



The Rhodoteller

www.nirs.rhodos.ca

HAPPY
Valentine's
Day!



North Island Rhododendron Society

2011/2012 Executive

President

Diana Scott338-0208

Vice-President

Paul Wurz287-4301

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 Casson334-2331

Publicity:

Helena Stewart339-1733

Sunshine Lady:

Nancy Munro334-3719

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

Coming Events

7th February 2012 - Executive Meeting 2:00 pm

The executive meeting will be held at the home of secretary Pauline Thompson 350 Torrence Road, Comox. Going north along Pritchard Rd. Turn right on Dogwood St. to the end. Turn right on Torrence, and house (not visible from the road) is on the left just after Casey Rd. (350 is across the street from 327)

14th February 2012 - Regular Monthly Meeting

Join us on Tuesday, February, 14th for our Annual Garden Panel. Yes, it's Valentine's Day so our panel will be moderated by our own sweetheart of a secretary Pauline Thompson. The panel will consist of three club members known for their garden expertise. The panel members; Judy Walker, Arthur Ralfs and Robert Argall will each speak for 5 or 10 minutes on a topic that is close to their hearts. After all it is Valentine's Day! Following these short presentations on a variety of garden topics, the floor will be open for members and guests seeking answers to gardening concerns.



Happy
Groundhog
day 2012

Executive

View

...by Diana Scott

On lovely days in February we begin to think that spring may truly be around the corner. The snow and rains have provided lots of moisture for the soil and it's time to think about fertilizing your rhodos. In other years I have referenced articles available on the internet, including Terry Richmond's 'Fertilizing Rhododendrons the Organic Way'

<http://www.rhododendron.org/v47n4p202.htm>

Terry's article appeared in the ARS journal in 1993. We need to have him talk with us about any changes he may have made in his recipe in the almost 20 years since that article first appeared! I know that many of our growers and members do fertilize their rhodos in February, and it has worked well for them and their plants.

Our featured species this month is *R. sutchuenense* donated once again by Ken Webb and grown on by the club. The name means 'from Sichuan' and it is native to the Sichuan and Hubei areas of China. It was introduced to the west by E.H. Wilson in 1901 and is quite a hardy plant with huge elegant leaves. According to the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden (RSBG) website, the species *R. sutchuenense* are 'large spreading evergreen shrubs that can eventually form small trees (especially in woodland conditions). The large leaves have a thin indumentum on the midrib beneath but are otherwise smooth. The large showy flowers (early spring) are pale pink to lilac-pink, usually with some reddish spotting. This is an easily grown hardy species with nice foliage and beautiful flowers in the earliest of spring. Best grown in light shade or woodland conditions. This popular species can be a very long-lived addition to the landscape.'

The plant that we have is *R. sutchuenense* PW#49 which according to the RSBG website

may be a bit different from the species and is referred to as follows:

R. sutchuenense aff.

These are seedlings grown from seed collected at 5,130 ft. in the Dalou Shan region of northern Guizhou Province, China. The foliage is somewhat similar to that of *sutchuenense* but has not yet developed the characteristic floccose indumentum on the midrib beneath. This seed was collected south of the known range of *sutchuenense* from a large ten foot shrub growing in thick scrub and may be a range extension (new subspecies?) or a closely related taxon.

Good sized vigorous plants.' For more information on *sutchuenense* visit:

<http://www.rhodygarden.org/catalog/item/1218869/934891.htm>



Our *R. sutchuenense* is small now, but I know it will grow up to be a wonderful plant in the garden of one of our members or guests after the February meeting! Shown above is what the bloom will eventually look like!



Friendship
warms the heart

Member's Notes

...by Dave Godfrey

January is typically one of the slowest months for meeting attendance, and for those who recall we had to cancel last year due to a one day snow storm. But this year January saw a tremendous turnout, partly due to the good weather, but mostly to see **Paul Wurz**' presentation of "Rhododendrons for West Coast Gardens."



During the meeting, President **Diana Scott** advised that our secretary Pauline Thompson was regrettably absent due to the recent sudden loss of her brother. Condolences go out to Pauline and her family. **Ann Chevrier** passed along the sad news that former NIRS member Maureen (Mo) Fidell passed away on Saturday, January 7th. **Ron and Mo Fidell** had been active members for many years in the 1990's.

From the agenda, President Diana placed a call for members to volunteer their garden to host the Annual General Meeting in May and our annual potluck picnic in June. **Bernie and Gloria Guyader** offered their garden for the AGM...well Bernie did, and Gloria did seem to be in agreement; and **Robert Argall** graciously offered his spacious garden for our June picnic. Thank you one and all.

Christine Aldred thanked all members who contributed to the success of our annual Christmas hamper project. As always, the Salvation Army hamper campaign was grateful for our ongoing support. Due to the overlap between the hamper project and the Christmas party, Chris expressed an interest in turning over the hamper project to another member to coordinate. **Margaret Griffith-Cochrane** volunteered to become our coordinator for this project.

During the meeting, President Diana explained that, although we are just into January, plans are already underway for our May fund raising events, the Spring Sale & Show and Mother's Day Garden Tour. The tour this year will focus on gardens in the Royston/Union Bay area. Members

willing to help coordinate these events are asked to contact any member of the executive. **Maureen Denny** has offered to help **Nadine Boudreau** and **Chris Aldred** organize this year's tour.

Following the business portion of the meeting, **Bernie Guyader** stepped forward to present his 'Show & Tell' items. He brought samples of the beautiful hellebore 'Niger' and a sprig of the winter jasmine 'Nudiflorum'; both adding glorious winter colour to his 'Alpine Meadows' garden in Courtenay. Bernie urges other members to bring along 'the colour in their gardens', for all to enjoy at future meetings.

Then, following a short social break, it was on with the show. **Paul Wurz** gave the 48 members and 6 guests an explanation of how he became interested in propagating Rhododendrons some 40 years ago. Paul and Lynn's property in Campbell River became known as "Hidden Acres". While Lynn concentrated on perennials and vegetables, Paul's interests focused on his Rhododendrons.

Although he has dabbled in some hybridizing, Paul's main method of propagation is by growing cuttings. Through his friendships with such notable growers as **Ken Gibson** in Tofino; **Dick Beamish** in Nanaimo; **Ken Webb** and **Norman Todd** of Victoria; the late **Jack Lofthouse** of Vancouver, and Washington State hybridizers **Jim Barlup** and **Frank Fujiyoka**, Paul has acquired some unique and special plants that he's found very suitable for our west coast gardens.

In addition to showing photos of many of these special plants, Paul also showed examples of several scented varieties that he's been able to propagate. Most are crosses originating from R. 'Loderi King George' and tend to be on the white to light purple or pink shades. Rhododendrons with names such as 'Towner Crest', 'Queen Anne', 'Yeti', 'Polar Bear', 'Babylon', 'Qualicum Pride' and 'Twin Sisters' are just some of the many scented rhodos Paul is propagating and will have available for our future sales.



After thanking Paul for his very entertaining program, President Diana drew tickets for the raffle and door prizes. The lucky winners for the evening were guest **Judy Osborne** (raffle prize - R. *campylogynum*) and **Ruth Fowler** (raffle prize of 'Golden Gate'). **Arthur Ralfs** won the door prize of a *Gardener's Diary* donated by **Lois Clyde**, while guest **Kathy**

Meunier won the Rhodo 'Moonstone' and member **Ron Cameron** won *R. cilpinense* (both donated by **Arthur Ralfs**.) Thanks to Arthur and Lois for their generous donations, and congratulations to our many winners. It goes to show our tradition of guests often winning prizes continues! Hummm, maybe I should ask a guest to buy my tickets next time!!

The '2012 NIRS Yearbook and Roster' has been printed and will be available for those attending our February 14th meeting. Members may consider this a small Valentine's gift from your chapter. Social chair **Louise Casson** also encourages those members attending the February meeting to please bring along some sweets and treats to share during the refreshment breaks.

The February meeting will feature our annual "Garden Panel", which this year will be comprised of such knowledgeable members as **Judy Walker, Arthur Ralfs** and **Robert Argall**. The panel discussions will be moderated by **Pauline Thompson**. Each panel member will speak for a few minutes on a specialty topic of gardening. Then the floor will be open to members of the audience for discussion or questions about any topic relating to gardening. These panels always prove to be informative; so bring along your questions or concerns and we hope to provide you with the answers.

Once again, **Chris Aldred** would appreciate any items you may wish to donate towards the Revenue Table. Plants may be scarce at this time of year, but magazines, books or other garden related items are always welcome.

Nadine Boudreau reminds members that she has a good supply of NIRS carry bags for sale at the Ways & Means table. She also has a supply of plant name tags, Greer's Guidebooks (the Rhodo Bible) and other items that our new members might wish to purchase. So be sure to bring along a cheque or a few extra dollars when attending the meeting on February 14th. We hope to see you there!

The Rhodora

(Ralph Waldo Emerson 1803-1882)

On being asked, whence is the flower.

In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,
I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,
Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,
To please the desert and the sluggish brook.

The purple petals fallen in the pool
Made the black water with their beauty gay;
Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,
And court the flower that cheapens his array.

Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why
This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
Tell them, dear, that, if eyes were made for seeing,

Then beauty is its own excuse for Being;
Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!

I never thought to ask; I never knew;
But in my simple ignorance suppose
The self-same power that brought me there, brought you.

HEAD STARTS: TUBERS & BULBS

...by Noni Godfrey

You can start tender bulbs indoors this winter and give them a head start on the blooming season! Begonias are known for their super-bright colours and the bounty of their blooms. But did you know you can enjoy even bigger and brighter blooms if you start growing your tubers a little earlier and indoors this winter? It's true!

Begonias and other tuber plants, like Caladiums, are slow growers that benefit greatly from a few weeks of head start growing under the ideal "weather" conditions inside your home.

Starting tubers indoors is not only incredibly easy; it's also fun and rewarding because you can check the progress of your plants every day. For best results, start your indoor growing about 6 to 8 weeks before the final frost in your area.

To begin, find a shallow container to plant your tubers in. Clay pots and plastic flats work fine, even aluminum cake pans or BBQ chicken containers from the supermarket. Peat pots work especially well, because they can later be planted directly into the ground without removing the plant and disturbing the roots.

Next, find a suitable planting soil and fill the container to within ½ inch of the top. Any commercial potting soil will work; just don't use dirt from your yard or garden as you don't want to be bringing any weeds or critters into your house. Commercial potting soils are sterilized, allow for good drainage and contain nutrients that ordinary soil lacks. These nutrients are essential for optimum growth and big blooms.

Now all you have to do is plant your tubers. For best results, plant them just below the surface of the soil. For Begonias, plant them hollow side up. Keep the soil moist but the hollows dry.

All that is left to do now is give your plants an ideal growing environment. Most tubers grow best when the temperature remains at a constant 65 to 70 degrees F. Also make sure your plant gets plenty of light, either natural or fluorescent.



When you're ready to move your plants outdoors, let them get accustomed to their new surroundings slowly through a process called "hardening off." To harden off your plants properly, simply move them outdoors in their pots during the daytime, placing them out of direct sunlight. At night, simply bring them back indoors.

After just a few days of hardening off, your plants will be ready to move to their permanent home in the garden. If the weather is still cold, cover them with upturned flower pots in the evening. If you don't have any unused flower pots, cover your plants with newspaper, burlap or even large milk or soft drink containers that have had the bottoms cut out.

That's all there is to it! In no time at all you'll be rewarded with the biggest, brightest, bloomingest plants you've ever seen!

150 years ago.

Symbols of the month include the violet as its flower and the amethyst as its birthstone—a gem that symbolizes piety, humility, spiritual wisdom and sincerity.



February 2012 is of course Leap Year so the month gets an extra day and lots of quirky traditions. It was the ancient Egyptians who first figured out that the solar year and the man-made calendar didn't quite match up. The reason is because it actually takes the Earth a little longer than a year to travel around the Sun—365 days, five hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds to be exact. At first the extra day was added willy-nilly but then the Romans formally designated February 29 as leap day. It was the Gregorian calendar later that fine-tuned the calculations to include a "leap day" in years only divisible by four: 2012, 2016, 2020 etc.

According to one story, the tradition of women being able to pursue men romantically in leap years began in 5th-century Ireland when St. Bridget complained to St. Patrick about the fair sex having to wait for men to propose. Patrick finally relented and set February 29 aside as the day when it was permissible for women to ask men to marry. (One story says that Brigit actually proposed to St. Patrick who promptly turned her down.) The tradition continued in Scotland when Queen Margaret declared in 1288 that on February 29 women could pop the question. Any man who refused had to pay a fine in the form of a kiss, a silk dress or a pair of gloves. A person born on Feb. 29 is called a "leaping" or a "leaper."

Here in North America, February 29 was dubbed Sadie Hawkins Day (it was originally staged in November) in the popular comic strip *Lil Abner* by Al Capp. Sadie was "the homeliest gal in the hills," the daughter of one of Dogpatch's earliest settlers, Hekzebiah Hawkins and both father and daughter grew frantic waiting for suitors to come a-courtin'. In desperation when Sadie was 35, Hekzebiah called all the town's eligible bachelors together for a foot race—he would fire his gun and the bachelors would run with Sadie in hot pursuit. If she caught and dragged an unfortunate bachelor kicking and screaming across the finish line before sundown, by law he had to marry her. Capp's creation caught fire and by 1952 Sadie Hawkins Day became an institution on tens of thousands of college campuses.



Valentine's Day is of course the month's best-known holiday but in familiarity it's followed closely by Ground Hog Day, February 2. Most of us do a quick check to see if the ground hog sees his shadow but some folks go all out to celebrate. In southeastern Pennsylvania, "Groundhog Lodges" celebrate the holiday with grand social events involving speeches, plays and abundant food. Pennsylvania German dialect is the only language allowed and anyone caught speaking English pays a fine. The most famous groundhog is Punxsultawney Phil but he has dozens of "cousins" with their distinctive monikers including Balzac Willie (Alberta), General Beaugard Lee (Georgia), Buckeye Chuck (Ohio) and

A decorative title box with a scalloped red border, featuring two cherubs on either side and floral accents. The text inside reads: "Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About February" in a pink, stylized font. Below the title, it says "...by Helena Stewart" in a cursive font.

Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About February

...by Helena Stewart

OK trivia buffs—are you ready for a tsunami of silly (and otherwise) facts about the month to come? In the old Roman lunar calendar, there were 10, not 12, months with January and February left out because the Romans considered winter a "monthless period." The two Johnnys-come-lately were added to the end of the calendar year by Numa Pompilius about 713BC and stood until 450BC when January was put at the start of the year and February followed using up the leftover days. Even then, February (like Rodney Dangerfield) got no respect. At certain times the month was truncated to 23 or 24 days with a 27-day month called *Intercalaris* inserted immediately after February to realign the year with the seasons.

The month was named after the Latin term *februum* which means "purification" because of a traditional Roman purification ceremony, *Februa*, held on the full moon (February 15). The Old English name for the month was *Solmonath* (mud month) or *Kale-monath* (named for cabbage) or Charlemagne's *Hornung*. In Finnish, the month is called *helmikuu* which means "month of the pearl" because of droplets that are formed when snow melts and then freezes again into pearls of ice (a big improvement over "mud" or "cabbage" month.) During Shakespeare's day it was known as *Feverell* and only became fixed as "February"

Warton Willie (Ontario).

BE MINE

For a month allegedly dedicated to love, February is associated with events that range from the gory to the plain silly. February 14, a day for delivering sentimental valentines and chocolates, is also the day in 1929 when a crime mob delivered the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. February 8 lives on in infamy as the day Queen Elizabeth had Mary Queen of Scots' head severed from her body (it also happens to be my birthday. Yoiks.) On the sillier side, February contains: National Wear Red Day, International Mother Language Day (21st), Feed the Birds Month, Avocado and Banana Month, National Condom Month (US), Spunky Old Broads Month and National Tooth Fairy Day (28th).



Trivia is OK but what about a flower connection for February? Since the snowdrop usually appears in February, the flower reigns along with the violet as a symbol of hope that winter will soon be over. According to a legend, the snowdrop won its symbolic role when Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden. Just as Eve was about to give up hope that the cold winters would ever end, an angel appeared and transformed some of the snowflakes into snowdrop flowers, proving that winter does eventually give way to spring. The flower incidentally earned its name because it resembled an earring and the original name for earrings was "ear drop."

As usual, there's a ton more February trivia. See me.

TRIVIA



With the blessing of Gwen and family, all of Harry's files relating to the revision of his book "Rhododendron Locations and Identification in BC" have been passed along to Bob Wright (no relation) of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society. Bob hopes to complete Harry's book revision in time for the ARS Western Conference in Nanaimo this coming September.

If any NIRS members wish to be included in the book, or to update a previous listing of your Rhodos, you are asked to contact Bob at 1-604-921-9370 or email him at: rjwright74@gmail.com

The Nanaimo Rhododendron Society invites you to attend our meeting on **Thursday, February 16 at 7:30 pm** Beban Park Social Centre



Bob Duncan, a retired entomologist who lives in Sidney and grows citrus fruit in an unheated greenhouse, will be providing a presentation on "Pushing the Limits". Bob and his wife, Verna, have a business called Fruit Trees and More, propagating and selling over 300 varieties of fruit, from apples (over 200 varieties) to citrus, olives, pomegranates and jujubes.

Basic information is available at fruittreesandmore.com. The Duncans will be selling plants, but if there is something specific you are interested in, I would encourage you to make contact ahead of time to ensure that they can bring it along to the meeting.

This is an opportunity to prepare for global warming, and to learn how to situate sub-tropical's to give them the best chance to thrive in your garden.

We welcome guests, admission is free.



If you would like more information, please call Glenda at 250-390-2822 or email applegal2@msn.com



COMOX VALLEY SEEDY SATURDAY

March 3, 2012: "Gardening is Everyone's Business" 13th Annual Community Seed Swap & Show Featuring: Vegetable, Herb & Flower Seeds; Bulbs, Plants, Trees; Garden Tools, Accessories & Products; Information Displays and Workshops

Saturday March 3rd, 2012-- 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM-- Florence Filberg Centre, 411 Anderton Ave. Courtenay

<http://www.comoxvalleygrowersandseedsavers.ca/?q=node/72>



Source for EM - Effective Microorganisms - www.gardenerspantry.ca (link on NIRS website)



Garden Tour of France, Belgium and Holland Featuring Floriade 2012

World Horticultural Expo May 29 - June 12, 2012

The tour will commence in France where gardens in Paris, Versailles, Giverny, Dieppe and Vernon will be visited. Next is Belgium with stops in The Imperial City of Bruges and Antwerp, hometown of Rubens. Continue to Holland with a stop in Lieden located near Amsterdam. Travel to Apeldoorn before arriving in Venlo where the "Floriade 2012 World Horticultural Expo" is being held. Tour Information can be found at <http://www.greatexpeditions.com/TourDetail.asp?TourID=EUR002>

Glen and Dorothy Jamieson will be hosting this tour, and there is still room available.



Nature is a generous mother and with flower and leaf decked the world in loveliness. Love of the beautiful in organic or inorganic life is the most elevating influence permeating the human family.



There are no happier folk than plant lovers, and none more generous than those who garden.

Ernest Henry Wilson, the great plant hunter (1876-1930)

**ARS 2012 NANAIMO PHOTO CONTEST
FALL CONFERENCE SEPT 21ST – 23RD , 2012**



R. stenopetalum 'Linearifolium'
(previously *R. macrosepalum* 'Linearifolium')

MAXIMUM ART WITH MINIMUM ARTIFICE – RULES

SIZE: – 8 x 10 photo. We will mount them on black Bristol.

ID: – No ID on picture please, put your name and name of the rhodo, if you know it also the location on the back. You must be the photographer of the picture.

HANGING: – Cut off date to let me know the number of pictures you are entering is Sept 1st 8pm. Limit one for each category. Photos must be at the Conference site by Friday evening 7pm unless you make other arrangements with me.

DATE PICTURE TAKEN: – within the last 2 years of conference (Sept 10)

JUDGING: – will take place by 4pm Sat 22nd

PEOPLE'S CHOICE: – voting of all entries will close by 6pm Saturday 22nd. Winners will be announced at the banquet. Photos must be reclaimed by noon on Sunday 23rd. Please consider donating your picture for our silent auction. Let me know when you give it to me on Fri evening.

Rhododendrons, azaleas or vireyas must be the obvious and integral part of the photograph.



R. edgeworthii



R. makinoi



White Gold

All the photographs were taken by Mary J. Parker in her garden in Nanaimo, BC, Canada
More information next page.....

CATEGORIES:

1. **MACRO/CLOSE-UP** of plant parts.
2. **INDIVIDUAL OR GROUPS** of plants in the wild or public/botanical garden
— *Not private gardens!*
3. **INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP** of plants in a private garden.
4. **TRUSS species or hybrid.**
5. **FOLIAGE species or hybrid.**



PRIZES:

No entry fee. All 6 winning pictures will receive a great prize.

OPEN TO EVERYONE INTERESTED IN PHOTOGRAPHY.

The photo contest is strictly a fun event. The Conference will make every effort to protect your art but will not be responsible for accidental damage to photographs. They will be put in a lockup area during the night.

Any questions may be directed to Mary Parker 250-754-1981. maryiparker99@shaw.ca



Blueberry Smoothie

(Chris Aldred).

200g blueberries 2 ice cubes
1 frozen banana 125ml plain yogurt
75ml apple juice 1 tsp honey

Simply place all ingredients into a blender and process 'til smooth

We all have left over frozen fruits in our freezers, so you can use them up this way, BUT omit the ice cubes. Delicious, and **GOOD FOR YOU!!**



Cranberry/Apple upside down cake

1/3 C butter or marg. 1/2 C brown sugar
2 med apples (peel & slice) 1/2 C whole berry cranberry sauce.
1 1/3 C flour 1 C sugar
2 tsp B powder 1/2 tsp salt
1/3 C shortening 2/3 C milk
1 tsp vanilla



Heat oven to 350 Melt butter in a 9"x 9" square pan. Sprinkle with the brown sugar, arrange apple slices over this. Spoon cranberry sauce between the rows of apple. Mix flour, sugar, BP and salt in a large bowl. Add shortening, milk and vanilla. Beat with electric mixer, scraping bowl from time to time. Add egg, beat again. Pour over fruit.

Bake about 50 mins until toothpick comes out clean. Immediately place a heatproof plate upside down on top of pan, and turn over. Leave pan over cake for a few minutes to allow the brown sugar mix to run over the cake.

Serve warm with ice cream or cream

3-Step Fruit and Jelly Trifle

1 1/2 C cubed angel food cake (1/4 of 284gr pkg.)
1/2 C orange juice
12 fresh strawberries, sliced
1 pkg. (10.1 g) Strawberry Jelly Powder
1 pkg. (4-serving size) *Jell-O* Vanilla Instant Pudding
2 C cold skim milk
3/4 C thawed *Cool Whip*



PLACE cake in 6 parfait dishes; drizzle with juice. Top with berries.

PREPARE jelly powder following the Quick-Set Method on package; pour over berries. Beat pudding mix and milk with whisk 2 min.; spoon over jelly.

REFRIGERATE 2 hours. Top with *Cool Whip* just before serving.

We are Shaped and fashioned
by what and who we love
~goethe

Until Next Month
Noni

