



The RHODOTELLER

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Coming Events

6 November 2007 — Executive Meeting

The executive meeting will be held at the home of Louise and Roger Casson: 2345 Suffolk Cres. Crown Isle Subdivision. Directions: Along Lerwick turn onto Idiens then turn right on Suffolk Crescent.

Executive Meeting begins at 2:00 p.m.

13 November 2007 — Regular Monthly Meeting

Program: Paul Wurz..."Some Help in Growing Rhododendrons" Information on: planting, pruning, fertilizing, mulching, insect and disease control, as well as moving rhodos. The program will end with some garden pictures and photos of some of Paul's favourites.



... by Harry Wright

Now that we are well into the fall season, we look back and try to remember what was great about summer. What I remember is that it was cooler and a little damper than normal, which made for nice conditions to be working in the garden.

Gwen and I did something a little different this summer; we took the month of September off, and went back to my roots in New Brunswick. The weather was perfect as we visited my only remaining aunt, and spent an afternoon with my grade 1 teacher. We toured more of New Brunswick than I ever had before; a lovely time of year for fall colours in the Maritimes.

On our return trip we flew to Calgary, where we spent 5 days visiting friends and catching up on lives past. We left Calgary by the Rocky Mountain Rail. What a trip; you think the scenery is nice by car, try it in a dome car by rail. We spent the night in Kamloops and then continued on the next day to Vancouver. It's a wonderful way to see this great province of ours.

We were only home for 3 days (just long enough to unpack and do some laundry) before heading on the road again. This time we traveled by vehicle with Bernie and Gloria Guyader to attend the ARS Western Region Fall Conference in Newport, Oregon. Following the weekend conference, we spent a week touring the state of Washington and Oregon; another lovely part of the continent for wonderful fall colours.

Now that our travels are over, we are busy trying to catch up. But that is okay, because it was well worth it.



November NORTH ISLAND RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

2007/2008 Executive:

President

Harry Wright 338-8345

Vice-President

Dave Crucq 339-7845

Past President:

Paul Wurz..... 287-4301

Secretary

Diana Scott..... 338-0208

Treasurer

Don Law 339-2735

Director: Ways & Means

Dave Godfrey ... 335-0717

Director: Membership

Brian Staton..... 337-5228

Director: Publicity

Chris Aldred..... 335-3231

Director: Newsletter/Library

Noni Godfrey ... 335-0717

.....Nonigod@shaw.ca

Social Committee:

Evelyn Wright .. 339-7493

Revenue Table Committee:

Louise Casson .. 334-2331

Historian:

Lois Clyde 337-5754



The club meets the second
Tuesday of the month
(except May through August)
at the United Church
Comox Avenue,
Comox 7:30 p.m.

November 2007

Member's Notes

...by Dave Godfrey

Over 40 members and guests attended our meeting on October 9th, where Robert Argall gave an educational on Fall and Spring Bulbs. As Robert explained, there is a large variety of bulbs and not all are priced reasonably. In comparing two bulb catalogue prices with the same bulbs available locally, the catalogue prices were as much as 10 times those of the local bulbs found at Art Knapp Plantland (plus members receive an extra 10% discount.)

During a question and answer period on bulbs, one member suggested inter-planting tulips and daffodils (narcissus) to discourage deer from eating the tulips, since deer generally avoid the daffodils. Marjorie Corsaut claims to have had great success with this type of planting.

Following the educational program, Robert continued as our guest speaker, and with the help of Noni Godfrey, presented a Power Point presentation of his trip to Scotland and northern England. His photographs showed the many castles and mansions with their expansive gardens; some had rhododendrons as far as one could see. Robert's trip in June was at the height of the rhodo season, since their climate results in a later bloom than ours. A quick visit to Paris, France, brought even more delight as he visited a former student of his in her book store, The Red Wheelbarrow, not far from the river Seine. The home of the famous painter Monet and his gardens concluded Robert's presentation in glorious colour.

The plant raffle for the evening, the rhododendron 'Odee Wright', was won by "birthday boy" Peter Guertler. The door prize of a garden gift pack, donated by Helen Asselin, was won by Louise Casson. Louise was very pleased with the wide variety of items for sale on the Revenue Table, which brought in over \$60 for the evening. Louise hopes that our members continue to be as generous with their donations in the coming months, as the funds raised help cover the monthly rental of our meeting hall.

On Thursday morning, October 11th, a group of 9 members attended a work party at our Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden for a fall clean-up. Many weeds were pulled, leaves raked, a few last deadheads taken off along with some pruned branches, and the pathways raked and tidied for the season.

Harry Wright has asked if any member has the rhododendron 'Mildred Amateis', or knows where we might find one. We need to replace her in the garden, as she has succumbed recently. Please notify Harry if you have one available or know of one.



Buy and Sell Item...from Dick and Pauline Bonney

"We have a hammer mill shredder, quite old, in good working order, will take and shred half inch branches etc. It can be picked up at 2393 Seabank Road for a donation of \$20 to the Rhodo Garden Fund. Phone 339 7594 to arrange a time."

Western Regional Conference

by Bernie Guyader

Bernie was kind enough to provide the following report on the ARS Western Regional Conference and a recap of their travels after.

We reserved space for the Thursday 20th September sailing on the Black Ball Ferry from Victoria to Port Angeles. As we had to be at the ferry terminal at 09:00, we had two choices. One to stay overnight in Victoria or get up much before breakfast and drive to Victoria. Being the hardy (or foolish) travelers that we are, we opted for the latter. Harry, Gwen, Gloria and I, blasted off at 05:30 a.m. I think the weather was good, but I know it was very dark.

In spite of getting involved with the "Colwood Crawl" just north of Victoria, we made it to the ferry in adequate time for the US customs and immigration checks. We sailed on time at 10:30 and rushed to the cafeteria for coffee and breakfast. After settling in for the 2 hour ride, we met Adela and Bob Smith who were also headed to the conference. They were planning on a different route to Oregon, so we parted ways as the ferry docked.

We traveled down the Olympic Peninsula along the Hood Canal and spent our first night at Montesano, Washington. The following morning we headed southwest crossing the Columbia River to Astoria, Oregon, then south along the coast to one of my favourite places, Tillamook. We stopped at the cheese factory for lunch and a supply of cheese for the trip. Oh, and I almost forgot, the best, smoothest ice cream ever!

We then headed to Newport, where we arrived about 4 PM. It was like old home week. District One was very well represented. With the six of us from North Island, we met members from MARS, Cowichan, Victoria and several from the mainland. There were also several Whidbey Islanders who paid us a visit last spring. Because we had attended the Western Conference in Newport two years ago, we saw many friends that we had met then.



It was a great conference; very well organized, and with many excellent presenters for the "How to and More" clinics. Of course, we couldn't attend them all, but the ones we did attend were very informative. Steve Hootman's clinic on growing Rhododendrons from cuttings dealt with cuttings of the more difficult species. As he said, timing is everything. Sometimes you only have a two hour window. It was educational, informative and very entertaining.

Then there were the plant sales. After attending the presentation on "Conifers That Enhance the Garden" showing the use of miniatures and dwarf plants, I naturally headed to the sales tables. It was then I realized how many species there are that I couldn't bring home. I was changing selections until the last minute before getting the "phyto" certificate.

The Saturday banquet was thoroughly enjoyable, especially the decadent chocolate cake. Afterward, Harold Greer entertained us with his humorous talk entitled "If I were a Rhododendron, what would I be?" accompanied by excellent slides. His presentation was followed by Steve Hootman speaking on "The best Species selections for your garden." The evening ended with a visit to the "Hospitality Suite" and a final nightcap in Gwen and Harry's room.

On Sunday morning there were more "How to and More" clinics and a final presentation on "Climate and Weather." Fitting this in while trying to get the "Phyto" certificate was a challenge, but everything worked out. We bid adieu to the other Islanders who were heading home, while we four enjoyed the afternoon and evening in Newport.

Monday morning we were on our way to Crescent, Oregon with a required shopping stop in Eugene. We arrived at the Woodsman Lodge in Crescent around 3:30. The motel was very nice and had some unique features such as a plastic cast toilet seat in which fishing lures were imbedded complete with large treble hooks. It was disconcerting when you first sat on the seat. Next door to the motel was a store that sold "Guns, Ammo, Beer and Liquor". What more could you ask?

The following morning, we drove down to Crater Lake which is about forty-five miles south. We drove around the lake on the rim drive stopping at many view points. This was my third trip to the lake and I continue to be in awe, as I have never seen bluer water anywhere. We had our picnic lunch along the way. The photo is the remnants of the volcano's dome, which they call the mystery ship.



We then drove back to Crescent for the night. The weather was sunny and warm. All in all, a very enjoyable day. The next day it was time to start winding our way home. We made a stop in Bend, OR at the outlet shops for another shopping fix (it had to be in Oregon, no tax you know!) Then we continued north to Leavenworth for an overnight stay in The Dalles; the end of the Oregon Trail along the Columbia River.

After an enjoyable evening and following day touring the Bavarian Village (our last day of sunshine), we headed for Stevens Pass, where we were just below the snowline in heavy rain. After an overnight stay in Skykomish, and another obligatory stop at the Bellis Fair Mall, we made our final overnight stop in Ferndale, WA. We had dinner at the casino (Gloria's choice) near Ferndale. The next morning, Sunday the 30th, we got away about 08:30 and arrived at the border at 08:45. Then it was on to Tsawwassen for the 10:15 ferry, getting us home at 3:30 PM.

I can only hope that the description of the conference will encourage you to attend one. It not only gives you a chance to have a short time away, but to meet many friendly people with similar interests as you. It is also an opportunity to learn many new ideas on growing Rhododendrons, and to refresh your memory on others.

Next year, the Western Regional is in Hawaii. We attended the last one in Hilo and it was also very memorable. Attend it if you can, as I'm sure you will also enjoy the experience.

Book Review

Seeds of Fortune (A Gardening Dynasty) *By Mary Palmer*

Author: Sue Shephard

Publisher: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. 2003



Anyone interested in Rhododendrons, and many of the other shrubs, trees and herbaceous perennials that grace our gardens these days, should spend time reading this book, for it not only describes the family Veitch over 200 years, but tells of some of the horrendous adventures of various plant collectors such as the Lobbs, and E.H. Wilson, who worked for and with this remarkable gardening family.

"For over a century, and across 5 generations, the Veitch family pioneered the introduction of hundreds of new plants into gardens, conservatories and houses, and were the foremost cultivators and hybridizers of their day.

The story begins when a young Scotsman called John Veitch came to England to find his fortune, starting out as a gardener for the aristocracy. Realizing that horticultural mania had begun to spread throughout the social classes, John's son, James, opened a nursery in Exeter and began to send some of the first commercial plant collectors into the Americas, Australia, India, Japan, China and the South Seas.

Using their canny business skills, the Veitch family expanded their nurseries into the most successful and influential in Europe. They became key figures within the gardening establishment and were involved with the Royal Horticultural Society from its early beginnings and the great Chelsea Flower Show. The Veitches and their nurserymen made invaluable contributions to the science of botany and horticulture, including the first ever Orchid hybrid."

The above summarizes the book (I copied it from the cover information because there is little else that I can add). Ms. Shephard has done a remarkable job of listing many details of the lives of these people, and made it all so interesting I found it difficult to lay the book down.

Garden Chatter, Chatter and Notes

...by Mary Palmer

Here is an interesting article written by Jennifer Sherlock for the Vancouver Rhodo Newsletter, May 2000. (I have abbreviated it to some extent).

The young roots of many plant species become infected with fungi to form mycorrhizae ("fungus-roots"). A mycorrhizae is a symbiotic association (this association is beneficial to both) between a fungus and plant root cells. The fungi receive food from the plant and in turn improve nutrient and water absorbing properties of such roots. Mycorrhizae are now thought to occur in more than 90% of all families of plants. Many fungi are multicellular organisms composed of masses of filaments. A single fungal filament is called a hypha. The complex, spore-producing structure of fungi, such as mushrooms, are tightly packed hyphae. Fungi must feed on organic materials formed by other organisms.

There are two main groups of mycorrhizae, those common to cone-bearing plants and to many flowering plants, and the others to plants such as grasses as well as some cone-bearing trees. The fungal partner of both kinds of mycorrhizae receive sugars from the host plant. One advantage to the host plant is a considerable increase in the rate of phosphate absorption, as well as other nutrients, by fungi in both mycorrhizal types.

Mycorrhizae usually develop best in relatively infertile soils. It is interesting that nurserymen often grow plants in containers with well-fertilized soils that suppress mycorrhizal development. If these seedlings were first transplanted into somewhat infertile container soils, mycorrhizal formation would be encouraged.

It is suggested that to ensure the best health of your Rhodos, whether in garden beds or containers, you need to inoculate the soil with these beneficial fungi. Just take a handful or a shovelful of soil from an area where Rhodos are growing well and put it into the planting mix or back-fill where another rhodo is to be planted.

Etta Burrows

Have you one of these beautiful Rhodos in your garden? I hope so. It is one of the first to bloom, in early April, and the bright red flowers give a cheery note to the garden, along with daffodils and early tulips.

Where did the name come from? I found out, by reading an article in the Portland Rhodo News, Nov. 2006.

R. Etta Burrows is a Yelmer Larson hybrid and while we love and admire the flower, it took an email from another Etta Burrows to spark my curiosity about this name.

Bert Larson, the nephew of Yelmer Larson, remembers the Burrows as good family friends who lived in Lakewood, WA. They were lumber brokers who bought many plants from Mr. Larson. The red hybrid was a seedling that was

named for Mrs. Burrows.

So who is this other Etta Burrows? She lives in Australia. She was so delighted and tickled to see a rhodo with her name that she and her husband of 40+ years had to know the story. After asking all over the world she not only found out, but one of the members of the Australian Rhodo Society gave her R. Etta Burrows for their anniversary!

Sometimes there is a lot in a name!

In Flanders Fields...

...Capt. John McCrae, MD

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*



*We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.*

*If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders Fields.*



Every November 11th, Canadians across the country pause in a silent moment of remembrance for the men and women who served our country during wartime. We honour those who fought for Canada - in the First World War (1914-1918), the Second World War (1939-1945) and the Korean War (1950-1953). More than 1,500,000 Canadians served overseas - more than 100,000 died, 45,000 in WWII alone. They gave their lives and their future so that we may live in peace.



SNIPPERS FROM SAYWARD

(by Rose-Marie Silkens)

After a dreary, wet start to fall, October promises to end with a week of sunny weather. I hope so, as I have a great many spring-flowering bulbs to plant. Over the years I've sunk literally thousands of bulbs into my Sayward garden, and each year I still find more that I want to add. I suppose I come by that predilection honestly, courtesy of my Dutch heritage.

The association between flowering bulbs and Holland is a cliché, and the huge Dutch bulb industry is as much an expression of commercial and marketing skills as of horticultural ones. However, it couldn't exist without the horticultural and botanical knowledge. Dutch gardeners, both professional and amateur, know how to grow flowering bulbs, and can present them with great artistry. Paying attention to their suggestions has helped my bulb gardening immeasurably.

Among my favourite spring bloomers are our native camass varieties, the tall *Camassia leichtlinii* and the shorter *C. esculenta* (syn *C. quamash*). Medium-height *C. cusickii* hails from Oregon but does well planted here. The clear blue flowers appear in May. Camass bulbs are readily available commercially, NOT because they are dug in the wild, but because the Dutch bulb trade recognized their potential years ago and now mass market them internationally. My first bulbs of this genus, the splendid *C. leichtlinii* 'Blue Danube,' were sent to me by a Dutch relative over 20 years ago. With them was an extensive magazine article about the species history that included a number of planting suggestions. One of them was to place camass under deciduous shrubs or trees with gold or chartreuse spring foliage. I planted my new treasures under *Physocarpus* 'Dart's Gold,' a selection of an eastern North American relative of our native ninebark. The combination has been one of my favourite garden pictures ever since.

Tulips are of course as synonymous with the Netherlands as are wooden shoes. As a highly-hybridized flower, they don't always have the natural look that I like in my garden, and I once expressed that opinion when visiting The Hague in spring. The extensive garden tour that followed showed me some very surprising planting schemes with tulips. One of the nicest is one I've probably written about before, a courtyard with a winding pathway bordered with wide beds of white and purple tulips interplanted with purple lunaria (honesty). The rigid form of the tulips was beautifully counterpointed in the meadow-flower look of the lunaria, and the generous massing of both made the scene irresistible. Several gardens massed single-colour tulips with forget-me-nots. This simple scheme was always successful regardless of the tulip colour used, and again the generosity of the plantings was the key.

However, I still don't mass hybrid tulips. They need to be replaced at spring's end for the plans to work, which is too labour-intensive. I do plant a number of containers with tulips, which I sometimes dig right into the ground if there is a bare patch to fill. In fact, for the open ground I plant only the short-stemmed species tulips. In Holland I was presented with the

jewel-box concept for planting these: place them in clumps (a mini-massing) of each variety, separated by the foliage of later-blooming perennials or ground covers, rather like jewels distinguished within their metal setting. As the species tulips will survive and naturalize modestly, they can be left in the garden without digging or division indefinitely.

Dutch crocus are common too, and while we often see these bulbs planted in unimaginative rows, an excellent planting scheme was first presented to me in a Dutch leaflet that came with a gift package of my favourite *Crocus vernus* selection, 'Vanguard.' This plan involves using any natural slope available to emulate a rivulet of water. It is also effective with the small-flowered crocus, especially 'Blue Pearl,' itself the colour of a stream in spring sunshine.

A spring flower I like very much but have found difficult to combine with other spring bloomers is the wallflower, *Erysimum* or *Cheiranthus cheiri*. An excellent answer comes from Holland as well: hyacinths. A deep red wallflower, or the violet selection 'Bowles Mauve,' is exquisite with white hyacinths. Any yellow wallflower, but particularly the long-blooming selection 'Fragrant Sunshine,' is a knockout with a deep cobalt-blue hyacinth like 'Kronos.'

In deference to another Dutch tradition, every year I plant a large container with hyacinths, to be placed at a walkway intersection in my garden. I have always disliked the pastel colours of hyacinths mixed together, looking somewhat like cheap candy. So this container's colour scheme is Delft blue. I cram in every type of blue and blue-purple hyacinth I can find that season, with a few white ones thrown in. Visitors admire it but never seem to recognize the origin of the colour scheme. Unless they're Dutch.



Many of our members have visited there, and I was able to visit recently. It was a rather cold cloudy day, but no rain until we were part-way home. We found a new building near the highway, where we deposited our offering, used the new washroom, and walked down the steps and into the forest. Many plants were still in flower - fuchsias, hydrangeas, and several Eucryphias high on a tree (and others I could not identify), even roses still in bloom.

We visited the plant sale and everyone found a treasure to take home. We thoroughly enjoyed the trip.

Here is a little history of the garden, copied from the Cowichan Rhodo Society newsletter of April 2001.

"Horatio "Ray" Milner was born in Sackville, New Brunswick, in 1889. He attended Kings College, Nova Scotia, and graduated at age 20. He was called to the bar in 1911 after receiving a law degree from Dalhousie University. After serving in World War I, he was made Kings Council.

Ray Milner retired in 1969 at age 80 after an exceptional career. A renowned philanthropist and businessperson, he had been the chair and director of several companies as well

as a partner in the law firm Milner & Steer. As one of his many achievements, Mr. Milner was a founding director of Canadian Utilities and was instrumental in the formation and growth of the company. He was made a companion of the Order of Canada in December, 1969 and three universities awarded him honorary doctorates.

The 28 hectare (70 acre) estate at Qualicum was Mr. Milner's retreat from his busy business life in Alberta. He purchased the estate in 1937 and began to work on the garden with his first wife, Rina. Both loved the garden and the forest. Sadly, however, Rina passed away in 1952. More extensive work was started in 1954 after Ray's marriage to his second wife, Veronica. Veronica named the estate "Long Distance." In her words, "We called this house this name because it was so far away from my home, and because the telephone was always ringing for him!"

Mrs. Veronica Milner was a fascinating person. Born of the British aristocracy, she was the widow of Desmond Fitzgerald, 28th Knight of Glin, in County Limerick, Ireland. Her mother was a cousin of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Both Churchill and Mrs. Milner were descended from the First Duke of Marlborough, and thus were related to Diana, Princess of Wales. Indeed, the Prince and Princess of Wales visited the garden in 1986. Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip stayed at the estate for 3 days in October, 1987. Mrs. Milner's artist's eye and horticultural expertise combined to shape the garden. She was an accomplished artist and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Art and Commerce. Her elegant pastel botanicals and rich oils cover the walls of the residence at Long Distance. Mrs. Milner was a member of the Founding Committee of the VanDusen Gardens in Vancouver, the University of Alberta Devonian Botanical Garden, the Royal Horticultural Society and a fellow of the Garden Conservancy. She was also a member of the International Dendrology Society. The aims of this Society are to promote the study of woody plants and shrubs, and conserve and protect those that are rare and endangered. Mrs. Milner acquired many of the trees and shrubs at the estate when she accompanied her husband on his many business trips abroad.

The estate was acquired by Malaspina College in 1996. In May, 1996 the garden was dedicated as "The Milner Garden" in recognition of Ray and Veronica Milner. Malaspina's goal is to maintain the garden in perpetuity for education and the community's benefit in Ray Milner's memory.

Mrs. Milner passed away at her home at "Long Distance" on Nov. 5, 1998."

Wasps...our friends in the garden

Vancouver Rhodo News, January 2000

Unfortunately, the widespread belief that wasps are pests and should be exterminated persists even among otherwise knowledgeable gardeners. Contrary to this mistaken notion wasps are very beneficial insects. They are carnivorous insects and as such, consume a tremendous quantity of soft bodied insects such as aphids and caterpillars.

Although the adult wasps are generally nectar eaters they prey on many varieties of insects; they actually pre-chew

these insects and bring them to the nests to feed the young larvae.



In the spring, a young, mated female chews wood to build a small, globular nest of wood pulp and saliva. The first generation to hatch consists only of female workers. They bring food continually to the larvae which have hatched from eggs laid by the over-wintered queen. The nest consists of many layers of cells covered on the outside with a wood pulp sheath with an opening at the bottom. Later in the summer male wasps emerge from unfertilized eggs and mate.

During the late fall

and winter all the wasps die

except for

young,

mated

females who

over winter

in the

ground or

under

debris to

emerge

in the

spring



and carry on the cycle.

As most people know, bees can only sting once as their 'stinger' is barbed and cannot be withdrawn without fatally injuring the bee. Unlike bees, though, wasps can sting repeatedly because their stinger is not ripped out of their body when used.



The 3 most common varieties found in our gardens around Western Washington (and probably here in B.C.) all belong to the genus vespula and are commonly called Yellow Jackets, Hornets and Baldfaced Wasps.

The Western Yellow jacket, *Vespa pennsylvanica*, build their nests in the ground or in rotting logs and stumps. Female Yellow Jackets can sting repeatedly and will do so if their nest is threatened or disturbed.



The Sandhills Hornet, *Vespa arenaria*, generally called Yellow Jacket by most people, is probably the most abundant wasp found in the Puget Sound region. The female builds paper-like hanging nests of wood pulp and saliva. These nests, sometimes as large as a football, can be seen hanging under the eaves of houses, sometimes high up in the trees but generally closer to the ground, or built in shrubbery.

The third most common species of wasp in the Pacific Northwest is the Bald-faced Hornet or Bald-faced Wasp, *Vespa maculata*. Generally a little larger than the other species, this wasp is distinguished by black and white or yellowish-white markings on the face and thorax. Like the other two species of wasps common in the Pacific Northwest, the Bald-faced Wasp is responsible for the destruction of large quantities of aphids, caterpillars and other soft-bodied insects.

In our garden we try to leave one or two wasp nests intact during the summer to assist in insect control and we urge you to do the same. It is far better for all of us if we use natural predators than pesticides to control unwanted insect pests.



This article was originally written by Lynn Watts. I think the creatures he describes are the same ones we have on the Island. I would like to add a few notes to his.

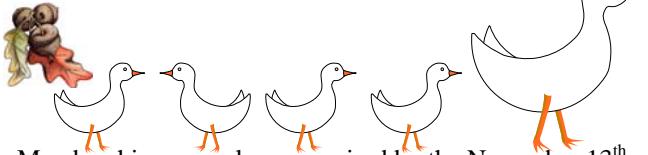


We live on acreage where there are several underground nests each summer, which we invariably find when we step on one. The wasps hate being stepped on. I end up with severe stings and swollen arms or legs every summer. I have the habit of carrying anti-histamines around - just in case.

This year, the wasps built a nice paper house on my Etta Burrows, which meant no weeding or even walking near that bush. However, one morning I noticed part of the nest lying on the ground, and the next morning, most of the tattered nest 30 feet away. I think the raccoons must have done it, while looking for honey. Poor wasps, they didn't get another nest built before fall.



FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN:



Membership renewals are required by the November 13th meeting to ensure this year's membership with ARS and to receive your winter copy of the ARS Journal!

All individual memberships, (which can include husband and wife) are \$35.00 Canadian.

All Associate memberships are \$10.00 Canadian.

All cheques should be made out to N.I.R.S. and either brought to the next meeting or mailed to Brian Staton at:

N.I.R.S.
Attn: Brian Staton
P.O. Box 3183
Courtenay, B.C.
V9N 5N4



DISCOUNTS FOR MEMBERS

Show your new 2008 N.I.R.S Membership card before items are rung up and receive a discount at the following retailers:

Arrowsmith Greenhouse Nursery in Coombs
Art Knapp's Plantland, Courtenay
Bees & Blooms Nursery, Courtenay
Black Creek Farm & Feed Supply
Campbell River Garden Centre
(not seed or bulbs)
Comox Valley Ornamental Concrete, Knight Rd.
Growing Concern in Black Creek (seasonal)
Just 'n Tyme Greenhouse Supply, Courtenay
Paradise Plants Nursery, Courtenay
River Meadows Farms, Courtenay
Shar-Kare Campbell River & Courtenay
The Plant Collector Nursery on Waveland Rd.

Check newsletter regularly
for additions to this list.

Rhododendron Nectar

POISONOUS TO BEES AND TO MAN.

I found this on the Internet. Written by Andrew Abrahams, Isle of Colonsay.

"May and early June are often the best weeks to visit the West Highlands of Scotland. The days are long, sunshine hours at their highest for the year, and gardens and hillsides are ablaze with colour from Rhodos and azaleas. Although far from their native Himalayas, Rhodos seem equally at home in the Scottish mountains. Rare species of Rhodos as well as the common R. ponticum flourish in the thin acid soils of the west. At the turn of the century West Highland landlords vied with each other as much over their collections of exotic plants, as the stag shoot and size of the salmon bag. Today many of these same estates are being over-run by R. ponticum as well as native bracken.

That rhododendron nectar is poisonous to man has somehow seeped into our folklore. Perhaps we all remember from our history lessons the fate that befell Pompey's army after they feasted on the local honey when crossing the mountains of the Caucasus. Yet most beekeepers are not sure how it is that with so many acres of the plant in the west, no-one seems to come to harm eating our honey!

The nectar from R. ponticum, the most common species found in the UK contains the poison grayonotoxin. Acute cases of honey poisoning reported from Nepal and Turkey indicate severe cardiovascular problems with very low blood pressure and slow pulse rate. A Scottish case has been reported where a man licked R. ponticum nectar from his hands and rapidly experienced loss of co-ordination and an inability to stand.

Rhododendron honey, however, remains toxic for only a very short period. Honey that is stored in the comb, along with say the sycamore and bluebell, will have lost its toxicity before the first extraction. Also, the bees themselves will consume most if not all of this nectar and honey for brood rearing during the spring and early summer build up.

Whilst the bees may build up well on the nectar and pollen of R. ponticum and most other rhodo species, and appear to come to no harm themselves from the toxins, there are one or two species on which they do not fare so well. A study of the species that produce a nectar toxic to bees was carried out on the Isle of Colonsay in the late 1950's.

Niall McNeil who kept bees at that time had experienced quite serious losses in hives kept near the estate garden with its famous rhodo collection. The experts from the West of Scotland Agricultural College and Glasgow University Medical Faculty were called upon to investigate further. After a long, grey Glasgow winter, early summer in the Hebrides during the 1950's would have seemed as exotic a research location as say Madagascar for today's scientist!



Nectar from different rhodo species was collected, their toxins analysed and fed to bees and injected into mice and

cats. The species found to be especially poisonous to all victims were R. thomsonii, R. arboreum, and R. pratti.

The study describes well, from my own experience, the effect of nectar poisoning on bees. Every spring I find a good scattering of bees on the ground in front of hives or on hive floors, usually lying on their sides or backs, legs and wings trembling, as if having an epileptic fit. The tongue is nearly always extended. The severity of losses varies from year to year and between even neighbouring hives. Large numbers of bees might be recruited to the toxic nectar from one particular hive and into another. A change in the weather will alter the foraging pattern of a hive when they next start flying. I suspect, also, that the amount of toxin produced in the nectar of the poisonous Rhodos species varies greatly each year. Thankfully, I have not yet experienced the extreme losses that prompted the original study on Colonsay."

The toxin isolated from the nectar of R. thomsonii was found to be identical to that found in R. ponticum, but because R. ponticum blooms later than the others investigated, and a much larger number of plants are blooming by that time, it is believed that much less or no toxins are present for the bees to ingest.



• Recipe Requests

Lemon Blueberry Coffee Cake (Pauline Bonney)

Prep time: 20 minutes

Bake time: 45 to 50 minutes

Cake:

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

1/2 tsp baking soda

1/2 cup butter or margarine

1 egg

1/2 cup plain yogurt

1 1/2 cups blueberries

Glaze:

1/2 cup icing sugar

1 tsp baking powder

1/4 tsp salt

3/4 cup white sugar

1 tsp vanilla

1 tablespoon finely
grated lemon rind



2 tablespoons butter or margarine

In medium bowl, mix together flour, baking powder, soda and salt.

In large bowl, with electric mixer, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in egg and vanilla. Stir in yogurt and lemon rind.

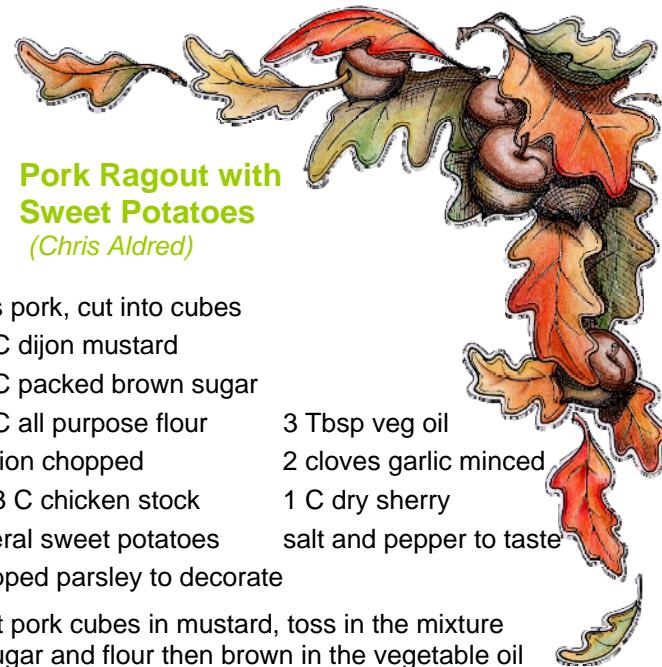
Stir dry ingredients into creamed mixture, just until well mixed. Remove 1 cup batter; set aside. Spread rest of

batter in 8-inch springform pan greased on bottom only. Place reserved batter back in bowl, stir in blueberries. Spread over batter in pan.

Bake in 350 F oven for 45 to 50 minutes or until it springs back when touched in the centre. Cool for 5 minutes, then remove outer ring from pan. Cool completely.

In small bowl, mix together icing sugar, lemon juice and butter until smooth. Drizzle from spoon over cake in thin stream.

This stays nice and moist!



Pork Ragout with Sweet Potatoes (Chris Aldred)

3 lbs pork, cut into cubes

1/4 C dijon mustard

1/3 C packed brown sugar

1/3 C all purpose flour 3 Tbsp veg oil

1 onion chopped

2 cloves garlic minced

1 1/3 C chicken stock

1 C dry sherry

several sweet potatoes salt and pepper to taste

chopped parsley to decorate

Coat pork cubes in mustard, toss in the mixture of sugar and flour then brown in the vegetable oil in a large skillet. Transfer to a slow cooker. Cook onion and garlic in the same skillet until soft then add to the pork. Discard any remaining fat or oil in the skillet and add chicken stock with sherry and bring to a boil, (scraping any brown bits into the liquid) then add to the pork mixture.

Peel sweet potatoes, and cut into cubes, cook in unsalted water until barely tender. Drain and add to pork mix.

Cook in slow cooker until pork is tender. Add salt and pepper to taste, stir and transfer to a serving dish. Sprinkle with parsley, and serve with your favourite veggies.

Note: this dish can be cooked in a conventional oven, just as you would prepare any other casserole.

