



The Rhodoteller

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I'm Irish

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March

North Island Rhododendron Society

2009/2010 Executive

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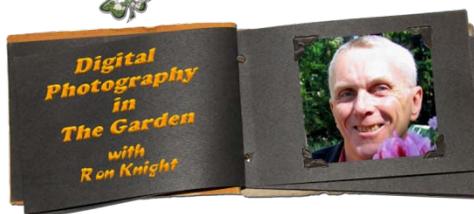
The club meets at 7:30 p.m
the second Tuesday of each month
(except May through August)
United Church in Comox.

Coming Events

2nd March 2010-Executive Meeting 2.00 pm

The executive meeting will be held at the home of Brian and Barb Staton, 1524 Seaview Road, Black Creek. Seaview is in the Miracle Beach area. From Courtenay/Comox go north on the Island Highway, turning onto Miracle Beach heading towards the park. As you approach the park, keep 'right' don't go into the parking lot! If you keep going you will end up on Seaview Rd which is on the other side of the Park.

9th March 2010-Regular Monthly Meeting



Ron Knight is a retired biology teacher and school administrator. He is a confirmed rhodoholic, past-president of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society, and currently the

Director for the American Rhododendron Society's BC District.

Over the past decade, Ron and his wife Carla have created Caron Gardens at Pender Harbour on the Sunshine Coast. In this one-acre lakeside garden, they display over 500 different rhododendrons, sell plants, host garden club tours, and teach a variety of gardening courses.

Ron is a keen garden photographer. His photographs have been published in the ARS Journal and in Gardens West magazine which features Caron Gardens in their winter 2009 edition. At our March meeting, Ron will be presenting a Powerpoint presentation entitled, "Digital Photography for Gardeners". He will discuss how your digital camera works, common photography pitfalls, and composition hints. **Bring your digital camera to the meeting.**

Caron Gardens can be found at: www3.telus.net/rcknight

PRESIDENTS' VIEW

...by Diana Scott

What wonderful weather we've been having! I understand that this February may have been one of the warmest on record. Lots of rain, but those sunny, warm days were definitely a gift.

John and I just returned from a month on the North Island of New Zealand, so we missed much of that wet weather. It was a pleasant surprise to come back to so much colour in the garden. *Cornus mas* is just outside our back door – covered with yellow flowers, *Viburnum bodnantense* 'Pink Dawn' is a mass of pink, and Christmas Cheer continues to bloom, having started in September! There are multi-coloured crocuses and early mini daffodils, winter aconite, primulas, and of course the heathers and ericas. The roses have started to leaf out and there are buds swelling everywhere. It was a very cheery 'welcome home'!



We had a wonderful time in New Zealand. It was the end of 'summer' so we enjoyed hot, sunny weather with only a few days of much needed rain. Between river rafting, checking out glow worm caves, and hiking on volcanoes, we visited a number of botanic gardens and parks as well as several private gardens. Many of the perennials and annuals reflected their European heritage and were very familiar. There were lots of hydrangeas blooming and the roses were out in full force. Since it was the end of summer, some of the more exotic plants had already bloomed, however there were proteas, grevilleas, and a great number of stunning tropical plants that are typically not grown here in the Valley! I was particularly interested in the native plants as we tramped through native beech forests, hugged the giant kauri and

totara trees, thought of Dr Seuss as we came across the common 'cabbage tree' *Cordyline australis*, stared in awe at the tree ferns and watched birds flitting through New Zealand's only native palm, the nikau. A standout native which was just in the last throes of flowering is the magnificent Pohutukawa which is known as the "New Zealand Christmas Tree". Covered with masses of red flowers there is no need to decorate!

The Rhodos that I saw were primarily vireyas, probably because their blooms caught my attention. One gardener I spoke with indicated that vireyas were great garden additions because they bloomed at different times and needed very little care. The Auckland Botanic Garden is developing a Rhododendron Gully with *Rhododendron arboreum* and *R. maddenii* as featured plants. Thrips seem to be a big problem for Rhodos in the Auckland area and the hope is that these two Rhodos will do well along with their already established deciduous azaleas. The Wellington Botanic Garden has Rhodos scattered throughout the park in addition to an area dedicated specifically to Vireyas. We were pleased that a number were in bloom when we ambled through the park.

Preparing for the upcoming battle in my own garden, I noticed that New Zealand is 'blessed' with many of the same weeds that we have here in the Valley. They also have many plants that have escaped the garden and are now common along the road sides and throughout the parklands. *Crocsmia x crocosmiiflora* hybrids have become quite invasive, and could be seen in drifts throughout the Island. A delight when I first saw them, the beautiful agapanthus was seen again and again – en masse – everywhere. Home gardeners who choose to continue to grow agapanthus are asked to take the seed heads off to reduce the spread. The roadsides sported masses of huge white and blue agapanthus – putting my scrawny garden specimens to shame.

As the days warm up and I spend more time out in the garden, I know that my camera will not be far away. We are delighted to have Ron Knight with us this month to hone our photography skills. I look forward to joining you, digital camera in hand, at the meeting!
(Photos by Diana Scott)

Member's Notes



...by Dave Godfrey

Unbelievably, our February meeting was one of the busiest ever with 44 members and 10 guests in attendance. Wisecracks and humour from acting Secretary Dick Bonney and acting President Harry Wright kept everyone chuckling throughout the business and show & tell portions of the meeting. A busy show & tell had Dick, Harry, Bernie and Brian explaining the large variety of blooms found in their gardens, due to our earlier than usual spring-like weather. This was followed by a short education where Brian Staton explained the different types of metal plant tags that may or may not last in a rhodo garden. He brought along his newly purchased Brother Label Maker for demonstration of how easy it is to make lasting tags. These name tags work well with the aluminum tags that our Ways & Means table sells at \$12 for a box of 50 tags.

Harry's presentation on 'Gardening Basics' drew a lot of interest and praise for a look at every aspect of gardening. There were several questions from members and guests which added to the interest and information of all present. If any members would like to check the quality of their garden soil, don't forget our club's pH soil tester. The tester is available for a small fee (\$10 with \$5 refunded upon return) through Harry Wright.



A preliminary show of hands for the garden tour trip to Powell River on Thursday, May 27th, 2010 provided enough interest to guarantee that the tour will be going ahead. Brian Staton will be taking names at our coming March meeting. Be sure to attend and get your name on the list if you wish to join the group for this exciting trip.

Ways and Means Director Nadine Boudreau is also taking

names for those members interested in purchasing a club vest or polo shirt. A new line of clothing allows for both men's and ladies sizes and styles. So be sure to place your order at the next meeting if you are interested, as Nadine will be placing the order following the meeting.

Also, Membership Chair Brian Staton is taking names for those members wishing to purchase an NIRS name tag for \$10. Those who have a name tag and wear it while purchasing raffle tickets will receive an extra 'free' ticket. Be sure to wear yours to the meetings.

A warm welcome goes out to our newest and 60th member, Margaret Griffith-Cochrane who joined our chapter at the January meeting. I also owe an apology to Jill Gould for announcing her as "Jillian" last month. Jill tells me she has never been a Jillian. Sorry Jill.

Congratulations to Ruth Rose, the lucky winner of the plant raffle for R. King George x Sun Spray donated by the Lightburns of Parksville. Also, congratulations to door prize winners Jake Ellis (A Rhododendron book donated by Mary Palmer) and Noni Godfrey (a mason bee house donated by Ross Munro.)

As warm weather has us busy pruning, splitting, and potting up plants, be sure to keep our revenue table and May sale in mind for a few donations. We always appreciate your support for these fundraising opportunities.

This year's George Fraser Day & Heritage Fair in Ucluelet will be held on the Saturday of the May long weekend (May 22nd). This year marks the tenth anniversary for the event that commemorates the work of local pioneer plantsman and rhododendron hybridizer George Fraser. Details of the day long event will be forthcoming from the local committee, and anyone planning to attend should book accommodations soon. This is also the same weekend as the Stubbs Island open house in Tofino. So an opportunity to enjoy two days of rhododendron history on the west coast waits.

As our guest speaker for the March meeting, Ron Knight, will be speaking on "Digital Photography in the Garden" members are asked to bring along their cameras and arrive early to ensure a good seat. This topic is sure to garner a lot of interest and a full house. See you there, and don't forget to wear your name tag!

May good luck
be with you
wherever you go,
and your blessings
outnumber the
shamrocks
that grow

Epimediums

...by Nadine Boudreau

Our Rhododendron gardens often form a woodland garden. We will have a canopy of trees providing drabbed shade, protecting our plants from too much sun or from severe winds. The middle layer of the woodland garden would include our beloved Rhododendrons perhaps interplanted with Pieris, Nandinas, Mahonias or Hamamelis. The lowest tier or woodland floor is where we can add some interesting perennials that can compliment the flowering period of the Rhodos, add foliage contrast and texture or bring colour to the garden throughout the year.

Plants for the woodland floor include Ferns, Hellebores, Pulmonarias, Trilliums, and Hostas just to name a few.

One groundcover plant that may often be over-looked is *Epimedium*. These deserve consideration when purchasing 'extras' for the Rhododendron garden.

These plants will tolerate a range of conditions, have interesting flowers, great foliage and spread slowly by rhizome developing into dense clumps. They can edge a pathway; fill space between Rhodos or mass plant under deciduous shade trees.



Epimedium sulphureum

The plants prefer moist well drained soil in drabbed shade or morning sun. They will however, perform well in dry shade, as well as in a position with more sun. This tolerance of little moisture adds to its value with our dryer, summers (Water restrictions).

The plants which are about 6-12" in height consist of many heart shaped leaves. I love the plant for the leaves alone. The leaves emerge in the spring with a reddish tinge to them, turning green for the summer, then again reddening in the fall. Most species leaves are deeply veined and edged with tiny spines (prickles) reminding us that they are part of the

Berberidaceae family.

The flowers of the *Epimedium* are small 'dainty' marvels that are often described as 'spider like', 'orchid like' and like fairy wings. The flowers range in colour depending on the species and cultivar from white, creamy yellow, yellow, pink, purple, and orange. The flowers will rise above the foliage, but what is often recommended and something I was taught many years ago is to shear the foliage to the ground in February, before the flower stems emerge in March/April. Look carefully in the clumps to make sure the stems have not emerged before shearing! New lush foliage will emerge with the flowers. It would be ideal at this time to add a light top dressing of compost or leaf mulch. This is basically all you have to do to this easy care plant.



Epimedium rubrum

Epimediums are easy to divide as they spread by rhizomes. You can lift the clump in either spring or fall and cut them with a sharp knife or spade. Replant in a good soil enriched with compost. These are great plants to share with friends. These would also be great potted up for our NIRS plant sale!

Some good species and cultivars to look for are *Epimedium grandiflorum* 'Lilafee' (lilac), 'Rose Queen', 'White Queen'. *Epimedium* x *versicolor* 'Sulphureum' (yellow) and *Epimedium* x *warleyense* 'Orangekonigin' (pale orange). Frasers' Thimble Farms Nursery on Salt Spring Island has a large selection of *Epimediums* listed on their website catalogue, always a temptation.

Epimediums are native plants from the eastern Mediterranean to eastern Asia. Many species originate from China. These plants were and are used as medicinal cures ranging from memory loss to osteoporosis. One of the common names for this plant and an herbal formulation is 'Horny goat weed', originating from a farmer's observation of what happened to his goats after they consumed *Epimedium*. I will leave that for you to look up yourselves....Oh plant history, much more amusing than one would expect!

Rhododendron of the Year Awards

...by Garth Wedemire

A new feature on the ARS District 1 Website: www.rhodos.ca is a page which summarizes the "Rhododendron of the Year Awards" for the Pacific Northwest and Southwestern British Columbia (ARS District 1) for the years 2002 to 2010.

Rhododendron of the Year Awards are made in four categories for each of eight geographical regions of the United States and Canada. These include elepidote rhododendrons, lepidote rhododendrons, deciduous azaleas and evergreen azaleas. Twenty-nine plants have been selected for the year 2010. See the following webpage for more information: <http://www.rhododendron.org/royawardsintro6.htm>



Plants selected for the 2010 Rhododendron of the Year Awards were drawn from the American Rhododendron Society's "Proven Performers" lists. These lists are developed and updated each year by the local ARS chapters and are made up of plants that do very well in members' own gardens over many years.

The purpose of the ROY awards is to educate the public about the wide range of rhododendrons that can be grown successfully in people's gardens. To be selected for a ROY award a plant must:

- have excellent foliage and flowers
- have an attractive growth habit
- prove itself hardy for the specific region
- be pest and disease resistant



Seaview Sunset



Too Bee



Gibraltar



Rosebud

Plants selected for the "Northwest Region" (our region) for 2010 are:

- **'Seaview Sunset'** (elepidote) - a Frank Fujioka cross of 'Nancy Evans' and 'Canadian Sunset'
- **'Too Bee'** (lepidote) - a Warren Berg cross of 'Patricia' and R. keiskei 'Yaku Fairy'
- **'Gibraltar'** (deciduous azalea) - a selection by Edmund de Rothschild
- **'Rosebud'** (evergreen azalea) - a Joe Gable cross of 'Louise Gable' and 'Caroline Gable'



See the webpage: <http://rhodos.ca/ROTY/roty.html> for Rhododendron of the Year Awards for the Pacific Northwest and Southwestern British Columbia (ARS District 1) for the years 2002 to 2010.



... Tidbits

Powell River Garden Tour

When: Thursday, May 27th

Where: 4-5 gardens in the Powell River area

How: Walk on 6:30 a.m. Powell River ferry. Parking at the ferry will cost \$3.00 for 16 hours. Return 5:15 p.m. Powell River ferry.

Ferry: Approximately \$10.00 each way for those not carrying a gold card. Pay your own way at the toll booth.

Food: *Breakfast:* (ferry food or ?); *Lunch:* bring your own bag lunch to eat at David Moore's garden (he will supply refreshments); *Dinner:* (ferry food or ?).

Transportation: 21 passenger bus Plus a 12 passenger van for a total of 33 spaces. Overflow spaces will be by car pooling provided by David Moore.

Sign-up: At the March NIRS meeting. First come first served.

Cost: \$20.00 per person.

The Ultimate Rhododendron Conference

April 9 – 11 at UBC Botanical Garden

With about a month to go, the conference is already 75% filled and instructors Ron Knight and Douglas Justice are delighted with the response.

There are still spaces left at both level 1 and level 2. Level 1 classes, with Ron, are all about rhododendron gardening and provide an excellent opportunity to more deeply involve potential and newer rhododendron club members in the wonderful world of rhododendrons. Level 2 classes, with Douglas, are for veteran collectors who want to know more about classification, identification, culture and care of species rhododendrons.

Friday April 9th is the garden tour day. Douglas Justice (Curator of UBC Botanical Garden) and Todd Major (former Director of the Park and Tilford Gardens) will be conducting morning tours of UBC Botanical Garden. In the afternoon, Gerry Gibbens (Head Gardener for the Sino-Himalayan

Garden) and Roy Forster (original designer of the Rhododendron Walk) will be leading tours at VanDusen Botanical Garden.

A large selection of species and hybrid rhododendrons will be offered for sale on Saturday and Sunday.

If you wish to register, please visit www.rhodos.ca to print a registration form. Mail it as soon as possible.

For further information, email Ron Knight at: rcknight@telus.net



Milner Garden's Spring Speakers' Series:

March 25th: Gary Lewis presents

"Among Kangaroo Paws and Grass Trees: The incredible spring flora of Western Australia - Join Gary for a trip Down Under to explore an out of this world flora you have likely never even dreamed of - a world of banksias and feather flowers, donkey orchids and spider orchids, eucalypts and myrtles and, of course, kangaroo paws and grass trees. In this talk you'll see wonderful photography from his recent trip as well as learn about why this area of the world is considered a biodiversity "hot spot."

April 29th: Des Kennedy will be the speaker on a topic yet to be determined but sure to be both informative and entertaining!

All presentations will be held at the Qualicum Beach Civic Center located at 747 Jones Street, and will begin at 7:00 pm. Tickets are \$10.00 each. Tickets will be available for sale at the door on the evening of the presentations.

Your support of these fundraising activities is greatly appreciated; the dollars raised from low-keyed events such as these are very important in the effort to keep Milner Gardens & Woodland the wonderful place we all enjoy.

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MERLE SANDERS 1931 ~ 2009



In October 2009, Merle was awarded the Bronze Medal from the Eugene chapter of the ARS. On the night of November 22nd, he passed peacefully away of a brain aneurism. He wrote articles for their newsletter; they ranged from pathos to comedy to raising rhododendrons. The following article was printed in their January 1995 newsletter (Reprinted with permission from the editor of the Eugene chapter's newsletter). This article is written by 'Jean Marie de Montague' herself.

From The Heart

by 'Jean Marie de Montague'

I said I wouldn't write until one of my children won a prize for my owner, Merle, but my life was such a mess; I know understanding readers will want to hear about it. People do get married and many of these marriages fail for one reason or another.

It is no different with us plants. I fell truss over leaf in love with a dark, good looking stranger whose name will remain unmentioned. We met in a truss show ~ by the time the show ended, we were wed. Having children wasn't discussed; alas, I presumed too much. Soon we moved out on our own—a mistake—and the subject of children arose. Since we live in unpredictable times, he declared he wasn't about to have children, what with two horrible freezes in the past few years. Many of his older friends had died as well as many, young ones who hadn't matured enough to take such cold weather. He had aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews who had frozen to death—horrible!

Recent droughts had also taken relatives and friends. They died of thirst—the worst way of dying – except being talked to death. Plants get puny and straggly before expiring. In fact, his uncle who was very robust and healthy until the drought hit, clung to life for two years before popping off.

It was clear, no children for my beloved! I began to cry – the more I cried the harder it was to talk to him. He was so stubborn! I dreamed of being back in Merle's garden.

Knowing that I would never have children, I couldn't go on. Certainly I'd never step out on him. There was only one thing to do: I got an annulment. Crawling back to Merle on my roots, I pleaded with him to allow me to come back to his garden. He finally agreed, but only if I would let him be the matchmaker in the future. This

time I will be sure to have children; lots of them are wanted. He will have to ask Merle for my truss in marriage. Now that this is settled, my problems are over and I will have many children for my owner to be proud of.
THE END

Vancouver Island Hybridizers The Victoria Contributors Part 3 by Alan Campbell, Cowichan Valley Chapter Stuart Holland (1910–1989)

Interest in rhododendrons blossomed in Victoria long before the start of the Victoria Rhododendron Society. During the early 1950s, Dr. Stuart Holland began to establish the garden of his Transit Road property in Oak Bay. Born in British Columbia and brought up here, Stuart Holland followed his interest in geology to UBC, received his bachelor's and master's degrees, and continued on to a PhD from Princeton University. His expertise in geology would see him become the chief geologist for the mines ministry in his home province.

In performing his duties as chief geologist, he travelled the length and breadth of the province, from seashores to alpine meadows and with his inquiring mind developed a fascination for the diverse flora he came upon. Through his interest in botany, he became acquainted with Dr. Adam Szczawinski, curator of botany at the Provincial Museum during the 1950s, and the two of them, along with eight other gardening enthusiasts around Victoria, organized The Arboretum Society of the Pacific Northwest. The purpose was to establish a national arboretum within Victoria, beginning with a specialized rhododendron garden. Federal politics being as fickle as it is, these plans were stifled within their fledgling steps. Undeterred, the Arboretum Society scaled back their plans and with donations from area nursery operators such as Ed Lohbrunner, Richard Layritz, and Ted and Mary Greig, the planting of Playfair Park in Saanich began.

Stuart Holland's interest in rhododendrons was second to none, and naturally led to attempts at hybridizing. He dabbled in the Triflora subsection with *R. augustinii* and also did some work with *R. thomsonii*.

No record of the hybrids produced from this work seems to exist, but his work with the subsection *Cinnabarina* is where he really excelled. Bill Dale gives high praise indeed when he speaks of his best friend as being "the best rhodo man I have known." The Victoria Chapter has chosen to make one of Stuart Holland's *R. cinnabarinum* crosses as their marquee plant. This hybrid is 'Transit Gold' {'Royal Flush' (cream form) x *R. cinnabarinum* ssp. *xanthocodon*} (reg. 1990). Stuart Holland died early in 1989, but Bill Dale saw to the registration of his finest work. The hybrid 'Stuart Holland', an open pollinated hybrid of *R. cinnabarinum* Roylei group was registered in 1993, but it is not clear in the registration declaration in the Journal of the ARS whether this is a Holland cross or a Vaartnou cross. Bill Dale is adamant that the hybrid was a plant selected by Stuart Holland from his garden, which was registered by Herman Vaartnou in Holland's memory. The only other hybrid that has been found, to my knowledge, and attributed to Holland is growing in Peter Kearns's garden at Cowichan Bay. This unnamed hybrid is a cross of *R. cinnabarinum* Roylei group and 'Lady Chamberlain'. Only three hybrids known of one man's work! Are there more? I have heard of cuttings taken from the old Transit Road garden by a member of the Victoria Rhododendron Society but have yet to confirm this.



Stuart Holland chose *R. cinnabarinum* Roylei group for two of his three known crosses
[Mike Trembath photo]

Stuart Holland's memory will endure not only because of the Victoria club's choice of 'Transit Gold' as its emblem, but also because of Saanich municipality immortalizing the names of the original members of the Arboretum Society on a bronze plaque in Playfair Park.

I grow and propagate the plants of these three gentlemen, but unfortunately never had the opportunity to meet them, but I do know those they mentored and who have taught me in turn. In that, I hold them in gratitude. Dr. Holland I hold in special reverence in the expectation that, should I ever enter the realm of the hybridizer, I too will work with the subsections *Cinnabarina* and *Triflora*.

References Harvey, M.J. 2006. *Magnificent Failure: Playfair Park. Victoria Rhododendron Society Newsletter, February.* McCarter, J.A. 1989. *Rhododendrons on a Western Shore.*

RECIPE REQUESTS

Banana Fruit Bread

...Helena Zukowski

Ingredients:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1-3/4 C flour | 1/2 tsp salt |
| 2 tsp Baking Powder | 1/2 tsp Baking Soda |
| 2/3 C sugar | 2 small bananas, peeled and mashed |
| 1/3 C soft butter | 2 eggs |
| 1/2 C raisins | 1 apple, peel and dice |
| 1/2 C chopped walnuts | |

Beat and blend butter, sugar and eggs until light coloured. In medium bowl, mix all the other dry ingredients together and add to egg mixture. Add the nuts and fruit, mix well. Pour into greased loaf or bread pan, bake 350°F for 1 hour or until a probe comes out clean.

To the basic recipe, I add about a cup or so of chopped dried apricots, cranberries and pumpkin seeds. I also substituted 1/2 cup of pureed pumpkin instead of the apple just because I had it in my refrigerator. This is one of those "never comes out the same" recipes depending on substitutions.

Until Next Month
Noni

Happy
St. Patrick's
Day

