



The Victoria Rhododendron Society Newsletter

4821 Townsend Drive, Victoria, BC V8Z 5P2

June 2018

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Thirty-Eighth Year of Publication

<http://victoriarhodo.ca>

Summer BBQ Picnic
12 PM SUNDAY, June 24, 2018
At the Webbs'
5008 Old W. Saanich Road

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**Sunday
June 24
Salmon
BBQ Picnic**

12 noon at the Webbs'
5008 Old W. Saanich Road

- Bring your chair
- Bring your eating utensils
- Bring your plates and cups
- Bring a plant for the auction
- Bring your appetite 😊
- Bring savories A-M - members
- Bring desserts N-Z - members

Upcoming Events

2018	Event	Place
May 7-30	ARS Convention - North America Meets Europe - May 20-26 With optional Pre & Post-Tours ranging from ~ May 7 – 30	Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands and Sweden
May 28 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Bill McMillan 250-478-3515	5024 Glinz Lake Rd Sooke
Jun 18 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Jun 24 Noon	Sunday VRS Summer BBQ Picnic at Ken and Madeleine Webbs'	5008 Old W. Saanich Rd. Victoria
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 Milner Gardens History & New Species Garden with Geoff Ball	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 TBA	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Nov 19 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Dec 3 6:30	Christmas Potluck Dinner - The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
2019		
Jan 7 7:30	General Meeting - The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Jan 21 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Feb 4 7:30	General Meeting - The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Feb 18 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Mar 4 7:30	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Mar 18 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Apr 1 7:30	General Meeting - The Couvelier Pavilion TBA	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Apr 15 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA

Editor's Notes



by Theresa McMillan

A report on the annual Truss Show, May 7, 2018

A welcome change in the weather from an unusually cold, wet spring to more seasonable warmth and sun greeted us in early May. In addition, our garden, like so



many other gardens in Victoria, burst into bloom.

It felt good to cut the best trusses, put them in water, place them in the car and drive them to the Couvelier Pavilion at the H.C.P.

There were so many blooms from the members at the Pavilion that needed to be put in the green glass bottles or the coloured vases we provide and there were so many labels to be printed out that the judging was delayed. This time was put to good use by members checking out the blooms in detail.

Lois and Ian provided us with bags with small beads and one wooden block for best in show, so that we could vote. For each category (like red truss, weevil notched leaf or flower arrangement) we placed a bead by the best example (in our opinion).

Then members counted the beads in each cup to find the winner of that category. Each category winner won a bottle of wine (nicely wrapped in plain paper with a star on top).

Then all the category winners were placed on one table so that members could use their wooden blocks to vote on "Best in Show". Joanna Massa won this award for a beautiful pink truss.

She laughingly invited visitors to her



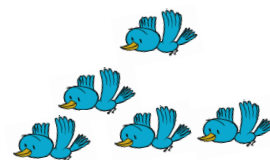
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garden near Sooke to sample a little wine; she had won several bottles at our Truss Show.

Tea, coffee and goodies were served from the kitchen, thus freeing up space for the tables and their floral displays.

As Lois Blackmore, our president, commented, the judging was done by the membership. Each of us could see how difficult it could be with so many fine entries.

We'll be seeing each other again at the June pot-luck picnic, to be held at the Webbs' on June 24. For details see page 1 of this newsletter.



This is a “**Tweet**” from the board!

We need to account for the truss trophies. If you have one at your home, please let Lois know at loisjblackmore@gmail.com or 250 478 6615





NOTES FROM THE BOARD April 2018

by Lois Blackmore

The board met informally after the Truss Show. Board reports and new business will be dealt with at the August Board Meeting.

Dean Goard has resigned as President and Lois Blackmore will be Acting President until the next Annual General Meeting in March of 2019.

We discussed the June 24 picnic preparations.



We remember...

Bruce Maycock

Bruce Maycock, a longtime member of the Victoria Rhododendron Society passed away peacefully on May 8, 2018. Bruce was an avid gardener, bird watcher and lover of vintage cars.

His visits to garden centers are legendary. Driving his 1934 Singer or 1958 Morgan, Bruce could often be found searching out a new rhododendron or finding another addition for his beloved snowdrops.

For many years, Bruce was the Treasurer of our Society. After serving as treasurer, he continued to audit our books for many years. This is especially noted as our year-end coincided with income tax time in Canada.

A Celebration of Bruce's Life will be held at the Sequoia Centre at McCall Gardens, 4665 Falaise Drive, Saturday, May 26, at 3 pm.



We learn as we go...

This year we had the opportunity to sample various venues for our plant sales. These ranged from formal sales to ARS members, the public, individual sales and other clubs.

We accidently discovered another way to sell our plants -- **GARDEN TOURS!** We sold a number of plants at open gardens this rhodo season. We continue to explore ways of marketing our specialty rhododendrons.

FATHER'S DAY

Garden party tour



SUNDAY, JUNE 17

11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Tickets \$25

Children under 12 free
accompanied by adult

All dressed up for Father's Day!

View eight lovely Oak Bay gardens, enjoy Afternoon Tea and a Silent Biddot Auction at Windsor Pavilion.

Also at the pavilion:

- Wild ARC and UWSS representatives will be available to share information
- Master gardeners on site to answer questions and share ideas
- Alternative plant sale - featuring drought and deer-resistant options



Urban Wildlife
Stewardship
SOCIETY

All proceeds will support the BC SPCA's Wild ARC and the Urban Wildlife Stewardship Society (UWSS).

Find tickets online at <http://spca.bc.ca/gardentour>

Epimedium #4, The Giant

by Joe Harvey

We do not know how many species of Epimedium there are because novel plants are still coming out of China, but there must be over 60. So far as is known all species are interfertile, freely forming hybrids when hand cross-pollinated and also by random bee action when grown together in the garden. The latter is becoming a marketing problem with a plethora of newly named plants of unknown parentage offered by nurseries, some without being particularly distinguished except in the mind of the originator.

My advantage, as a semi-retired geneticist, is that I have the techniques, the time and the patience to produce hybrids from known plants by hand cross-pollination. This is simple but very fiddly work, which production nurseries do not have the time, the knowledge or the economic incentive to carry out in the busy season.

The Arcto-Tertiary Flora

The reason why China is such a rich repository of plants is that it was less affected by the Ice Ages; ice sheets wiped out most of the plants in Europe and many of those in North America, but left China more or less intact because ice caps formed asymmetrically round the northern hemisphere.

With increasing affluence the Chinese are supplementing conventional medicine with Traditional Chinese Medicine, and demand for Ying Yang Huo, with supposed sex-enhancing properties, has increased to the extent that some mountainsides are being denuded of Epimedium plants, (at a talk, Philip MacDougall showed bushel-loads of plants in a market). The dried leaves would provide equal efficacy and would not damage the plants but herbalists demand the rhizome and this results in the elimination of the plants. Since some Epimedium species have a very restricted distribution, such as a single mountain, (isolation appears to be the evolutionary trigger), there is a problem of possible extinction. A similar situation applies to the tree peony species.

Multiplying The Giant

As mentioned in a previous article, 'The Giant' is a highly prized six-foot Epimedium species which may or may not have a scientific name. Plants in the trade are a single clone so self-pollination will not result in seed. Thus it has to be propagated vegetatively, and with a tough upright rhizome, increase in stock is agonisingly slow. However, it is not true that a chainsaw is required to divide plants; I find a breadknife quite adequate.

Tissue culture might be possible but is expensive to set up and demand may not justify the investment in a niche product. One jocular suggestion is for a group of Epimediphiles to contribute the airfare to Darrell Probst to return to the mountain where he found 'The Giant', and bring back another plant so that seedlings could be produced. Meanwhile, I have a partial solution to the shortage.



Epimedium wushanense
from Wikipedia

The 75% Solution

Possibly the first hybrid made with 'The Giant' was with the species *E. wushanense*. The latter is itself a handsome garden plant, about 3ft tall, clumping like 'The Giant' but differing in that the panicle is constricted with yellow and white flowers. The hybrid is vigorous, with a somewhat more open panicle although not as much as 'The Giant's' 2ft long display.

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Now any hybrid has 50% of its nuclear genes from each parent, thus 'Giant' x wushanense has 50% 'Giant' genes. If in turn I pollinate this hybrid with 'Giant' pollen, then the backcross seeds will get 50% 'Giant' genes from the pollen, plus 25% 'Giant' genes from the hybrid, for a total of 75% 'Giant'. I have labelled these plants, '75%'. But, you protest, you can't label a plant with a number. Oh yes I can - I'm having fun! However, there is a serious reason: any plant labelled with genetic gobbledegook which includes the word 'Giant' may get abbreviated to "Giant", and that would be bad. I look forward to people asking me "75% of what?" and I am going to say, "Sorry, I'm not allowed to tell you".

For my friends who want to grow organic, non-F1, non-GM, heirloom plants and who might be reluctant to welcome a genetic backcross into their garden, may I remind them that anyone with a European background has a few percent Neanderthal genes. And how did that arise? By backcrossing, and we are none the worse for it.



Epimedium the giant.JPG
by Philip MacDougall of the
Scottish Rock Garden Club Forum

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