for your trusses

All trusses must be in place by 7:30 pm.

Voting finished by 8:10 pm.

Extra water-filled vases will be on a table by the door if needed

Look for the correct table to enter your trusses; ask others for help if need be

Each person attending will be given the correct number of beads for voting, two wooden blocks...1 for your favorite truss and 1 for best in show included

Best in show vote and high aggregate take place **AFTER** the winners of each category are declared

After voting get tea or coffee and Tim Bits... your reward for your judging abilities

Winners will be announced and trophies awarded and taken home

Please take trusses home...WITHOUT THE VASE

See Entry Category descriptions on Page 3

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Editor's Notes

Review of Gordon MacKay's talk on the Two Georges, two plant hunters in the far east.

by Theresa McMillan

Gordon MacKay, aided by beautiful slides of plant discoveries, described the work of George Sherriff (1898-1967) and George Forrest (1873-1932).

Some of the special plants were named after their discoverers, for example meconopsis sher-

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riffii, pink with red stamens, or liliu sherriffiae, a deep red trumpet lily, featured on some of the stamps in Bhutan. There is rhododendron forrestii, with red flowers and a crawling habit and primula forrestii, a fine yellow primula seen in Yunnan.

Other plants such as different types of primulas, lilies, pierises, and gentians set the screen aglow.

Many a gorgeous plant was followed by a sigh that many a propagator utters, "I managed to kill it." This is especially common with seeds from al-pines, often the only way to get the plant at all.

Visit Gordon's Alba Plants nursery in Cowichan to find some of these special plants.



Notes from the Board

At our April Board Meeting:

The minutes and the treasurer's report were adopted as read.

We have added one new member this month... welcome David Gustavson

The speaker's committee is looking for suggestions from our group. If you know of speakers our group may enjoy, please see Norma or Lois.

The Mary Winspear Centre Legacy Garden will be started on Sunday, May 1st. Calvin is coordinating this event.

Truss show at Mary Winspear Centre May 6-8. Trusses to be brought between 3 and 7 pm.

(Continued on page 3)

Notes from the Board - cont'd

Norm Todd's book is available for the serious and lighter side to rhodos.

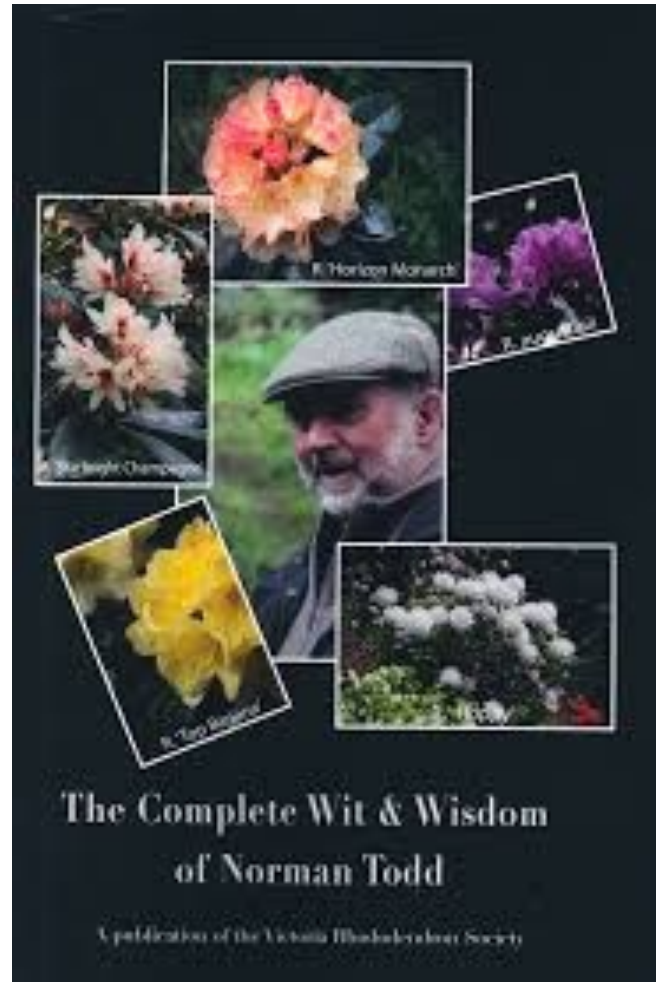
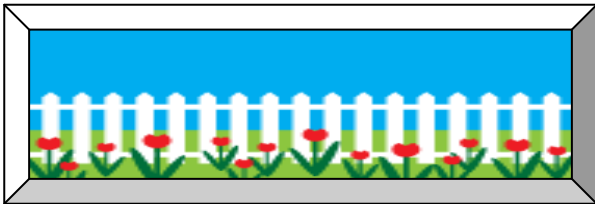
on Friday, May 6. Carrie, Linda, Madeleine and Lois responsible for set up and take down
Open Gardens: Ian has arranged several garden tours for our group. **Details of garden tours are on page 4.**

The competitive Truss Show, Garth Homer Centre on May 9. The committee responsible includes Carrie George, Linda Gilmore, Sue Lindquist and Lois Blackmore. **Details of competitive truss show on page 8.**

Picnic June 26, 2016 at the Marquardt Farm, 4640 Cordova Bay Road, starting at noon. Set up at 11 am. More information to follow.

Each chapter in District 1 received \$2622.53 for its contribution in helping with the Convention of 2015.

Reminder: The **deadline** for submissions for the June Newsletter will be May 20". There will be no July & August Newsletters.



Entry Categories

Best Vancouver Island Hybrid _____	hybridized by a Vancouver Island hybridizer, registered or not registered
Best Fragrant Rhododendron _____	single, spray or container plant
Best Lepidote in Container _____	a lepidote has scales on the underside of the leaf
Best Companion Plant _____	a plant that works well with rhododendrons
Best Species Truss or Spray _____	a species rhododendron that is not a single truss
Best Hybrid - the best hybrid _____	no restriction where hybridized
Novice Trophy _____	for those who have never won a trophy
Best Northwest Hybrid _____	a rhododendron hybridized in BC. WA. or
High Aggregate _____	the greatest number of points in total of entries
Best in Show _____	as determined by our members voting

Victoria Rhododendron Society

Members' Open Gardens - April & May 2016

We are reintroducing our 'Members' Open Garden Tours' after an absence of several years. This presents a prime opportunity to view the gardens of your fellow club members. The following gardens are during the months of April and May:

Sunday April 24 1 pm to 4 pm

- * Johanna and Moe Massa 5024 Glinz Lake Rd., Sooke
On your way towards Sooke, not far past Gillespie Rd, look for the Y-CampThunderbird sign.
A woodland garden of many acres with thousands of Rhodos.

Thursday April 28 5 pm to 8 pm/dusk

Two gardens on tour this evening.

- * Calvin and Jeannie Parsons 937 Rankin Rd. Esquimalt
The garden overlooks the Gorge waterway. Due to the steepness of the hillside this is not appropriate for wheelchairs or walkers.
- * Bill and Theresa McMillan 562 Hallsor Drive Colwood
A standard residential sized lot full of choice everything.

Sunday May 01 1 pm to 4 pm

- * Agnes and David Lynn 3913 Woodhaven Terrace , 10 Mile Point, Saanich

Thursday May 05 5 pm to 8 pm/dusk

Two gardens on tour this evening

- * David Gustavson 2970 Rutland Rd., Uplands, Oak Bay
- * Dean Goard 2175 Kendal Ave., Oak Bay

Wednesday May 11 5 pm to 8 pm/dusk (note: Wednesday, not the usual Thursday)

Two gardens on tour tonight, our final evening of tours this year.

- * Carmen Varcoe 5440 Old west Saanich Rd. Saanich
- * Ann and Tom Widdowson 4635 West Saanich Rd., Saanich

If you would like to offer your garden to be 'On Tour' for our members next year in March, April, May 2017, please contact Ian Duncan, 250-479-0820 or duncani@telus.net .

Open Gardens can be either a Thursday afternoon/evening or a Sunday 1- 4

Xeriscaping with Rhododendrons

(reprinted from ~ 2003)

by M.J. Harvey

It is unfortunate that Rhododendrons in Victoria have come to be associated with intensive watering. This is partly due to the enterprise of our local landscapers and equipment suppliers. Imaginary conversation: Gardener, "Does my garden need an automated system?" Landscaper, "It is the best thing you could possibly have; we will install one next week." There is a wise saying, never ask a barber whether you need a haircut. The answer is always yes.

The above was going on when many western cities in the USA were running short of water and were actively promoting xeriscaping. They wanted to persuade homeowners to give up their water-sucking lawns and flower beds and install rock-mulch and drought-resistant plants. The case for Xeriscaping never got a fair hearing in Victoria – no one could see a profit in it.

In the wild, Rhododendron species grow in a wide range of climatic conditions. The great centre of species diversity in the Himalayas has a monsoonal climate where rain sheets down in the summer, but with cooler dryer winters. Away from this region there are fewer Rhododendron species but they are adapted to various climates most with a greater or lesser degree of summer drought. A local example here on Vancouver Island is *R. macrophyllum*, distributed from BC to CA, perfectly adapted to survive a long summer drought. (I have found it difficult to grow. Don't water young plants and they die, water them too much and they die).

By happenstance I conducted a long-term experiment on drought resistance in Rhododendron hybrids. I had no intention of doing such a thing; it just happened. Let me explain what happened.

When I came to Victoria, actually Sooke, in 1990 I brought many hundreds of seedlings resulting from hybrids I had made during the previous few years in Nova Scotia. I planted out these seedlings in rows in a large, flat field with the intention of eventually picking out the best.

For the next few years I would put sprinklers on the field during dry spells but as the seed-ling area grew larger and pressure from other work (on grasses) mounted I stopped watering, allowing the exposed field to dry out completely in the summer.

The soil is a deep fine sand, low in clay components and with little water-storage capacity. In some summers with only a few millimeters of rain June to September the capacity of the plants to survive drought in full sun was severely tested.

The results? Most of my seedlings died. Considering the magnitude of the water stress and years of sheer neglect this was not surprising. What is interesting is what survived. Looking at the parentage of the remaining plants it became apparent that the nature of their parental genes had a strong influence on which survived.

The survivors:

smirnowii X *pachysanthum*

pseudochrysanthum X *yakushmanum*

maximum X *ungernii*

N.B. I had not used *R. macrophyllum* in my crosses but I suspect that its hybrids would have been among the survivors had I done so.



R. smirnowii

Photo by Garth Wedemire

What is interesting about the above list is where the parents come from and the climates in which they grow. Not one is from the monsoonal centre of Rhododendron diversity. They are all from peripheral regions with some degree of summer drought.

R. smirnowii and *ungernii* are both from the slopes of the southern Caucasus Mountains and



R. pachysanthum

Photo by Jens Birck

both were discovered in 1885 by Baron Franz Ungern-Sternberg (1808-1885), a Baltic-German botanist and physician. One of the species was named for the Baron and one for a friend. I might mention that Linda and I have visited the Georgian Republic (when it was part of the USSR) and seen the sub-storey of *R. ungernii* in the foothills



R. ungernii

Photo by Everard Daniel

growing under an open canopy of magnificent Carpathian beech with towering straight trunks. The southern Caucasus have a fairly mild climate with some summer drought periods.

R. pachysanthum and *pseudochrysanthum* are both from Taiwan, not the frost-free sub-tropical margins of the island but at certain zones in the



R. pseudochrysanthum

Photo by Jens Birck

mountains where it can freeze in winter and yet get quite warm and dry in the summer. *R. yakushimanum* is not too far away on the island of Yakushima at the southern tip of the Japanese chain. It grows exposed to sun and wind on the mountain-top and is part of the Japanese complex of species.

The remaining species, maximum, is from yet another continent. It occurs along the Appalachians in eastern USA where it can get summer storm rain but otherwise where it can get stinking hot and dry as I have experienced. The particular cultivar used to make the hybrid was the Mt Mitchell red-leaved form although this does not show in the offspring, or not yet.

So, in summary, all the surviving hybrids in the field have parents with some degree of natural drought resistance. This seems to have combined in various ways to produce exceptionally drought-tolerant offspring. As I said earlier it was not my intention to research drought tolerance but the results are so striking that I thought it worth bringing to your attention.



Remembering

In March two people, Joan South and Bill Kempster passed away. They were important to the early success of the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific.

Joan loved plants and took delight in sharing her gardening knowledge with its students.

Bill was a noted long time volunteer in Victoria's garden world. Among his many interests were dahlias. At the new Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, he installed a dahlia garden. It soon became the Victoria Dahlia Trial Garden, a sanctioned seedling garden of the American Dahlia Society.



Lynn Bissell

VicRS has lost an inspirational member with the passing of Lynn Bissell, who courageously battled cancer for several years. Lynn was a regular and dependable Wednesday volunteer at the HCP Glendale Rhododendron Garden. She would often ride her bike from the UVic area to Glendale. Lynn was an eager learner with lots of questions regarding care of rhodos and the best growing conditions. She was always thinking of ways to keep the Earth healthy. Lynn passionately loved her children, grandchildren and friends. We will miss Lynn and her enthusiastic nature.

THE VRS RHODODENDRON FLOWER SHOW EXTRAVAGANZA 2016

Mary Winspear Centre Show—May 7—8

We are having a somewhat different format this year for our truss (rhodo flower) shows. As the costs keep rising for churches and malls, we are taking advantage of free space at the Mary Winspear Center for our public showing of trusses. This will happen on Friday, May 6 to Sunday, May 8. A committee has been organized for setting up and dismantling the truss show. The responsibility of our club members is to bring their trusses (as many as you like) to the Center on Friday, May 6 from 3 to 7 pm. Beautiful new and colorful vases will be already filled with water and members can choose which vases in which to display their trusses. There are several events scheduled at the center on the Mother's Day weekend, and we believe this is a good alternative to the mall displays. We hope to have a good number of trusses on display as this event satisfies the goal of the ARS, "...to promote and educate about the genus rhododendron....".

Members' Show...A Four T's Evening...Trusses, Tallies, Tea, Timbits- May 9

A second part of this extravaganza is at our regular May meeting on Monday, **May 9**. There will be several categories from previous years into which members can enter their trusses. Each category will have a separate table. There will be members there to help some who do not know in which categories to enter their trusses. Members will be able to choose their prepared vase filled with water in which to enter their trusses. Once all entries have been placed, the members of our club will be asked to vote on which truss they believe is best suited in each category. The winners for each category will be able to take home their trophy and their trusses.

Each member or guest will receive a bag with the correct number of beads for each category. As well, two separate and distinct beads for People's Choice and Best in Show are included.

Members may bring up to 3 trusses per category (see the bottom of page 8 for list of categories). Trophies will be awarded to the members whose truss receives the most number of votes.

After you have finished voting, please enjoy a social evening with friends while partaking of a Canadian tradition...Tim Horton's Timbits.

Categories

Best Vancouver Island hybrid
Best fragrant rhododendron
Best lepidote in container
Best companion plant
Best species truss or spray

Best hybrid
Novice Trophy
Best Northwest hybrid
High aggregate
Best in show

Category descriptions on [page 3](#).

Drought Advice – Part I

Lessons Gleaned from Experience
(reprinted from Rhodovine December 2015)

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.

Here are some jewels I learned from this venerable duo:

In an established garden.....

- If possible, remove larger trees that use too much water
- Plant more deciduous trees such as maples and magnolias that will provide shade and coolness in the summer (read hot and dry) and then drop their leaves to use as a mulch and allow light in during winter
- Avoid aspen, walnut and willow trees (unless you have a stream).
- Cedar trees are a no-no.
- Create a good growing medium for your rhododendrons by adding compost, bark fines, large bark, loam and manure.
- Avoid sandy soil –it drains too quickly. According to Al, the purples are fairly drought resistant. This is borne out by the Rhododendron Catawbiense Boursault which is a large, mature shrub that self-mulches and shades its own roots. It rarely if ever receives any supplemental water –winter or summer –drought or no.

Mulch –Mulch - Mulch

- Allow your trees and shrubs to self-mulch; let the leaves fall to provide winter protection and prevent loss of moisture from the soil; don't be too tidy –good for the worms and birds too!
- Supplement self-mulching with fir bark, sea soil
- 5" to 6" of mulch is best –do it now
- Keep mulch away from the stem or trunk. Rhododendron 'Linda' is a williamsianum hybrid, known for tolerating full sun. In fact, this specimen has thrived in a large pot in lots of sun for many years and produces more than 200 blooms in late April, making the foliage

difficult to see!

Watering

- Hand watering is best for a small garden; then your plants get just the water they need and are being monitored all the time
- To prevent loss of water through evaporation, watering in the early morning is best or late day after the heat and sun of the day has gone. Rhododendron April Glow is another sun tolerant williamsianum cross with great foliage.



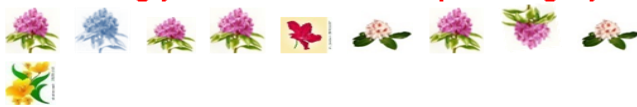



Rhododendron Linda



**Magnolia Bella Bella
March 2016
Royal Roads Garden**

Upcoming Events

2016	Event	Place	Fee
Apr 21- May 11	Open Garden Tours Some Members have opened their gardens for viewing. See Page 4 of this VRS May Newsletter for details.	Various Gardens	N/A
Apr 30 10-2	Rhodo Plant Sale - at the Marquardt's Unique and rare find rhododendrons	4640 Cordova Bay Rd	
Apr 30 10-12	Evelyn Weesjes' Plant Sale Wide selection of shrubs, rhododendrons and ferns	10629 Derrick Rd	
May 1 10-2	First Planting at Mary Winspear Centre Volunteers Needed - Bring shovels, rakes, etc.	Mary Winspear Centre 2243 Beacon Ave W Sidney	
May 6-8	VRS Rhododendron Flower Show Mary Winspear Centre Members may bring as many trusses as you like May 6 between 4-7 pm for setup 	Mary Winspear Centre 2243 Beacon Ave W Sidney	
May 8 10-2	Second Planting at Mary Winspear Centre Volunteers Needed—Bring shovels, rakes, etc.	Mary Winspear Centre 2243 Beacon Ave W Sidney	
May 9 6:00	Members' Rhododendron Flower Show 6 PM at the General Meeting === Bring your trusses – max 3 per category === 	Garth Homer Centre 813 Darwin Ave	
May 15-18	<u>Canadian Botanical Association Annual Meeting</u> Contact: Patrick von Aderkas pvonader@uvic.ca	University of Victoria 3800 Finnerty Rd	Registration
May 16 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA	
May 22 9-12	Plant a Holics Sale at Abkhazi Gardens Wide Selection tropical, perennial, ferns etc.	1964 Fairfield Rd	
Jun 13 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA	
Jun 26 NOON	Sunday BBQ Location: Carolyn & Tony Marquardt	4640 Cordova Bay Rd	
Sep 12 7:30	General Meeting TBA	Garth Homer Centre 813 Darwin Ave	
Sep 19 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA	
Oct 3 7:30	General Meeting TBA	Garth Homer Centre 813 Darwin Ave	
Nov 1	Photos Due Final Day to submit photos for Photography Night at the November 14 General Meeting		
Nov 14 7:30	General Meeting - Photography Night	Garth Homer Centre 813 Darwin Ave	
Nov 21 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA	
Dec 12 6:30	Potluck Dinner	Garth Homer Centre 813 Darwin Ave	