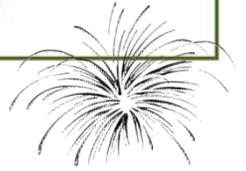




Happy New Year

The Rhodoteller

www.nirs.rhodos.ca



Coming Events

4th January 2011-Executive Meeting 2:00 pm

The executive meeting will be held at the home of Helena and Roy Stewart, 2431 Seabank Road, Courtenay, BC.

(Two driveways past Dick Bonney's)

11th January 2011-Regular Monthly Meeting

A POWERPOINT PRESENTATION



ARS Gold Medal recipient and Species Foundation Executive Director, Steve Hootman will be our guest speaker in January. His presentation on "Rhododendrons in their native habitat" will explain how this translates to our cultivation of the various species. Steve

will include tips on cultivation and show many great photos of scenery and plants in the wild.

Steve will also be giving different presentations to the MARS and Nanaimo chapters on the following two evenings. On the 12th at the MARS chapter in Qualicum, the topic is "Plant exploration in Southern China and Vietnam".

On the 13th in Nanaimo, the topic is "Exciting changes and new introductions at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden."



JANUARY

North Island Rhododendron Society

2010/2011 Executive

President

Diana Scott338-0208

Vice-President

Paul Wurz287-4301

Past President:

Harry Wright.....338-8345

Secretary

Pauline Thompson339-3423

Treasurer

Dave Godfrey335-0717

Director: Ways & Means

Nadine Boudreau339-0909

Director: Membership

Brian Staton337-5228

Director: Revenue Table

Chris Aldred335-3221

Director: Newsletter/Library

Noni Godfrey335-0717
..... nonigod@shaw.ca

Social Committee:

Louise Casson.....334-2331

Publicity:

Helena Stewart.....339-1733

Sunshine Lady:

Nancy Munro.....334-3719

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



Wish you the blessings
and a Happy New Year
Wish you the blessings
of Christmas
Wish you the blessings
of a Happy New Year

President's View

...by Diana Scott

Our winter season in the Valley is short compared to other areas of Canada, but it still makes me long for spring. Plantings in the garden can lift the spirits during these winter months making a tour of the garden a must! Yellow and white seem to be the prominent colours in the 'winter floral display', and what great colours to brighten up the landscape! In addition to the colour, it is a gift to be able to walk outside on one of our warmer sun-kissed winter days and be greeted by a wafting fragrance coming from some corner of the garden.



For both colour and scent, Charity and Winter Sun mahonias are a striking addition to any garden. I call these my 'architectural' plants since they

are over 6 feet tall and covered with prickly leaves throughout most of the year. Then, in early winter, they develop tall spikes of yellow flowers which bloom for several months depending on the conditions. Charity (Mahonia x media 'Charity') has pale yellow flowers and a light scent. Winter Sun (Mahonia x media) has brighter yellow flowers, a scent like lily-of-the-valley and a somewhat more compact growth. I have both in my garden and despite the differences; I have difficulty telling them apart.



The yellow winter flower racemes develop into grape-like clusters of wax-coated purple-black berries by late summer. Throughout the year this is a

striking plant, but its scented blooms really make it stand out in the winter garden!

Although not scented, the cheery yellow flowers of winter jasmine (jasminum nudiflorum) certainly

brighten up those winter days! In my garden the flowers start in November, appearing first near the base and then blooming up the stem to the tip as winter progresses. The leafless stems are bright green which almost gives the plant an 'evergreen' look. A reliable shrub introduced from China in 1844, it has been a garden staple as a wall shrub or for scrambling over a low wall or bank. It's pretty tough and will even show off its small yellow blooms when covered with snow!

Winter honeysuckle (Lonicera fragrantissima) is a shrub form with creamy white flowers that bloom in winter. The flowers are smaller than most honeysuckle and are not very showy, but they have a lovely, sweet, lemony fragrance! Depending on the winter, Lonicera fragrantissima may retain some or none of its leaves, so the flowers typically appear on relatively bare branches. I have a small plant that I'm sure will become a favourite in our winter garden.

Sarcococca (Himalayan Sweetbox) is a 'sleeper' in the garden. The genus name means Fruit (Sarcos) Berries (Cocca), likely because the drupes (that's for Bernie) stand out somewhat after flowering. A rather unassuming evergreen plant in



the semi-shade garden all summer, it comes into its own throughout the winter. Sarcococca species originate in China and the Himalayas and are related to the common box, buxus. The plants have narrow rich green leaves with small insignificant white flowers that form on the underside of the stems in early winter. Sarcococca hookeriana var. humilis is commonly grown in gardens and forms a low mat of deep green foliage. Sarcococca ruscifolia is a taller plant which grows to five feet and is commonly called Fragrant Sweetbox. I have both plants growing close together along our walkway, and to me ruscifolia is the sarcococca that scents the garden with a heady vanilla-like fragrance on warm winter days.

Happy New Year

What a joy to be able to enjoy both flowers and fragrance in our gardens throughout the winter. This is indeed a paradise!

Diana :)

Member's Notes

Ring in the
NEW YEAR!

...by Dave Godfrey

Wow! Wasn't that a party? A wonderful evening of fun, fellowship and festive foods was enjoyed by the 39 members and guests who attended on Dec. 14th. Unfortunately, a few members came but could not stay as they had another event to attend. Also, several members were away enjoying a holiday.

Thanks to the fund raising efforts of our Ways & Means and Revenue tables over the past year, NIRS Santa was able to provide all those in attendance a lovely garden related gift. **Corinne Innes** had attendees trying their luck at the popular guessing games. The jar of chocolate coated almonds was won by **Nadine Boudreau** with a correct total of "145". The jar of jelly beans contained 447 and **Dorothy Law** gave the closest guess with "435". Congratulations ladies!

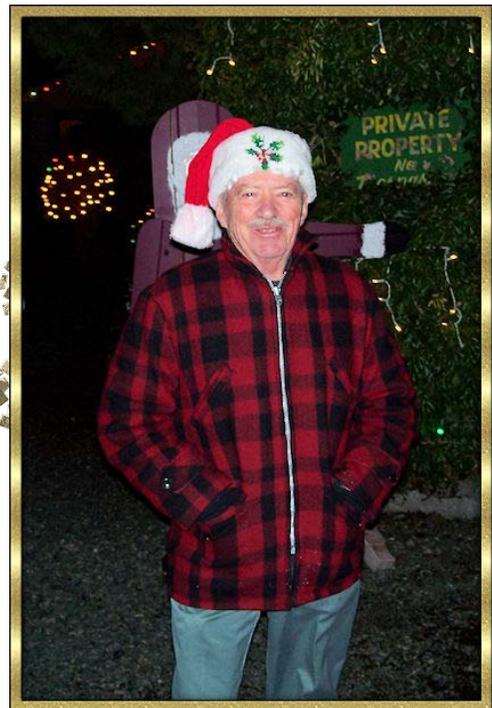
Also to be congratulated is the winning 'blue' team in this year's Jeopardy Game. With 23 correct out of 33, each member of the 'blue' team (**Diana Scott, Tim & Julie Engelhardt, Corrine Innes, Jill Gould and Dave Doubek**) received a small potted rhodo prize donated by **Brian Staton**.



Brian Staton the lucky winner of the basket donated by **Lois Clyde**.

It was wonderful to welcome **Harry & Gwen's** daughter, **Debbie and Barr McLaren**, and to personally thank Deb for once again making and donating a beautiful wreath for the door prize. The wreath was won by **Lori Kenny**. Meanwhile, and thanks to **Christine Aldred**, everyone went home with a small cookie gift pack.

Our thanks to all the executive members who helped organize the event. Special thanks go to **Nancy Munro** for organizing the kitchen in **Louise Casson's** absence, and to **Nadine Boudreau** who received lots of praise for serving up a delicious hot apple cider. Photos of the evening's activities can be found on our NIRS website.



Despite the stormy wet weather the week leading up to Christmas, **Harry Wright** reports 718 visitors passing through Haida Gold Gardens during their three open evenings. The light show is well worth the small donations, which this year totalled \$1000; all of which will be donated to the Sonshine Lunch Club to provide healthy lunches for those in need. As usual, the family was there to help Gwen serve up her traditional hot apple cider and cookie refreshments. The

kids were in awe of the lights and the magical train scenes in the workshop.

If you haven't had a chance to take in the beauty of Haida Gold Gardens at Christmastime, you'd better make it there next December as rumour has it that the 15th annual may be the last. Thanks again Harry and Gwen for adding to the beauty of the season. It is a lot of work appreciated by the many visitors.

ARS Gold Medal recipient and Species Foundation Executive Director, Steve Hootman from Federal Way, Washington will be our guest speaker in January. His presentation on "Rhododendrons in their native habitats" will demonstrate how this translates to our cultivation of the various species. Steve will include tips on cultivation and show many great photos of scenery and plants in the wild. This is going to be a popular program with members from other chapters attending, so be sure to arrive early for a good seat. And don't forget to wear your name tag for an extra chance on a raffle prize.

Christmas Hamper Drive!



Many members dropped off their donated items or cash to our hamper coordinator **Chris Aldred**. Our hamper supports the Salvation Army Program. This year we had a family of five – two adults and three children. A variety of foods, gifts and vouchers ensured that the family had an enjoyable Christmas holiday season. Thank you to all who helped to make the program another tremendous success.

Garden Personalities

...by Nadine Boudreau

I have often heard that pets can resemble their owners. There was even a contest in the local paper awhile back. Though I am not sure if I believe this, I will not be getting a pitbull or Shar Pei (wrinkle dog) any time soon.

What I have noticed while visiting gardens through the years is that many of these gardens are a true reflection of the gardener's personality or heritage. These are gardens that have been designed and built by the owners, usually over many years.

Our club members have some great examples of what I think reflects their persona. I will just touch on a few examples in this article.

When I first visited Harry and Gwen's lovely home and garden, I could just feel the warmth and welcome in the garden that Harry and Gwen are known for personally. Harry's love for knowledge and the growing and hybridizing of Rhododendrons is apparent with the propagation area being one of the first stops on a garden tour. Through the garden you see the collection Harry has proudly acquired, he is always happy to share a tidbit about a particular plant. Along the way, you see the wonderful perennials, annuals and the rose garden that Gwen has added to soften the garden, just as she has with Harry, what a complementary pair.

As we all know, Noni and Dave Godfrey do a lot for the club, newsletter, speaker organizing, treasurer, ways and means, library... as well as all the other volunteer activities they participate in. These are generous, nice, helpful, busy people, and their wonderful garden reflects this. The garden is full of plants, not just Rhododendrons, tons of perennials, rock garden plants, fruit trees, vegetables, annuals, roses and Dahlias. Noni grows many of these plants from seeds in her greenhouse, saves and splits her Dahlias to share with others, and donates some to our plant sale. Oh, the wonderful pond and stream, not a little barrel, but a huge water garden filled with fish. And a great fire pit to sit with friends and socialize. It

takes a few visits to take in all the wonderful plants that this garden has to offer.

Bernie and Gloria Guyader have a very interesting garden. They have a fine collection of Rhododendrons, but it is when you start exploring and looking closely do you find the most interesting plants. Rare alpiners, woodland perennials, small bulbs and the bonsai collection reflect these gardeners great knowledge of plants, appreciation of beauty in a non-opposing way. And of course, patience; calmly waiting for these intricate flowers and the forming of the bonsai.

When I visited Bob and Adela Smith's garden, I was overwhelmed with the beauty and lushness of the lawns and plants. They have developed a wonderful garden in a relatively short time. What I noticed right away was Bob's real pleasure in propagation, collecting, and documentation of the garden. His talk on his computerized data system had my mind reeling. This man is a scientist through and through. You can see the excitement in Bob when he shows you his greenhouse, sophisticated misting system and the hundreds of Rhododendrons growing. As with most of the gardens, the grace and beauty of the garden is the reflection of lady of the house, in this case Adela.

The last garden that I would like to mention today is that of Dick and Pauline Bonney. This garden is a wonderful mixture of Rhododendrons and perennials. As soon as I walked into this garden I felt like I was in England. Lush grass walkways lead around perennials borders bursting with flowers of all colours. Rock walls and plants dividing areas making small "rooms" that I first fell in love with when studying garden design. There were huge, lush Rhododendrons displaying large trusses, with bulbs covering the soil surface. It is always a great adventure, following the pathways, not knowing where they would lead. Gracious garden, gracious people.

The varieties of these gardens tell me that one should follow their feelings and passions when designing or working in garden beds. Books and magazines show us great examples of plants and combinations, but truly beautiful and interesting gardens come from within. You do not need to adhere to 'rules', or follow what is in vogue. Working your garden this way, will have you developing a garden that is as unique and interesting as yourself.

Curl Up and Stay warm

...by Diana Scott

As the temperatures dip below freezing I watch the garden take on the frosty hues of winter. The Rhodos in our garden sustain winter damage from time to time, but usually 'weather' the mild cold that we typically get here on the coast. Over the past few winters we've had some pretty COLD spells, which may be the beginning of a nippier trend in years to come.

Looking out our window at the garden, we can usually tell how cold it is by the curl and droop of the Rhodo leaves! Folks new to Rhodo growing may not be aware that the sight of droopy, shriveled-looking leaves on their favourite Rhodo is an appropriate protective response to the drop in temperature. Rhodos that are cold-hardy seem to show more leaf movement than those that are not.

Biologist Erik Tallak Nilsen in his research paper "Why Do Rhododendron Leaves Curl?"

<http://arnoldia.arboretum.harvard.edu/pdf/articles/796.pdf> helps to explain his view of this interesting phenomenon.

Nilsen begins by crediting Charles Darwin for first categorizing leaf movements in his book "The Power of Movement in Plants" published in 1880. Darwin reported that many plant parts, particularly leaves, move in response to both environmental and physiological factors. The key factors are light intensity, light direction, water content, and temperature. The leaves of plants in hot, dry environments respond to temperature by moving upward to avoid excess light absorption. In contrast, many Rhodo leaves droop downward and curl inward in response to cold temperatures.



According to the research described in Nilsen's article, the droop and the curl are two distinct phenomena, both serving to protect the leaf from cold damage. Thermotropic (temperature related) leaf movements have been commonly thought to be a mechanism to prevent leaf desiccation or loss of water during cold periods or a way for the plant to shed snow, but Nilsen's research does not support these theories. The droop and curl seem to be related more to the protection of the cell membranes from the effects of freezing. The leaf drooping is controlled by hydration of the leaf stalk or petiole, and the downward angle this produces may serve to protect the leaf from membrane damage due to strong sunlight and cold temperatures.



The inward curl appears to be a response to leaf temperature (as opposed to air temperature) which reduces the amount of leaf area exposed to light, preventing cell damage by slowing the rate of thaw. Most damage caused by leaf freezing is a result of ice crystals piercing the cellular membranes, followed by too rapid a rate of re-warming. Drooping and curling may both reduce the area exposed to sunlight thus slowing the rate of re-warming after a period of cold. Leaf movement seems to be a significant factor in determining cold hardiness in rhododendrons.

Despite what it looks like in your garden, the Rhodos that appear the most shriveled may very well be the ones that are taking the cold weather in stride! I hope that over the upcoming months you will be taking our cold winter temperatures in stride along with your Rhodos!

(Photos: Rhododendron leaf curl – Diana Scott)



Legends and Flowers

...Part II

...by Helena Stewart

Even though a flower is only peripherally involved in the first legend, it's timely and explains the bleak, cold, dark days we are currently experiencing. It seems our climate is all the fault of Demeter (goddess of crops and harvest) her husband (Zeus) and their daughter (Persephone.) As the tale goes, Persephone was fritting away time gathering **crocuses** when Hades (god of the underworld where the dead live) spotted her and whisked her away to his subterranean house. Distraught, Demeter complained to Zeus (who was Hades' brother) but Zeus refused to intervene—leaving Demeter no choice but to withdraw from her role as goddess. Without her, no crops could grow and the extinction of the human race loomed.

Grumbling, Zeus went to Hades and told him he had to let Persephone go; unfortunately the god of the underworld had tricked Persephone into eating some pomegranate seeds. (It was a rule of the Fates that whoever consumed food or drink in the Underworld was doomed to remain there for eternity.) With a little arm twisting, Hades agreed to negotiate so Persephone had to spend 1/3 of each year in the Underworld but she got the other 2/3 of the year with her mother. While her daughter is with Hades, Demeter mourns and refuses to allow crops to grow (well, except maybe for those NIRS members who have a greenhouse.)

Feuding gods also play a role in the legend behind another spring flower, the **hyacinth**. According to the myth, Hyacinth was a beautiful young man who loved Apollo but was admired by Zephyr, the West Wind, which all led up to one heck of a jealous dust-up between the latter two gods. At one of the regular discus throwing contests Apollo and Hyacinth used to have for fun, Zephyr blew Apollo's discus off course and right into the skull of Hyacinth. Since gods can't undo the work of other gods, Apollo could only transform the dead man into a flower but the tears Apollo shed left an indelible stain on the petals. If you happen to be in Sparta, one of the city's principal festivals is a three-day event dedicated to Hyacinth, the first day of which is reserved for mourning the death of Hyacinth.

There are two legends about the **snowdrop**, January's emblem and the first flower to bloom in spring. The first

tells about how Eve sat weeping after her expulsion from the Garden of Eden in a world that was cold, snowy, dark and barren with no sign of life. A sympathetic angel who obviously did not like seeing a woman cry caught a snowflake in his hand and breathed on it whereupon it dropped to earth as the first snowdrop. A German legend has another twist: when God was making all things on earth, he asked Snow to go to the flowers and request that they donate a little colour. All the flowers refused except for the tiny snowdrop—for its sacrifice it was given the honour of being the first to bloom.

The favourite legend about the **daffodil** (or narcissus) harks back to a young wood nymph named Echo who fell in love with a Greek youth named Narcissus upon whom the gods had bestowed great beauty. In order to put a damper on the youth's vanity, the gods warned that if he dared look at his own reflection he would lose his stunning good looks. Narcissus was so totally obsessed with his own beauty that he totally ignored Echo who was consumed by love and faded away until only her voice was left. As punishment, the goddess Nemesis led the vain Narcissus to a shimmering lake where the self-adoring nincompoop couldn't resist looking at his reflection. Like Echo, he too faded away. The other gods, reluctant to waste all that beauty and thinking Nemesis a tad harsh, transformed Narcissus into a flower that continues to face downward, always searching for its own reflection.

In England, many tales are told about the **tulip**. In one, tulips were tiny cradles where fairies lay their children at night, giving the flowers bright, new colors in return. Another legend tells of how, ages and ages ago, happiness was hidden from people in the yellow bud of a tulip and no one had the power to open it until one day a woman with a child walked in the field. The child saw the flower, laughed and ran to the flower—lo and behold, the bud opened. The child's laughter did what no other power could do. Since that time tulips are presented only to people who are happy. Or so they say.

In February, we look at legends about flowers and love, faithful, jealous and perfidious. Happy January and watch out for geeks bearing gifts of pomegranate seeds.

TiBbits... Goodie Gals for the
January meeting are:
Maureen Denny, Barb Staton
and Chris Aldred.



RECIPE REQUESTS



CHUNKY TOBLERONE SHORTBREAD

- 2 C butter, softened
- 1 C berry or super-fine sugar
- 3 ½ C flour
- ½ C cornstarch
- 2 bars (100 gr each) Toblerone Swiss Milk Chocolate, chopped
- 3 Tbsp sifted icing sugar



Preheat oven to 350° F . Beat butter and sugar in large bowl with electric mixer on high until light and fluffy. Combine flour and cornstarch. Gradually add to butter mixture, beating until well blended.

Stir in chocolate chunks.



Drop by heaping tablespoonsful onto ungreased baking sheet about 1 inch apart.

Bake: 20 – 25 min. or until lightly browned. Cool 5 mins on baking sheet. Sprinkle with icing sugar. Remove to wire racks and cool completely. Makes approx 4 doz cookies.

LEMON ALMOND STRIPS

(Chris Aldred)

CRUST:

- 1 ¾ C Flour
- 1/3 C sugar
- 1/2 C ground almonds
- 1 C butter or marg



Combine flour, sugar and almonds in bowl cut in the butter til crumbly. press into 13 x 9 pan, greased. bake 350° F for 15 mins until light golden. cool 15 mins

FILLING:

- 4 eggs
- 2 C sugar
- 1/3 C lemon juice
- 1/4 C flour
- 1 tsp baking powder

Beat eggs, sugar and lemon. Combine flour with baking powder, and stir into eggs. Pour over baked crust. Bake 25-30 mins until just set and golden. Cool completely in fridge before cutting into squares. Dust with icing sugar if desired. Freezes well.



ORANGE MARZIPAN CAKE

(Chris Aldred)

SHORTBREAD:

90 gr butter
75 gr flour
40 gr light brown sugar
50 gr ground almonds

CAKE:

225 gr butter, diced
4 eggs, plus 1 egg yolk
75 gr sultanas
225 gr Self Rising flour
200 gr marzipan
20 gr flaked almonds
Icing sugar for dusting
225 gr light brown sugar
90 ml rum
75 gr raisins
1 tsp B powder
75 gr marmalade
20 gr pine nuts

This may seem like a complicated recipe, but it — SURE IS GOOD—and quite different.

Make the shortbread first: Cream butter and sugar, add flour and almonds to form a soft mixture. press into base of 20cm springform cake. Lay a sheet of Clingfilm over shortbread and smooth with fingers. Remove film, and cover top of tin with it, then chill for 1 hour. Preheat oven to 350° F

Make the Cake: Cream butter and sugar til fluffy, add eggs and yolk one at a time incorporate the rum, toss dried fruit in a little of the flour to coat, fold in the remaining flour with BP, then fold in the dried fruit.

Thinly roll out the marzipan on a sheet dusted with icing sugar until transparently thin. Cut out a circle the size of the cake, and spread a layer of marmalade over the marzipan lay this over the shortbread base (marmalade side up), then spread cake mix on top. Scatter with the nuts, and bake for 60-70 mins or until pick comes out clean. Run a knife around the edge leave to cool dust with icing sugar before serving.

DREAM SLICE

CRUST:

1 1/3 C flour
3/4 C butter
1 Tbsp sugar (white)

Combine flour and sugar. Cut in butter (mealy textured). Press firmly into bottom of lightly 13 x 9 greased pan (or non stick lined with foil and parchment paper for easy removal)

Bake at 350° F for 20 minutes.

FILLING:

2 eggs
1 C brown sugar
2/3 C walnuts, chopped
1/4 C glace cherries, snipped



1 tsp vanilla
1 C shredded coconut
Pinch of salt
3 Tbsp flour
1 tsp baking powder

Beat eggs, gradually adding sugar and vanilla. Sift flour, baking powder and salt, then add to sugar mixture. Add remaining ingredients. Spread over crust and return to oven (lower to 300° F). Bake 25 to 30 minutes until top is set and lightly brown.

FROSTING:

1/4 C. Margarine or Butter
2 1/2 C icing sugar
3 Tbsp cream

Cream butter; add icing sugar alternately with cream until spreading consistency is reached. Spread over cooled cake.



2011 Garden Supply Discount Offers

Just a reminder that NIRS membership brings discounts at many garden retailers.

Those businesses now providing discounts for 2011 include:

Arrowsmith Greenhouses - Alberni Hwy, Qualicum
Art Knapp's Plantland, Courtenay
Bees and Blooms Nursery in Courtenay
Black Creek Farm & Feed Supply
Campbell River Garden Center (not seeds or bulbs)
CV Ornamental Concrete on Knight Rd. in Comox
Growing Concern in Black Creek (seasonal opening)
Hidden Acres Rhododendrons, Campbell River
Just 'n Tyme Greenhouse Supplies, Courtenay
River Meadows Farms, Courtenay
Serendipity, Campbell River (garden ornaments only)
Shar-Kare - both Courtenay and Campbell River
The Plant Collector Nursery and Gardens



Until Next Month

