



The Victoria Rhododendron Society *Newsletter*

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December 2017
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Thirty-Seventh Year of Publication
<http://victoriarhodo.ca>

Christmas Potluck Dinner starts at 5:30

MONDAY, December 4, 2017

Couvelier Pavilion at the HCP Gardens
505 Quayle Road, VICTORIA, B. C.



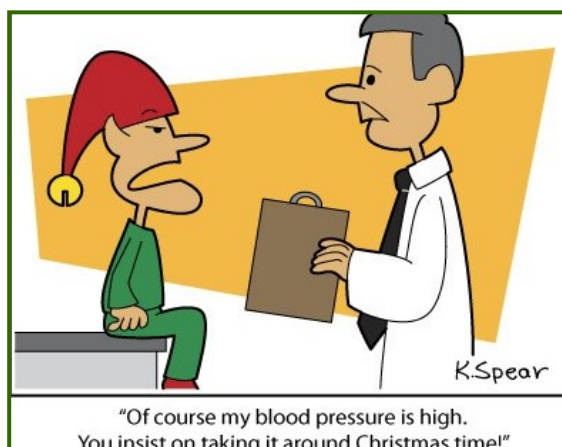
**You are Invited
Christmas Dinner
December 4 @ 5:30**

**Raffle and Donations are given to the
Food Bank**

page 7 for details

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Editor's Notes



by Theresa McMillan

From the Couvelier Pavilion, on an unseasonably cold November evening, Sean Rafferty took us on a trip to the Himalayas, especially to see the thousands of species rhododendrons that flourish there.

On a side trip before the Steve Hootman-led tour of Yunnan, Sean and his wife Brenda visited the famous limestone karst hills of Guilin. A glorious sunrise highlighted their strange shapes and very steep slopes.

Just as we have an invasive plant from China here, the ubiquitous Himalayan blackberry, noted for nasty thorns and tasty fruit, Canada and the United States have returned an invader to China, a low-lying mass of thorns, the Prickly Pear cactus or opuntia.

For rhodoholics who fuss over our garden rhododendrons, it was a real eye-opener to see what awful conditions species rhododendrons can survive in their native China. In fact, in the Himalayas, rhododendrons are the first plants to colonize freshly disturbed soils, such as road cuts.



Rhodo Mtn R. lapponica and phaeochrysum

Sean's pictures showed rhododendrons growing at incredible elevations, up to 14,000 feet, clinging to steep mountainsides, living in a thin layer of soil over outcrops or scree with water dripping down. Many rhododendrons and beautiful wildflowers grow on

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NOTES FROM THE BOARD MEETING FOR NOVEMBER 2017

by Lois Blackmore

The Victoria Rhododendron Society continues to be a well-funded and viable organization with monies available for immediate withdrawal as well as long-term investments. Over the many years from the 1989 convention, our club has maintained and added to our investments. We continue to be a very viable organization for a garden club.

The B. C. Societies Act is now under review. Linda and Bill will be reviewing the new regulations and our society will adapt its constitution to be in accordance with the new rules in accordance with the law.

The Victoria Rhododendron Society has donated \$1000 to the Community Action Fund in Nepal. This donation was in response to the devastating earthquake of 2015. Carol has been responsible for this quest and through contact with Ken Cox, we were able to donate the equivalent of 579.74 pounds sterling.

Our executive decided to forego the community truss display this year.

The HCP has put on hold its development of the VRS proposal for a new area until after the spring of 2018. At the HCP board meeting, they have come to realize that with the expansion of weddings and other large crowd events at the gardens, they need to expand the areas for parking. Until that decision has been made, we will not formally present our proposal for approval, although verbal agreement has been reached. Ian and Calvin will explore the grounds for a suitable location.

Ken presented an update on the spring convention in Europe. Currently there are 98 registrations for the German Convention: 37 for the Netherlands component; 54 for Denmark with a waiting list being taken; Westerstede 42 and Finland 37.

One idea that was discussed is to have a special speaker series in honor of Norm Todd. This would be a speaker from the gardening world who would come to Victoria and do a special presentation. We would open this meeting to other gardening clubs and they would be charged a fee for entry. This proposal will continue to be discussed over the next many months.

Our Christmas party will be held on Monday, December 4, starting at 5:30 pm. The club, thanks to cooks Ken, Carolyn and Carrie, will provide our usual selection of turkey and ham. Members whose last name begins with the letters A-M will bring a savory and members whose last name begins with N-Z will bring a dessert. Our raffle table will be up and running as usual, with all proceeds being donated to the Food Bank. In past years, these monies have ranged from \$400-\$600. As well, we accept non-perishable items for the food bank. These gestures have been very well received and appreciated by the in-take volunteers at the food bank. Thanks to Bill Gordon for taking on this task.





Rare Rhodos vandalized

Posted by: The Local Weekly November 1, 2017 in Breaking News, Front Page, News Leave a comment

A shocking case of vandalism was discovered Oct. 25 in Sechelt's Hidden Grove, where a patch of rare rhododendrons were torn up.

In 2005, loggers discovered a patch of native rhododendrons in the Community Forest, which turned out to be a distinct genetic variation of the Pacific rhododendron. It is otherwise found only outside of Nanaimo and near Manning Park. This is the most northerly stand in North America.

Four years ago, the Sechelt Groves Trailbuilders planted some tiny four-year-old plants raised from seed by Ron Knight of Caron Gardens in an effort to establish populations elsewhere on the Coast. They have been carefully tended ever since, especially during extended dry periods. They are very slow growing, reaching less than two feet (60cm) tall in eight years. Their energy has gone into creating an extensive root system to protect themselves from drought.

All that effort was lost in an instant when one of the patches was wantonly attacked by some idiot. They were yanked up by their stems and cast aside. The remaining root balls are slightly bigger than golf balls. A valiant effort is being made to save them, despite the poor odds.

For a community that claims to be environmentally aware and desires to preserve our natural world, it is hard to comprehend this vandalism. If anyone has any information on this vicious act, please contact the Sechelt Groves Society. (www.secheltgroves.com)





R. macrophyllum at Shawnigan Lake
photo by Bill McMillan

Plants As Precious Resources

by Theresa McMillan

When Dean Goard spoke to me about the vandalism of some of his grown-from-seed R. macrophyllum this fall, I was reminded of the loss of many special plants from parks, gardens and the wild.

Dean has been interested in the Pacific rhododendron or R. macrophyllum for years. They are plentiful in Washington State; in fact, they are the state flower. However, they are uncommon here. Dean is interested in extending their range.

In order to do this, he had gathered the tiny seeds from the Community Garden in Sechelt, a distinct genetic variation, cared for them so well that they grew first to have a few branches, then became small rather delicate shrubs. Dean and Ron Knight of Sechelt planted them a fair distance down an old road near Sechelt so that they would grow to a fine, pink flowering group. However, for unknown reasons, someone or some ones decided to yank the seedlings up by their roots, and leave them out to die.

Besides being victims of vandalism, plants are often stolen. A few years ago, a rare rhododendron that had been donated to the Finnerty Gardens at the University of Victoria was planted with its label. It was gone the next morning. One of the worst fears of the donor or the gardeners is that the plant would not be cared for properly and would die, seen only by the garden thief.

Very recently, some of the labeled rhododendrons we planted at Mary Winspear have been stolen.

Many gardens, because of the fear of theft, are not shown to the public or (even worse) members of garden clubs or visitors from Conventions. Sometimes, as in a public garden we saw in San Francisco, elaborate security measures (metal tags with computerized information on them) are in force. We have visited parks at U.B.C. or in Portland, Oregon or in San Francisco, California,



Isles of Scilly Wollemi Pine

where there are specimens of the rare "living fossil", the Wollemi pine, surrounded by jail-like steel bars. Ironically, a few years ago, at a famed but remote garden in Cornwall, England, the Tresco Abbey Garden in the Isles of Scilly, we saw a Wollemi pine standing free in a meadow.

Rare plants removed from the wild can be because of theft, or sheer ignorance. Years ago, when my sister and I and friends played in the forest around Florence Lake in Langford, we saw hundreds of little pink orchids, "fairy slippers".

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Calypso bulbosa

We picked a few for our mothers, but they drooped too fast. Then we used them to decorate our mossy fairy houses. We wondered why the little plants gradually stopped blooming. In fact, they disappeared. Little did we know that Calypso bulbosa's delicate root systems were destroyed by



Calypso bulbosa - Spring 08 Hatley Park forest

picking or we would have left them strictly alone!

You would think that alpine wildflowers, protected by heights, icy spring winds, very fussy growing conditions would be safe. Nevertheless, plant hunters can be anywhere. Most will find seeds or take cuttings but others are not so choosy. They dig them up and take them away.



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slopes that are little more than a mixture of broken rocks, sliding from slopes higher up. However, every situation has plenty of water and excellent drainage.

Species rhododendrons often vary remarkably in leaf form and flower colour. Whole slopes of rhododendrons like *R. augustinii* can have flowers of blue-mauve to white to pink. Leaves of many species can vary from long, narrow and curved to rounded and flat.

Pictures of a furious yak that had just kicked the guide's knee, ruined a camera and cell phone and was ready to take on anything else enlivened Sean's talk. Her calf was nearby.

There was a picture of Steve Hootman, quite ill yet clinging to the trunk of a large and valued rhododendron, trying to find a seedpod to take back to the Species Garden in Federal Way. He couldn't find any; such is the plant-hunter's lot.

The basic message: rhododendrons thrive where they have perfect drainage and abundant water.

[Click to go to next section](#)

Poinsettia

(Charles Woo)

**Poinsettia smiles in winter.
People know Christmas is nearer.
Yellow pistil with red leaves appear
In all greeting cards every year.**



Src: <http://christmas.365greetings.com/christmas-poems/short-christmas-poems.html>



Invitation

The Victoria Rhododendron Society's Annual Christmas Potluck Dinner Couvelier Pavilion, HCP

Monday, December 4 @ 5:30 p.m.

*Members A - L, please bring a savory
or a salad*

Members M - 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 appreciated.*

*All proceeds and
non-perishable foods will
be donated to the
Mustard Seed Food Bank.*



Upcoming Events

2017	Event	Place
Dec 4 5:30	Christmas Potluck Dinner - The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
2018	HAPPY NEW YEAR 2018 HAPPY NEW YEAR	2018
Jan 8 7:30	General Meeting - The Couvelier Pavilion Wildflowers of Switzerland & Austria by Bike with Anne Allen & Ian Duncan	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Jan 22 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Feb 5 7:30	General Meeting - The Couvelier Pavilion Gardens of South Africa with Norma Senn	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Feb 19 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Mar 5 7:30	General Meeting - The Couvelier Pavilion What's Blooming in the Garden with Carol Dancer	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Mar 19 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Apr 2 7:30	General Meeting - The Couvelier Pavilion Speaker - TBA	4640 Cordova Bay Road Victoria
Apr 16 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Apr 21 TBA	Preparation for Plant Sale - Plant placement and tagging	4640 Cordova Bay Road Victoria
Apr 28 10:00-4:00	Plant Sale at Marquardts' Farm **One day only**	4640 Cordova Bay Road Victoria
May 7 7:30	General Meeting - Flower Show	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
May 7-30	ARS Convention - North America meets Europe - May 20-26 http://arsstore.org/ARS2018/ With optional Pre & Post-Tours ranging from ~ May 7 – May 30	Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands and Sweden
May 21 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Jun 18 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Jun 24 Noon	VRS Summer Picnic	TBA
Sep 3 7:30	General Meeting - The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Sep 17 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Oct 1 7:30	General Meeting - The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Oct 15 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Nov 5 7:30	General Meeting - The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Nov 19 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Dec 3 5:30	Christmas Potluck Dinner - The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
2019	2019	2019
Jan 7 7:30	General Meeting - The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road



www.victoriarhodo.ca

VRS 2018 Calendar

Key to the Symbols

8 General Meetings
Gardens at HCP
505 Quayle Road
Victoria BC V9E 2L7

11 Board Meetings

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

Activities

28 Plant Sale at Marquardt's - April 28

7 Flower Show - May 7

7-30 ARS Convention - May 7 - 30
"North America Meets Europe"

Summer Picnic - June 24

3 Christmas Potluck Dinner - Dec. 3

January

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28	29	30	31			

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29	30					

May

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June

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SUMMER BREAK

September

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October

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November

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December

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