



The Victoria Rhododendron Society Newsletter

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

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

MEETING 7:30

MONDAY, February 6, 2017

Couvelier Pavilion at the HCP Gardens

505 Quayle Road, VICTORIA, B. C.

Doors Open 7:00

Speaker: Bernie Dinter

The Changing Gardening World

Bernie Dinter is a well-known nurseryman, who operates Dinter Nurseries, just across from the Whipple Tree junction in Duncan. His knowledge of the gardening world is extensive. His topic this evening will focus on the changing gardening world and its impact on gardening in general. Gardeners of all types will find this most informative as one looks into the future of our ever-changing world.

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***NEW - try the links 'In This Issue' above

REFRESHMENTS

for the next meeting to be provided by:

Florence Newcombe Ron & Shirley O'Brien

Patricia Owen Calvin Parsons

Sean Rafferty & Jackie Ralph
Brenda MacDonald

Please email Betty Gordon at bbgordon@shaw.ca or (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 with the cleanup is really appreciated.

Lug Your Mug



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Editor's Notes



Brenda MacDonald's talk, "A Rhodo Twitcher in Asia, Bird Watching for Plants"

by Theresa McMillan

Brenda MacDonald, wearing a brilliantly embroidered Asiatic jacket, gave a talk with photographs which transported us from a cold, dark night in Victoria to Sikkim, with blooming flowers, snowy mountains...like a far Eastern paradise.

This small Himalayan country lies on the border with Tibet (China) and between India, Nepal and Bhutan. There is no flat land in Sikkim, so constructing an airport has been a definite problem. To get into the country, tourists must drive along mountainous roads.

Even travel within Sikkim is difficult. Trails and roads are often built by hand using thousands of irregular rocks, difficult for hikers to walk on. A kind of yak or bos used as beasts of burden have wide ranging horns with perilous points on them, so hikers passing them are often obliged to clamber out of the animals' way.

Another problem when travelling in the far East is the ever-present leeches. The leader of a trek is spared the worst of the leech attack while the followers are not so lucky. Soon the group is afflicted by many slug-shaped, blood-bloated leeches.

Travel is also affected by endless thickets of rhododendrons, which favor the disturbed soils around the trails as well as steep terrain and frequent landslide.



Meconopsis sp.

Sometimes a sprinkling of flowers on the ground is the only sign that tall rhododendrons arch over the understory of other plants. Young

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Welcome New Members !!!

**Carol and Tim Smith
Shelley Stott**

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meconopsis plants with their delicate fuzzy yel-



R. thompsonii

Courtesy of Garth Wedemire

Private garden Nanaimo, BC - March 9, 2010

lowish leaves stood untouched by the yaks that had been grazing around them.

Other pictures show the variety of colours of the calyxes of *R. thompsonii*, which are left after the red flowers fall. The corollas are like an outer set of flowers in blends of green, white, orange, pink and mauve.

Other pictures show the incredible variety of species rhododendrons, such as *arboreum*, with varying flower colours, shapes, leaves... like different hybrids from our gardens.

In a few weeks (depending on when spring decides to arrive), we should see the early blooms from our wonderful rhododendrons.



THE VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY IS BLESSED IN FRIENDSHIP WITH JIM BARLUP

by Lois Blackmore

In our newsletter, there are photographs of large rhododendron plants that are being donated to our society by Jim Barlup. Sometime in March, several members of the board will travel to Bellevue to pick up these plants and bring them to Victoria. These will be stored in the compound at the Marquardt farm. Our plan is for our members to be able to take cuttings and grow them on for our club. This was a decision that Jim and Judy made together for our benefit.

As many of you know, Jim has been hybridizing rhododendrons for over 40 years. He has led the way in becoming the first hybridizer to cross rhododendrons with varying sets of chromosomes. This is a scientific first in the field of rhododendron hybridizing. Now in his early 80's he continues his work on a daily basis. He recently submitted 14 new hybrids for registration in 2017. These beauties are the latest to come from his hybridizing program.

See pictures of same on the following pages.



Simply Sunny



Velvet Dreams



Raspberry Spirit



Best of Times



Amber Honey



Icicle Creek



Mellow Sun



Sunset Dancer



Summer Dreams



Silk Sunshine



Winding Road



Sweet Talk



Quiet Journey

NOTES FROM THE BOARD DECEMBER 12, 2016

by Lois Blackmore

The board met at the Webb's and the following information was discussed.

1. We voted to approve sending the [ARS fees](#) with an additional sum of \$120 US dollars in case we gain up to 4 new members. These monies will be kept as a credit if not used.
2. Three new members were welcomed into our Society at this past meeting.
3. The garden at Mary Winspear is on hold because of weather conditions.
4. We have put together a proposal to the HCP with the possibility of having an area for the Victoria Rhododendron Society set aside for further development. This would be more of a working area, as opposed to an extension of the rhododendron garden. Further information will become available as the process moves forward. We also moved for the VRS to join the HCP.
5. The VRS will take part in the Seedy Saturday on January 14 with a display about our association and becoming a member of the VRS.
6. The second week of March, several members will go to Bellevue, WA to retrieve the gifts from Jim Barlup. The plants will be stored at the compound at the Marquardt farm. These rhododendrons are part of the legacy that the Barlups have gifted to our club. Further information about these plants will be forthcoming.
7. The dates for our public plant sale are April 14, 15 and 16. This is the Easter weekend. The thinking of having the sale at this earlier time was based on a discussion that this is the time of the year when people are thinking about gardening. Many volunteers will be needed to assist in the endeavor. A volunteer list will be available at the March meeting. The sale is at the Marquardt property on Cordova Bay Road.
8. A public display of rhododendron trusses is being considered for display at the Mary Winspear Centre. Dates and availability will be forthcoming.
9. The trophies that have usually been awarded at the truss show will be on a hiatus for 2017. A new format is being developed for entries. The new format will be published in the March newsletter.
10. Sharon, Bill and Theresa will meet to go through the mass of archival materials that have been kept since the inauguration of the club. All relevant materials will be kept.
11. Norm and Jean Todd have donated a large number of books to our club. Relevant materials will be added to our library.



Autumn Orange



Chilean Bellflower, *Lapageria* #4: The Valdivian Rainforest

by Joe Harvey

Mirror Climates

Get an old atlas, tear out the Mercator map of the world and fold it along the equator; you will notice that Valdivia in Chile lies on the same latitude as Tofino, British Columbia. Actually I lie; the south/north latitudinal match is with Eureka, California but the hemispheres don't match perfectly so I am choosing Tofino as the climatic equivalent.

The point I am making is that the hemispheres have matching climatic zones along the western seaboard of the continents, and that plants and animals (and their diseases) may be translocated N and S with some confidence that they will fit into the mirror climate in the opposite hemisphere. This applies more strongly to plants which are very climate sensitive.

We are talking in this case about temperate rainforests: annual precipitation at Valdivia is 2500mm, at Tofino 3270mm.

Now I live in Victoria, BC where, on a purely latitudinal basis we would expect over 2500mm pa. But a freak of plate tectonics plonked a hulking big mountain range, The Olympic Mountains, Washington State, in the path of Pacific storms, trapping the moisture and leaving Victoria in a rain shadow with a measly 705mm precipitation. Victoria has a cool Mediterranean climate (as does Eureka, CA with 968mm). That is why I chose Tofino as the climatic equivalent to Valdivia.

We know from Eva Nyquist's magnificent, pioneering specimen that *Lapagerias* grow well in Victoria provided attention is given to providing them summer moisture when young. In Tofino *Lapageria* should really be able to thrive without setbacks. It should grow like a weed. Could that be a problem?

Responsible Introduction

I intend to take a few *Lapageria* plants to Tofino

to see how they do. But I get Scrooge-like nightmares where the ghost of Captain Grant visits me. The ghost reminds me of his garden at Sooke and the little broom plants he grew there.

Captain Walter Colquhoun Grant emigrated to Vancouver Island in 1847 and set up a water-powered sawmill on the Sooke Basin. (The concrete foundations can still be seen from the bridge on the Galloping Goose Trail where it crosses the Veitch Creek). Thinking to be reminded of the Scottish hillsides of his childhood, he asked for a few seeds of broom to be sent so that he could once again see their golden flowers.

Six seedlings grew, flowered and were greatly admired for their beautiful flowers. At the time, these were the only ones on the West Coast of North America. Seeds were generously shared with friends and in a few years, many people were able to appreciate these beautiful plants. Then something happened: plants started to appear outside gardens, apparently the result of spontaneous spread of seeds. Now, over a century and a half later, a blaze of gold appears in spring all the way from British Columbia to California. Broom proved to be one of the supreme weeds for the climate.

Now I don't think Grant was the only person to introduce broom, he just wrote letters and kept a diary so that as one of the pioneering settlers we happen to have good records of him in the Sooke Museum. There was no intention on his part of bringing in one of our worst weeds. Hey, they named a road for him! And Broomhill Road in Sooke.

If I introduce *Lapageria* to Tofino with its ideal climate for the species, would I be 'doing a Grant'? Gardeners have responsibilities not to do damage by their actions. Would I be bringing the equivalent of kudzu to Tofino? Kudzu is the legume deliberately introduced to the southern States to stabilise exposed slopes and provide nutritious browse. It grew so well in Georgia and Alabama that whole barns have vanished under its 20m per season growth. So let us study the biology of

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broom and Lapageria and see how ecesis – their spread and establishment occurs.

Broom

Broom is a legume, which fixes nitrogen, giving it an advantage in poor soils. The flowers have a spring mechanism, which traps the style and stamens until a bee lands on the keel. The weight of the insect releases the style, which springs up to hit the abdomen of the insect, picking up any pollen there might be from a previous visit to another flower. Simultaneously the stamens jump out and dust the abdomen with pollen. This takes a fraction of a second – no doubt many readers have tapped an unopened broom flower to see the tiny explosion. Whether cross pollinated from another flower or self-pollinated, a broom flower sets seed. They are said to be ‘self-compatible’. This results in a high seed production.

Seed dispersal is by an explosive mechanism: as the green pod ripens, it turns black and develops



Cytisus scoparius

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cytisus_scoparius#/media/File:Cytisus_scoparius_by_Danny_S._-_001.JPG

tensions along the two edges. On a hot day, the pod pops open, scattering the seeds for a few metres. You can hear the sound on a warm day in early summer as they open. The seeds germinate when kept moist but if buried they remain dormant for decades, providing a seed ‘bank’ which ensures colonisation when conditions are

good. Broom is a prolific seeder and with its drought tolerance spreads rapidly on land which has been disturbed, such as clear falling.

Lapageria

The Chilean bellflower produces large, 3-4 inch long hanging flowers, with a narrow bell-shape. The mouth of the bell is almost blocked by a large stigma, which protrudes slightly and is surround-



Lapageria rosea

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lapageria#/media/File:Lapageria_rosea1.jpg
By I, KENPEI, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3426382>

ed by the six large anthers which produce abundant pollen. At the top of the bell are six large nectaries which produce large amounts of nectar, so much that it can drip out. With red flowers (the Nyquist one is the unusual white), this is the syndrome of a hummingbird pollinated flower – a hummingbird has to push its beak into the flower, first delivering any pollen it has already got on its head to the stigma, pushing hard to sip up nectar with its tongue and getting more pollen on its head as it withdraws its beak. Then it visits another flower.

Victoria has two species of hummingbirds, one of which is present all year. Bill Dancer, a birder,

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tells me that he has never seen a hummingbird visit their Lapageria (the original Nyquist plant). I have had a similar experience: my flowering plant in a pot was outside the living room window all summer and, although I don't stand there all day, I never saw a visit, even with abundant birds. What is wrong? I think it is beak length. Our hummingbirds, Rufous and Anna's have beaks



<http://plant.daleysfruit.com.au/l/lardizabala-10019.jpeg>

about 1 inch long; even allowing for a tongue extension, these species are too small to push their way into the mouth of the flower and feed on the nectar.

But pollen from the anthers does fall on to the stigma. However no fruit has been produced on plants left alone. Deliberate self-pollination also results in no fruit. The conclusion is that the individual plants are self-incompatible. This is shown to be likely by taking pollen from say, a red flower, and putting its pollen on the stigma of a white-flowered plant. This results in fruit set. This is a cross-breeding mechanism with a genetic basis and is common in fruit trees.

Fruit of Lapageria is about 3" long, sausage shaped, turning orange more or less when ripe. The fruit is said to be sold in markets in Chile as a dessert fruit. Sue Lee and I have both tried nibbling bits of the ones we have produced; the flesh is sweet but the inside is full of small, 3mm diameter hard seeds. Not a terribly good eat. But of course I wanted seeds to grow; one fruit contained 90 seeds. Plants with edible fruit and small

hard seeds are adapted to having the seeds distributed by frugivores.

These are animals, which eat such fruit and either spit out the seeds or excrete the seed in their dung. Various birds, especially of the parrot family, fruit bats and various small marsupials carry out this task in Chile.

The seeds have



Pudu

<http://www.zooborns.com/zooborns/pudu/>

a short viability period of a few months (never buy seed in commercial packets), but in a damp climate long viability is not needed. One remarkable but incidental frugivore is the pudu, the world's smallest deer. Up to 18 inches high, these hide in dense bush and will eat fruit that has fallen on the ground. Stubby little animals they have short legs and can climb. They look like a combination of deer, goat and dachshund and eat shoots and leaves. Pudus are now rare because of forest clearance and because, at 14-30lb undressed weight, they make an ideal Sunday dinner.

To sum up:

Broom has everything going for it to spread in the drier more open soils of the West Coast. Lapageria has everything against it: it lacks a pollinator and probably a method of seed distribution but maybe raccoons could do the job! I shall go merrily to Tofino.



YOUR NEWSLETTER



Remember the **20th** of each month. It is the VRS newsletter deadline for submitting YOUR content, be it articles you have written, rhodo pictures or something else you believe would be of interest to the Members of the Victoria Rhododendron Society. It's all about sharing and information - and having fun! Your contributions are most welcome.

Please contact:

Theresa McMillan
Linda Gilmore

tkmcmillan@telus.net or
gilmore2080@gmail.com



Some wonderful Christmas dinner pictures submitted
by Nadine Minckler.

Thank you Nadine !



A Successful Day At the Horticultural Centre of the Pacific For Seedy Saturday



Calvin Parsons and Lloyd Gilmore manned the VRS table at
HCP on Seedy Saturday

by Ian Duncan

January 14th was 'Saanich Seedy Saturday', held at the Couvelier Pavilion at HCP, and your Rhodo society was there. Lloyd Gilmore, Calvin Parsons and Ian Duncan set up our booth with books, plant tags, kneeling pads and a few Rhodos for sale, along with society info and membership forms. There were posters to promote VicRhodo and our upcoming spring plant sale. For demonstration purposes, Lloyd brought some seedling Rhodos, and Ken and Madeleine Webb loaned us propagated cuttings that were at various stages of growth.

Our table was situated away from the maddening crowds in the lunch room across from the pavilion. This gave us more room and quietness to interact with the event attendees. Lots of questions about Rhodo care, interest in the club, some Rhodo and plant tag purchases, many names on an email list for the plant sale notice and everyone taking either a brochure or a VicRhodo business card made for a very successful and worthwhile 4 hours.



North America Meets Europe



The 2018 ARS Convention will be in Bremen, Germany. It will start around May 7, 2018, with optional tours before the convention and after the convention. The schedule may and probably will change slightly in the next couple of months.

1st Pre-Tour:	Optional 5 days visiting Dutch Gardens including Keukenhof Gardens
2nd Pre-Tour:	Optional 2 days at RHODO 2018 Rhododendron Festival and Bremen
3rd Pre-Tour:	Optional 6 days public and private garden visits in Denmark & Sweden
Convention:	7-day convention in Bremen from May 20 to 26 including 3 tour days
Post-Tour:	Optional 4 days visiting gardens in Finland.

Calendar this now! It is a do-not-miss event. You can choose to start in Holland or Germany with one of the 3 pre-tours or start with the convention. Then you can choose to finish in Germany after the convention or in Finland after the post-convention tour. There are 8 possible combinations ranging from 7 days & nights for just the convention to 24 days & nights if you do everything which includes the 3 pre-tours to Holland, Germany, Denmark and Sweden, the convention, and the post-convention tour to Finland.



Upcoming Events

2017	Event	Place
Feb 6 7:30	General Meeting Bernie Dinter - The Changing Gardening World The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Mar 6 7:30	General Meeting Lois Blackmore - The Birds and The Bees The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Mar 20 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting At Lloyd Gilmore's	2080 Ludlow Road Sooke
Apr 3 7:30	General Meeting Interactive Session with all Members The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Apr 7-8	<u>Rhododendron Species Symposium 2017</u> Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden With Hartwig Schepker	2525 S 336 th St Federal Way, WA
Apr 14-16 10:00-2:00	Plant Sale at Marquardt's Farm	4640 Cordova Bay Road Victoria
Apr 23 10-2	Mount Arrowsmith Chapter Show and Plant Sale Parksville Curling Club - Contact Ray Walker, 250-228-8683	193 Island Highway East Parksville, BC
Apr 27-30	<u>ARS Annual Convention</u> for Conference registration <u>Red Lion Hotel</u> reservations separate from registration or <u>1-800-733-5466</u> Early booking is recommended.	Eureka, CA
Apr 29 10-2	Cowichan Valley Chapter Plant Sale Several rhodo growers, companion plants, garden furniture Contact Carrie Nelson, carrieonupthemountain@gmail.com	Cowichan Exhibit. Grounds Main Hall, Mays Rd & Island Hwy Duncan, BC
May 1 7:30	Truss Show The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
May 1 10-3	Nanaimo Chapter Spring Show and Plant Sale	Beban Park 2300 Bowen Rd, Nanaimo, BC
May 15 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting - call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Jun 18 Noon	Sunday BBQ at Marquardt's Farm	4640 Cordova Bay Road, Vict.
Sept 4 7:30	General Meeting The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Sept 18 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Oct 2 7:30	General Meeting The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Nov 6 7:30	General Meeting The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Nov 20 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Dec 4 6:30	Christmas Potluck Dinner The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
2018 ~May 7-30	ARS Convention - <u>North America meets Europe</u> - May 20-26 http://arsstore.org/ARS2018/ With optional Pre and Post-Tours ranging from ~ May 7 – May 30	Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands and Sweden