



# The Rhodoteller

www.nirs.rhodos.ca

Happy New Year

## January

### North Island Rhododendron Society

#### 2011/2012 Executive

**President**

Diana Scott .....338-0208

**Vice-President**

Paul Wurz .....287-4301

**Secretary**

Pauline Thompson .....339-3423

**Treasurer**

Dave Godfrey .....335-0717

**Director: Ways & Means**

Nadine Boudreau .....339-0909

**Director: Membership**

Brian Staton .....337-5228

**Director: Revenue Table**

Chris Aldred .....335-3221

**Director: Newsletter/Library**

Noni Godfrey .....335-0717  
..... 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.



## Coming Events

### 3rd January 2012-Executive Monthly Meeting 2:00 pm

The executive meeting will be held at the home of Helena and Roy Stewart: 2431 Seabank Road, (just down the road from Dick Bonney)

### 10th January 2012-Regular Monthly Meeting



### A PowerPoint Presentation of.... "Rhododendrons for West Coast Gardens"



Paul Wurz will be our speaker for the January 10th meeting and his topic will be "Rhododendrons for West Coast Gardens". Paul will focus on some of the new and rare Rhodos that are becoming available on the market, including hybrids from the late Jack Lofthouse, Frank Fujioka and others. He will be discussing scented Rhodos and some of his personal favourites from their Campbell River home and nursery.



the old



# Executive View



...by Diana Scott

Happy New Year! We are such a fun club. Our annual Christmas Party is becoming one of the highlights of the season, and once again the group got together and had a great time. Thank you to our Christmas Party Committee of Christine Aldred, Nadine Boudreau and Barb Staton, and to all who contributed and participated this year. Christine was kept in high gear again over the festive season as she coordinated the Christmas Hamper sponsored by our club. Thank you Chris for all your efforts, and thank you to all who chose to be part of the Hamper program again this year.

As we head into January, it amazes me how much our gardens offer us even in the depths of winter. If we are not knee-deep in snow, on a warmer, sun-kissed day we can even be greeted by the delightful fragrance of some of our hardier cold-weather beauties. The striking Charity and Winter Sun mahonias may be sporting tall yellow spikes of fragrant flowers and the usually low-key sarcococca may be coming into its own, wafting its vanilla-like fragrance to those who walk by.

Some of our rhodos have foliage that is fragrant. Our featured species this month is *R. campylogynum* which has tiny, shiny leaves that give off a scent when handled. The Species Foundation website states that it is a 'dwarf evergreen alpine shrub typically with a dense, mounding habit.



The flowers (late spring) are pink to salmon-pink, red, claret, purple, plum to almost black-purple, or cream. The campanulate blossoms resemble small thimbles nodding at the ends of their long pedicels. The small rounded to elliptic leaves are typically quite shiny with a glaucous underside. A fantastic specimen plant for the rock or woodland garden. Also nice in a container or as a mass groundcover planting. Found in a wide range of habitats from 8,000 to 16,000 ft. in N India (Arunachal Pradesh), N Burma, S Tibet & Yunnan, China." Couldn't have said it better myself... On our Members tour to the Port Alberni and Qualicum Beach area last spring, we saw a number of great specimens of *R. campylogynum* in their gardens. We hope that whoever wins this little beauty donated by Ken Webb and grown on by the club will enjoy it in his or her garden for years to come!

Looking forward to seeing you all as we move into 2012!

party on  
2012



# Members Notes



...by Dave Godfrey

A cool crisp afternoon on Saturday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, saw a dozen NIRS members along with friends and neighbours of the Wright family come to help decorate Haida Gold Gardens for the Christmas season. Son Gary and daughter Sherry Wright had the setup plan in place and the team of helpers started stringing lights, arranging garden ornaments and decorating trees. With so much help, the task was completed in less than two hours, leaving **Bernie Guyader** to help Gary with the electrical hook-ups in the days that followed. Gwen had plenty of cookies, cupcakes and coffee or tea available to warm up and socialize with once the chores were completed.

For those who know the story of the Barred owl that appeared in the gardens for the first time the day after Harry's passing, you'll be interested to know that after a few weeks of not being seen, the owl reappeared during the garden decorating party. It sat contently in the tall tree overlooking the property, and appeared to be satisfied with the work that we were doing to prepare the gardens for the final opening.



*Gwen and Harry Wright* have made a tradition of decorating their gardens for the past 15 years. Each year they invited the public to tour the lights and decorations on the evenings of Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, and 24<sup>th</sup> with cash donations going to support Courtenay's *Sonshine Lunch Program*. This was to be the last year for the open gardens, and the NIRS members wanted to help the family keep the tradition going in his honour. Gwen reports that over 1200 people attend the final three evenings with donations totaling over \$3000! This brought their 15 year total to well over the anticipated \$10,000 that Harry had hoped. Congratulations to the Wright family, and many thanks to all those who helped make it a success!

With 50 members in attendance, our chapter's annual Christmas party on December 13<sup>th</sup> was one of the best ever. The executive began setting up at 4:30 PM and by 5:30 most members had arrived to enjoy the evening's activities. While *Pauline Thompson* and *Bob Eberle* were busy in the kitchen preparing the hot apple and cranberry ciders, *Louise Casson*, *Myrna Trimmer* and *Gwen Wright* looked after the tea & coffee and setting up the food tables. Special thanks go to the team of *Chris Aldred*, *Nadine Boudreau* and *Barb Staton* who did a terrific job of organizing the party, as well as buying and wrapping the many gifts.



The fabulous potluck finger food buffet of scrumptious savouries and delightful desserts was enjoyed by all. The evening's fun activities included a couple of guessing games run by *Corinne Innes* and another team game of Jeopardy. Congratulations to *Sheila Medori* who came closest with her guess of 335 jelly beans, and to *Lois Clyde* and *Gloria Guyader* who tied with their guess of 1500 coffee beans. They shared the coffee beans, while Sheila took home the jar of jelly beans. *Nadine Boudreau* was this year's proud winner of "Miss Piggy" which she promises to prominently display in her garden all year.

Of the six teams of eight players each, the Christmas Jeopardy game was won by team number 6 (*Dave Doubeck, Antje Guertler, Dale Patterson, Bob Eberle, Nancy Munro, Paul Wurz, Sheila Medori* and *Helena Stewart*) with 17 correct out of the 30 questions. Noni and I received many compliments for once again producing a challenging and entertaining game that provided a lot of fun and laughter. The challenge now is to come up with some easier questions for next year. Before the evening ended, a door prize draw was made for a lovely wreath made and donated by *Lois Clyde*. The lucky winner of the wreath was *Ross Munro*, with *Linda Billings* winning a secondary prize of a decorated arrangement, also donated by Lois. (Photos of the party are now posted to our website's gallery page.)



Hamper chair **Christine Aldred** was delighted with the many gifts and items donated by our members for the Salvation Army Christmas Hamper drive. Although we had a smaller family this year than in the past, the support shown by our members most definitely made a difference in making someone's Christmas much brighter. Thank you one and all. This charitable project was originally suggested by **Harry Wright** several years ago, and we will likely continue the annual program in his name.



On the afternoon of December 20<sup>th</sup>, workers from the Courtenay city crew transplanted three large rhodos from Haida Gold Gardens to the new extension of the BOVI (Born on Vancouver Island) bed in our Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden. Harry's hybrids 'Courtenay Gold', 'Courtenay Duke' and 'Courtenay Queen' are the first of many to be added to the bed dedicated to Vancouver Island hybrids. The Wright family has also added a special bench to the BOVI garden in remembrance of Harry and all that he did for the community and our organization.



With the New Year, it will be back to business at our January 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. Vice President **Paul Wurz** will be giving his power point presentation on

'Rhododendrons for West Coast Gardens'. Paul will focus on some of the new and rare Rhodos that are becoming available on the market, including hybrids from Frank Fujioka, the late Jack Lofthouse and others. Paul will also be discussing scented Rhodos and some of his personal favourites from his 'Hidden Acres' nursery in Campbell River. As usual, the doors open at 7 PM with the meeting starting at 7:30.

The famous poet Shelly once wrote "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?" Well, winter is now here, and plans are already underway for our annual sale and garden tour events in May. The executive is seeking a coordinator for the garden tour, which this year will feature gardens in the Royston/Union Bay area. If you are interested in helping as an event coordinator please contact any member of the executive.

Also in May, we will be hosting a return visit by members of the Whidbey Island chapter. Vice President **Paul Wurz** is making the arrangements, and will be seeking host billets for the Whidbey members during their 3 day stay during May 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup>.

In the meantime, the executive is also planning another bus tour for NIRS members - this time to Salt Spring Island. **Pauline Thompson** is making the plans for the tour towards the end of May. Stay tuned for more details on these and other events in the coming months.

As always, Revenue Table chair **Christine Aldred** encourages everyone to "dig deep" and bring along some offerings to the table in the next month or two. January and February are traditionally slow months for garden activities, but any items members can provide or purchase will help us to cover some of the costs of running our meetings.

For those who pre-ordered a copy of "The Complete Wit and Wisdom of Norman Todd" be sure to bring along your money to pay for your copy. The book order has been received and will be available through the library at our January meeting. There are a few extra copies if you still wish to purchase one.

The days are once again getting longer, and our meetings are always entertaining. So we encourage each of you to join us for our meetings. Hope to see you there!



*Editor's Note*

*I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone all the very best for whatever ventures you may take, whatever opportunities may come your way and whatever obstacles you may have to face. May this year bring you courage, strength and wisdom which helps give you hope, perseverance and therefore building character. Have a wonderful New Year's Eve, where ever you are, and I'll see you in 2012...*



- H** - ours of happy times with friends and family
  - A** - bundant time for relaxation
  - P** - rosperity throughout the year
  - P** - lenty of love when you need it the most
  - Y** - outhful excitement at life's simple pleasures
- 
- N** - ights of restful slumber (don't worry be happy)
  - E** - verything you need
  - W** - ishing you love and light
- 
- Y** - ears and years of good health
  - E** - njoyment and happiness
  - A** - angels to watch over you
  - R** - embrances of happy years!



## *How To Care For Christmas Gift Plants*

As far as I am concerned, several are "no-nos". I love cyclamen, and have dozens in the garden. But Cyclamen persica, the houseplant variety, with large flowers, do not survive for me. I follow directions carefully, but when the flowers and leaves die down, I put the corm away in a cool place for a few months, and it invariably dies. Another is Poinsettia. They look lovely in the house for many months, and even survive in the garden for the

summer. But as for keeping the plant and producing bracts again the next winter - forget it. They go onto the compost pile in our garden.

It is not possible to keep the bulbs of Narcissus, such as 'Paperwhite' or 'Grand Soleil d'Or' after they finish flowering during the winter. They just rot. But any others that you have forced can be left in a cool place, watered a little, until the leaves die down. Plant them in the garden, and though they may take a year's rest from flowering, they will survive.

Amaryllis make a spectacular showing with their huge bells on strong stems. Variety and colours increase every year and with a little care the plants will last for years. After flowering, keep them in a cool room with lots of light. They can go into a shady spot in the garden for the summer. Leaves can be cut off when they get long and raggedy, give the bulb a rest for a few months, then start to water it when new leaves (and hopefully a flower stem) start to grow again. No guarantee it will bloom for Christmas every year, but it will bloom in time.

Orchids -the latest "craze" in flowering houseplants. Most of the time one can find a variety of these exotic plants in nurseries, Home Depot, flower shops, grocery stores - everywhere. The easiest to grow (for me anyway) variety is Phalaenopsis, also the easiest to find. Just remember to sit the saucer under it in another dish of water or pebbles in water. They do not need much other care - no sunlight, but a bright window or fluorescent light, a drink of water once a week, and a bit of very weak fertilizer a couple of times a month. The flowers last and last - I had one plant that bloomed, one stem of flowers after another, for a year and a half. That's value for money!

Begonias. There are so many kinds - those that can be planted in the garden border for the summer, tuberous types that need to be started in warmth and planted out in pots for summer, and many kinds that live in the house. Rex begonias have interesting leaves - large or small, plain or frilly, many shades of green, grey, red - the flowers are small, but often in huge hanging sprays. There are others with masses of red, pink or yellow flowers, plain green leaves that last for months in the house. Last summer I placed one on an outdoor table and it bloomed itself to death until late September. I have had no luck with cutting them back and getting a second blooming from them. I am sure there are other members of the club who have had better luck.



## New Years and How It Came To Be

*The celebration of the New Year is the oldest of all holidays. It was first observed in ancient Babylon about 4000 years ago. In the years around 2000 BC, the Babylonian New Year began with the first new moon (actually the first visible crescent) after the Vernal Equinox (first day of spring.)*

*The beginning of spring is a logical time to start a new year. After all, it is the season of rebirth, of planting new crops, and of blossoming. January 1<sup>st</sup> on the other hand, has no astronomical or agricultural significance. It is purely arbitrary.*

*The Babylonian New Year celebration lasted for eleven days. Each day had its own particular mode of celebration, but it is safe to say that modern New Year's Eve festivities pale in comparison.*

*The Romans continued to observe the New Year in late March, but their calendar was continually tampered with by various emperors so that the calendar soon became out of synchronization with the sun.*

*In order to set the calendar right, the Roman senate, in 153 BC, declared January 1 to be the beginning of the New Year. But tampering continued until Julius Caesar, in 46 BC, established what has become to be known as the Julian calendar. It again established January 1<sup>st</sup> as the New Year. But in order to synchronize the calendar with the sun, Caesar had to let the previous year drag on for 445 days!*

*The tradition of using a baby to signify the New Year was begun in Greece around 600 BC. It was their tradition at that time to celebrate their god of wine, Dionysus, by parading a baby in a basket, representing the annual rebirth of the spirit of fertility. Early Egyptians also used a baby as a symbol of rebirth.*

*And now you know...*



## MYTH OR MAGIC

*(Reprinted from the MARS December 2010 newsletter)*

*Kim Hammond, Grower and Groundskeeper at Milner Gardens and Woodland offers some help with those nasty bugs and pests.*

Remember when Nematodes came onto the market? How skeptical we all were about a little blue sponge of impossible-to-see microbes. There were more than a few raised eyebrows and many who didn't read instructions had poor results. Still others pooh-pooed them - at length - and still do. At first they came in a baggie with a blob, and later on in powder form. Do you also remember how pleasantly surprised you were when it worked... when fewer and fewer notches were found in your new rhododendron leaves and when the crane fly adults weren't swarming around during August barbeques?

We've come a long way since then and most of us who garden are died in the wool, sworn supporters of our parasitic nematodes. Perhaps it was the outbreak of European chafer in Coquitlam a few years back - all but eradicated by nematodes - that turned the tide for them, because now they are a household word.

And now the case for Effective Microorganisms (EM). Around for some time, EM still has some skeptics - including me at first. But I'm cured now. My first exposure to EM was during a course on organic gardening (is there any other kind?). Molasses (a sugar for the fermenting process) is mixed with the "mother" mix of concentrated EM in a somewhat convoluted process. Fermenting is required for several days. Be sure to burp the bottle to prevent pressure build up. Next, the mixture is diluted with water to make the magic elixir for your plants, inside and out.

If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes I may have remained a non-believer. A stephanotis had been languishing in my window for several years. Three smallish leaves clung to a few spindly stems that appeared healthy but far from the robust growth to which I had grown accustomed. I refused to part with the plant on the basis that if it ever bloomed, it would fill the room with a most intoxicating scent I had

experienced many years before, and thus it would be worth the wait. So as instructed, I dosed my struggling stephanotis with the EM mixture. Within two weeks it had grown two feet. I chopped it back and new growth came from the bottom, and today - two years later it is fifteen feet or more having been chopped back several times to increase the leaf density. My stephanotis has yet to bloom, but I am hopeful for next spring as the leaf nodes are becoming closer together.

Subsequently, I tried EM on other indoor plants with considerable success. I confess to neglecting my indoor plants. Being more of an ornamental lover, indoor plants are often the victims of my experiments. But amazingly, the Meyer's lemon fruited, the Christmas cactus bloomed twice and the Amaryllis flowers lasted for weeks. And as a bonus, the Clivia formed two seed pods.

Now one could make some deductions about these apparent marvels: the stephanotis was dormant too long, pot bound or just needed more fertilizer; the Meyer's Lemon was finally warm enough; the Clivia was reaching maturity. All fair assumptions, but it was the other plants on which I continued experiments that sealed the deal. A Streptocarpus that was covered in aphids - within 24 hours was aphid free. A tray of fuchsia cuttings watered in with EM rooted earlier and with a larger root ball than a similar tray watered with plain water. A rhododendron showing clear signs of unhappiness - yellowing, stunted, not blooming and not long for this world - never looked back after a shot of EM. Now my back yard garden is a living testament to its effectiveness.

Effective Microorganisms truly live up to the name. Now available in many forms and from many companies, I highly recommend you do your own experiments and test it for yourself. Then you can decide whether it's... Myth or Magic?

New Year's  
Resolution



## 2012 GARDEN SUPPLY DISCOUNT OFFERS:

*Just a reminder that NIRS membership brings discounts at many garden retailers. Those businesses now providing discounts for 2012 include:*

Arrowsmith Greenhouses - Alberni Hwy in 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  
 Paradise Plants, Courtenay  
 River Meadows Farms, Courtenay  
 Serendipity, Campbell River (garden ornaments only)  
 Shar-Kare - both Courtenay and Campbell River  
 The Plant Collector Nursery and Gardens

"What can be said in New Year rhymes,  
 That's not been said a thousand times?  
 The new years come, the old years go,  
 We know we dream, we dream we know.  
 We rise up laughing with the light,  
 We lie down weeping with the night.  
 We hug the world until it stings,  
 We curse it then and sigh for wings.  
 We live, we love, we woo, we wed,  
 We wreath our prides, we sheet our dead.  
 We laugh, we weep we hope, we fear,  
 And that's the burden of a year."

...Ella Wheeler Wilcox



# RECIPE REQUESTS



Many requests from this year's Christmas party... thanks to those who contributed!



## Mighty Rum Balls

(Fiona Clarke)

- 2 C graham wafer crumbs
- 1 C finely chopped nuts
- $\frac{1}{2}$  C rum - I use Captain Morgan's dark
- $\frac{1}{2}$  C cocoa
- $\frac{1}{2}$  C melted butter

Mix together. Form into small balls. Store in freezer. Roll in icing sugar just before serving. Makes ~ 3 dozen. These mellow and improve with age.

## Italian Rosemary Shortbread

(Fiona Clarke)

- 1 C butter
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 2 Tbsp chopped fresh rosemary, plus more for garnish
- $\frac{1}{2}$  C sugar
- 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup flour



Beat butter until creamy. Gradually beat in sugar and vanilla. Continue beating until well mixed, ~ 2 mins. In small bowl, mix flour and rosemary. Beat into butter mixture with wooden spoon. Divide into 2 portions. Place each in a buttered 9" pie plate. Press evenly into dishes. Place small sprigs of rosemary. Bake at 300F for 45 - 55 mins. Slice each disc into 12 wedges while still warm. Makes 24 wedges.

## Almond Bark

(A Christmas favourite)

- 1 C whole blanched almonds
  - 1Tsp butter
  - 1 Lb White Chocolate
- Place almonds and butter in a 9-inch glass pie plate. Cook on high in microwave 4 to 6 minutes, or until almonds are toasted, stirring twice during cooking. Now, melt the chocolate in microwave dish 2 - 3 mins, or until softened. Stir in almonds and pour onto lined baking sheet. Refrigerate until set. Break apart and store.



## Spitzbuben Cookies

(Peter Guertler)



- 300 g (10.5 oz) Flour
- 100 g (3.5 oz) Sugar
- 150 g (6 oz) butter, unsalted
- 20 g (1 oz) powdered sugar
- 2 tsp Baking Powder
- 1 pk (1/4 oz) Vanilla sugar
- 1 egg
- 40 g (1.5 oz) red currant jelly

In a bowl mix flour, baking powder, sugar and vanilla sugar together. Add 1 egg and very cold unsalted butter in small pieces. Quickly bring everything together to form a soft dough. You don't need to refrigerate the dough. Roll out half of the dough on a floured workspace. With a cookie cutter cut out 25 stars or circles. Put them on a parchment paper lined baking tray. Do the same with the other half of the dough. But additionally cut out small circles from the middle of 25 stars. If using circles, a smaller cookie cutter looks nice for the top.

Preheat oven to 320 F. Bake the Spitzbuben for about 8 - 9 minutes until lightly brown. Let them cool down on the baking tray to become firm and crispy. Dust all cookies with confectioner's sugar. Put a small amount of red currant jelly on all whole cookies and top with a cookie with a hole in the middle. (Offset the star points when doubling up cookies for a nice effect) After the jelly is dry, store them in a tin canister.

## Tiger Butter Candy

(Noni Godfrey)



- 2 C White Chocolate wafers
- $\frac{1}{2}$  C peanut butter
- 1 C Chocolate wafers

Melt white chocolate and blend in the peanut butter. Pour onto a parchment lined cookie sheet. Melt chocolate wafers, pour over the white and swirl into the white chocolate. Refrigerate until cold enough to break up, then store in container. Yummy treat!

Until Next Month



Noni

