The Rhodotelle

www.nirs.rhodos.ca

April

North Island Rhododendron Society

2014/2015 Executive

President
Jake Ellis 337-8516

Vice-President
Nadine Boudreau 339-0909

Secretary
Carolyn Chester 619-5864

Treasurer
Dave Godfrey..... 335-0717

Past President:
Paul Wurz..... 287-4301

Director: Ways & Means
Dick Bonney 339-7594

Director: Membership
Jill Gould..... 331-1859

Director: Revenue Table
Fran Thornton 339-3754

Director: Library
Ruth Fowler 890-9448

Director: at large
Garth Wedemire..... 941-5598

Newsletter
Noni Godfrey 335-0717
..... nonigod@shaw.ca

Social Committee/Sunshine Lady:
Claudia Ellis..... 337-8516

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 April 2015 - Executive Meeting 2:00 pm

The executive meeting will be held at the home Helena Stewart 2431 Seabank Road, Courtenay. (Just down the road from Dick Bonney, same side.)

14th April 2015 - Regular Monthly Meeting

A presentation on "The New Zealand Rhododendron Society Conference and Garden Tours"

This month's presentation will feature some of the many colourful photographs taken by Sue & Garth Wedemire during their attendance at the 70th Jubilee International Rhododendron Conference last October in Dunedin, New Zealand. They will be presenting a photographic overview of the pre-conference tour. Throughout the North and South Island they toured private gardens, the Pukeiti Rhododendron Park, a 360 hectare rainforest property just south of New Plymouth, NZ, as well as numerous tourist attractions.

Happy Easter

President's View

...by Jake Ellis

Today, like every other day I guess, is the beginning and the end of something. Sometime this evening is the official commencement of spring 2015 and the end of a truly remarkable winter. Growing up in Victoria and living most of my life on Vancouver Island, I have been through some very pleasant, snow-free winters but I can't recall anything like this one. While it's true that Island skiers were more than disappointed, I can personally testify that golfers, on the other hand, were overjoyed.

It seemed strange, though, as I walked through the garden this morning. Usually I would be jumping with joy to see spring finally arrive. While it's still a joyful day, it's just a little anti-climatic. It's reminiscent of The Grand Opening of your local Home Depot, complete with balloons, several months after they opened the doors. I've been on so many tours of our member's beautiful gardens and have seen some of the grandest of the gardens of Victoria. I've seen more than enough to know that my garden is at best mediocre. But as I walked my garden this morning — on the first day of spring — with a large part of Canada still digging out from the latest snowfall — I was very pleased.

So much eye candy throughout the property — drifts of snow white aubretia, a variety of colourful primulas, eranthis with their dainty yellow flowers barely hanging on; but most notable were the hellebores that have been in bloom for weeks along with several varieties of daffodils and hyacinths and other assorted bulbs. Just about everything that's going to have a leaf seems to be showing new growth. And how about the camellia in the backyard which is now covered with beautiful pinkish blossoms with R. 'Snow Lady' in full bloom nearby. And I was very pleased to see one of our few trilliums poking out of the mulch in the rhodo bed. Even my neighbours add to the colour with a beautiful large forsythia and a flowering plum on our fence line. I'm pretty sure I saw a rabbit in the perennial bed the other day with a big smile on his face as he surveyed all the succulent, and I'm sure, delicious new growth. (Note to self: get a bigger dog)

It's all beautiful and it made me feel inspired, but it did cross my mind that to any enthusiastic rhodo grower these are like pre-Christmas decorations. Like the tinsel and the lights on the Christmas tree. Like the flower arrangements on the table or the mistletoe hanging from the doorway. They're all beautiful but they're all just a lead-in to the most important part of all — the part where you get to open the presents under the tree.

The "presents under the tree" in this scenario are my rhododendrons which are spread around the property with a major concentration in the front yard. I just can't wait for them to open - I can't wait for them to reveal the beauty encapsulated in those buds. Some I've seen before while others will open for the first time this year. And even though I've seen R.' Seaview Sunset' in many other gardens there will be nothing like seeing it in my own personal garden. It's going to be like a fireworks display in extreme slow motion when Anah Kruschke, Cinnamon Bear, Coral Skies, Horizon Monarch, Hotei, Pomegranate Splash, Miss Frances, Pink Pinwheels and a dozen more rhodos all explode in colour! Makes me feel like playing Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture on speakers throughout the yard for the months of April and May.

OK! I do get carried away a little but you get the idea.

The final touch will be when some of our latest additions to the garden show their finery.

We planted a beautiful shrub Clethra alnifolia 'Pink Spire' last fall and although I read that it suckers, hopefully, those beautiful, fragrant light pink bottlebrush flowers will make it all worthwhile. Another addition was Exchorda x macrantha 'The Bride'. I can't wait to see its arching branches covered in those lovely white flowers. We also planted a Ginkgo biloba 'Mariken' last fall and if it looks anything like the one I saw at Wolfgang's place I will be delighted.

Wouldn't it be something if the best winter ever is followed by the best spring ever? **HAPPY GARDENING!**

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the North Island Rhododendron Society will be held on Tuesday, 12th May 2015 at Ron Cameron's garden 1060 Willoughby Rd. in Merville. Come at 6:30 PM for a self directed garden tour, meeting starts at 7:30. Bring a lawn chair!

Business to come before the meeting will include the Annual Financial Report, Reports from Committees, and the Election of Directors and Officers for 2015/16.

There are four two-year board terms ending in May. Members wishing to put names forward for nomination are to contact the President or Nominations Chair.

Following the AGM, the elected Board will select a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer from among the elected Directors and will assign roles to Committee Chairs.

RAFFLE Rhodos

…by Dick Bonney

This month a lovely Rhododendron called Rocket is up for grabs, this is a Cunninghams White X Red Catawbiense cross. Grows 5 ft in 10 years with mid green foliage thick and heavily veined, it has frilled flowers of a vibrant pink blotched with scarlet. The plant is good to –15 F or –23 C.

Our second prize is R Frazeri. (must be an Azalea - more on this later at the meeting). The Fraseri (Fraseri Group), a cross made by George Fraser of Ucluelet B.C. in 1912 between R. molle ssp. japonicum and R. canadense. Both R. canadense and Fraser's azalea are completely hardy and suffer no frost damage.

Member's Notes

…by Dave Godfrey

Depending on where you are and with whom you are speaking, most will agree the mild winter weather this year has brought flowers and plants three to five weeks ahead of normal. This can clearly be seen with the wonderful Show & Tell sessions at our monthly meetings.

Last month, ***Bernie Guyader*** showed us samples of his *R. parmulatum*, *R. fargesii*, and a potted *R. stenopetalum*. ***Paul Wurz*** also provided a colourful display of trusses from his rhododendrons *'Heatherside Beauty'* (which has also already bloomed in our CVRG) a pink *'Promise of Spring'*, *'April Rose' with* a tiny double purple truss, and the dark red *'Maxine Childers'*.

Not to be outdone, ***Dick Bonney*** presented his collection of a white *Pieris japonica*, a *skimmia*, a *yellow forsythia*, *Sarcococca* and flowering current and plums (pink, white and golden), plus a branch from his magnolia about to break bud.

As ***Summer Joy*** explained, she had brought in some more of her pussy willows, but they were on the Revenue Table and snapped up by other members. She presented a flowering begonia and had a magnificent potted *Geranium 'Stololferous'*, which she grew from a cutting provided by ***Diana Scott.*** Summer says it blooms almost year-round in her sun room and looks magnificent.

During our business meeting, ***Nadine Boudreau*** and ***Margaret Griffith-Cochrane*** gave an update on plans for our Sale & Show on Sunday, April 26th, and the Mother's Day Garden Tour on Sunday, May 10th. As always, many volunteer helpers are needed for both major fundraising events. Volunteer lists were passed around at the meeting and will be available again at our upcoming April meeting.

For the sale date (Sunday, April 26th), members are asked to provide trusses of any flowering rhodos for the Truss display and to donate any specialty plants that they have potted up for our companion plant table. Please NO lilies, irises, or common plants; otherwise your contributions will be gladly accepted beginning at 8:30 AM on the morning of the sale. If you are unable to drop items off, please advise the committee members and arrangements can be made to pick them up the day before. Donations of cardboard flats or plastic plant trays will also be appreciated. Work begins at 8 AM and many hands will be needed to help set up tables, bring in plants for vendors and general preparations. Doors open at 10 AM.

This year, for the first time, beginning at 11 AM we will be featuring 10 to 15 minute educational sessions at a separate booth. Nadine has arranged for ***Garth Wedemire***, ***Judy Walker*** and ***Bernie Guyader*** to provide information to the public on several aspects of growing rhododendrons.

This year also marks the 20th anniversary of our Mother's Day Garden Tours and will feature 7 special gardens in the Courtenay/Comox area. NIRS members ***Bernie & Gloria Guyader***, ***Robert Argall***, ***Wolfgang & Wilma Hoefgen***, ***Helen & Joe Stefiuk*** and ***Dany Fortin & Jamie Willms*** will be opening their gardens, along with non-members ***Margaret Spencer*** and ***Linda Blake***. These beautiful gardens require gate sitters (2 each) for both the morning (9:45 – 1 PM) and afternoon (1 PM to 4 PM) shifts. Those members who volunteer for a shift receive a complimentary ticket to enjoy the gardens during the rest of the day.

Also during the meeting, ***Paul Wurz*** provided an update on plans for both the ARS Convention in May and the Milner Species garden project. ***Jim Cadwaladr*** has donated about $10,000 dollars worth of his time for the planning of the garden. With the layout of the garden completed, the plant selection process is underway. They are hoping to plant as many as 250 species rhododendrons, with some possible plant contributions from the Rhododendron Species Foundation in Federal Way, Washington.

President ***Jake Ellis*** reminded everyone of the CVRG work party scheduled for Thursday morning at 9 AM and the next Propagation Group meeting on March 18th. *(More about these later.)*

Congratulations to the winners of our draws. ***Claudia Ellis*** won the raffle prize of R. *'Pink Cameo'* with ***Jim Webb*** winning a potted primula 'Wanda' and ***Phil Robertshaw*** won the soil tester kit. The set of slug traps for the door prize was won by ***Gwen Wright***.

Bernie Guyader presented the educational for the 61 members and 2 guests in attendance, focusing this time on the variety of plant names. *(See a separate article in this issue.)* Then, prior to the introduction of our guest speaker for the evening, ***Noni Godfrey*** took a few minutes to demonstrate how to log on to the ARS website and access the Journal magazine. Several members have expressed an interest in reading the Journal online and have cancelled their subscription to the printed magazine. If this is something you might consider, please let President Jake know and he will advise the ARS office.

Paul Wurz, a long-time friend, introduce ***Earl Daneluk*** of the Nanaimo chapter as our guest speaker. This was a return visit for Earl to present Part 2 of his presentation on the 12 day bus tour of Northern Germany and Denmark. In Part 1 back in October the focus was on the German Rhododendron Convention last May and the world famous Hachmann's nursery. The second part of Earl's presentation featured visits to private gardens and public nurseries as they continued on their tour.

With such famous nurseries as Hobbies, the Bruns' Rhodo Park and Bremen's Bontanika, the tour saw some magnificent rhododendron displays. Hobbies nursery sits on 80 hectares of land with streams, ponds and beautiful rhododendron gardens throughout. This nursery was established in 1937 and provides a variety of rhodos in all colours and sizes.

Bruns Rhodo Park and Nursery is one of the leading nurseries in Europe and covers 500 hectares that requires 300 staff to maintain the grounds which contain 4000 plants. Originally a private estate, the park features seven different types of gardens (Japanese, rock and koi pond gardens) and some amazing topiary trees - some as high as 30 feet. The old castle on the property is now used for entertaining garden parties and weddings.

Abningslider Nursery in Fuglebjerggaard

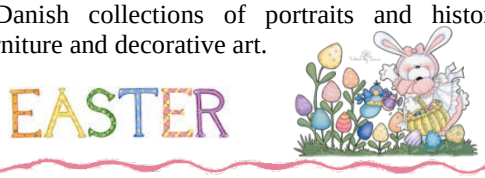
Entrance to Botanika

In Bremen, the tour stopped at the world famous 46 hectare Rhododendron Park and Botanika. This park contains over 3000 hybrid plants and 600 species. It began as a private botanical garden in 1905. The park itself began in 1933 at the initiative of the German Rhododendron Society and was transferred to the city in 1935. Its Botanika facility, described as Germany's largest nature center, opened in 2003 and in 2007 ownership of the park was transferred to a special non-profit society.

Crossing the border into Denmark, the tour took them to many smaller gardens with manicured lawns and winding pathways. Gardens full of beautiful plants of all types with stunning vistas. Pond gardens, rock gardens and sunken gardens all adorned with the most beautiful plants along winding paths.

A stop at Abningslider Nursery in Fuglebjerggaard gave the tour a look at an organic vegetable and plant garden that is owned and operated Camilla Plum and her husband. It is a small company that features many plants, herbs, perennials and fruit trees. It was here that the group learned how to use course peat as a growing medium and saw garden beds walled with peat blocks.

One final stop at Frederiksborg Castle, north of Copenhagen, provided an opportunity to visit a classic baroque garden and see the crown jewels. The castle was built in the early 1600s and is the biggest Rennaissance castle in Denmark. It is the home to the National History Museum with 500 years of history of Danish collections of portraits and historical paintings, furniture and decorative art.



The baroque garden surrounding the castle features the Queen's monogram designed in close cropped hedges surrounded by cone shaped boxwoods. There is also an English garden with small lakes and shrubbery showcase the beauty of nature; in stark contrast to the baroque style garden with its straight lines and sharp edges. A fitting royal conclusion to their 12 day tour!

On behalf of all those in attendance, President Jake thanked Earl for his colourful and informative presentation.

As advertised and announced at the meeting, another spring work party was held at the CV Rhodo Garden on the Thursday morning following the meeting. Despite the damp weather conditions, a dozen members attended to help distribute another 4 yards of mulch provided by the city. Weeding and fertilizing was also carried out to help keep the garden presentable to the many visitors that pass through the area. *(See separate article in this issue.)*

On the afternoon of Wednesday, March 18th, members of the Propagation group (Bunny club) attended another meeting at the home of ***Sue and Garth Wedemire***. This time the group discussed the methods and advantages of 'layering' as a form of propagation. *(See separate article in this issue.)*

Then on March 29th, ***Robert Argall*** opened his gates for a members' visit to view his spring garden. Each spring, Robert plants several thousand bulbs to supplement his many rhodos and flowering trees in a park-like setting. This year Robert planted 4250 new bulbs and many were in colourful bloom for the 40 members and guests to enjoy. Lots of camellias, magnolias and flowers in very early bloom. As Robert said "about a month ahead of previous years because of all the mild weather we've been experiencing!" *(Photos of our members' open gardens will be posted to our website in the near future.)*

As an added surprise, Robert's guests ***Kailey & Nathalie Caldwell-Waluk*** brought along a couple of small rhodos for an impromptu draw. Those in attendance submitted their names and the draws were made during the social gathering that followed the tour. ***Paul Wurz*** was asked to pick the first winner and drew ***Brain Staton's*** name. In turn, Brian then drew the second winner, with ***Lois Clyde*** looking on saying "pick me, pick me!" Lo & behold, didn't Brian pick Lois' name. Congratulations to the two and a big thank you to Kailey & Nathalie for their generous donations. The couple plan to become NIRS members in the near future.

Our April meeting will feature a presentation by ***Sue & Garth Wedemire*** on their trip last year to attend the New Zealand Rhododendron Conference. We look forward to seeing many of you at the meeting.

Rhodogarden News

…by Wolfgang Hoefgen

The work party on March 12th was very successful, with 13 people to help. This took care of the 4 yards of mulch in short order. The work crew also fertilized and did some weeding before mulching.

Tyler, the head gardener of Courtenay, came by and we discussed the pruning of low branches on the Liriodendron tree in the center of the garden.

He will also be supplying some gravel for all the pathways for our April work party.

It is only March and we have already deadheaded one Rhodo (Heatherside Beauty).

And not to forget the tasty "Marmorkuchen" supplied by Peter Guertler. *(Recipe on last page of this newsletter.)*

We look forward to the next work party, scheduled for 9am on Thursday, April 16th.

Propagating

…by Noni Godfrey

The 2nd meeting of our fledgling Propagating group met on the 18th of March at Garth Wedemire's. Twelve members were present for this session ready and eager for more knowledge! Following is a quick recap of the afternoon events….

Videos: Garth showed a few YouTube videos on his TV for all to see. One was of the 'Crystal Springs Rhododendron garden in Portland Oregon', six minutes long showing some very mature rhododendrons, beautiful trusses and exquisite foliage.

The second video was 'Rhododendrons by Hank Shannen', only 4 minutes long. Shannen, owner of RareFind Nursery in Jackson, NJ, has been a recipient of the Gold Medal of the American Rhododendron Society. He has been propagating Rhododendrons since the 1960's and also collects Japanese maples, lilacs, and magnolias. www.rarefindnursery.com

Garth asked that anyone surfing the internet, especially YouTube videos on Rhododendrons, to give him the links. He is thinking of putting together a catalog of worthwhile and perhaps educational sites for club use.

Discussion: Layering was the topic for this meeting and several different techniques were discussed. Layering rhododendrons is one of the easiest ways to propagate and quite often happens naturally. Noni showed us a sample of R. Patty Bee that had layered several branches into the winter leaf mulch. She also presented R. Purpureum Elegans that had been scarred, pegged (with a rock for a marker) and left for 2 years to layer. Wolfgang also showed a species r. camtschaticum that had layered naturally in his garden.

Garth then demonstrated the 'professional' way to layer a rhododendron. First look for a branch that is close to the ground as these are the best to use. Using a sharp knife, make an incision on the branch in the area that is closed to the ground, making sure the cambium layer is exposed. Then dust the area with rooting powder (he used #3 rooting powder). Garth then cut a couple of landscape pins from a wire coat hanger to use to peg the branch down. Cover with a bit of soil, mark with a rock if desired, and wait for a year or two, possibly longer, depending on the rhodo. Check for rooting on a regular basis. After a good root structure has formed, you can cut the branch away from the mother plant and pot up into its own pot, and you have a new plant. Although layering is not suited to high volume production, it is a simple way to clone a prized or rare rhododendron.

Following this demonstration, there was lively discussion and different examples of some of Garth's rhodos were shown.

Next Meeting: Wolfgang will be arranging a trip to a nursery to view their methods of propagation. Tentatively scheduled for late May or early June.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS FOR UPCOMING EVENTS

PLANT SALE HELPERS NEEDED

April 26, 2015 10 am- 1 pm

First Nations Hall – Comox Rd (*Dyke road*)

2 Shifts 8:30 – 11:30 am *or*

11:30 am – 1:30 pm (*or both*)

IF YOU HAVE A JOB PREFERENCE please make a note on your email. We will do our best to accommodate!

MOTHER'S DAY GARDEN TOUR GATE SITTERS

May 10th from 10 am — 4 pm

2 shifts for sitters 9:45 am – 1 pm *or* 12:45 pm – 4 pm

Remember gate sitters receive a 'complimentary ticket' to view gardens before or after shift!

PLEASE EMAIL

Jake - jakeellis@shaw.ca
Margaret - mgriffico@shaw.ca
Nadine - ger.nadboud@shaw.ca

…by Bernie Guyader

I know most of us grow hybrid Rhodos but have you ever thought of how the species got named or for that matter how all plant species are named. I know most people don't want to bother with botanical names, but, if we know the proper names we can very quickly identify their horticultural requirements.

The species names are very descriptive, let's look at some items:

Hemisphere: orientalis ..... Eastern
occidentale ..... Western

Country: sinensis ..... of China
korean ..... Korea
arabicus ..... Africa
japonica ..... Japan

Habitat: maritime ..... by the sea
rivulus ..... by the river
atlanticum ..... Atlantic coast

People: fargesii ..... after Farges
falconeri ..... Falcon
forestii ..... Forrest

Season: vernalis or vernum..... Spring
Autumnali ..... Fall
Praecox ..... early flowering

Flora: flowers longiflora..... long flowered
multiflora ..... many flowers
grandiflora ..... large flowers
triflora ..... three flowered
uniflora ..... one flowered …
..... etc

Fruit: carpum

Folia: foliage rotundifolia..... round leaves
palmatum ..... hand shaped
hirsutum ..... hairy
villosum ..... soft hairy
angustifolia..... narrow leaves
pictum ..... painted leaves
oppositifolium ..... opposite leaves

Dhvlla: leaves octophyllum..... eight leaved
Triphylla ..... three leaved
Variegatum ..... variegated
Arguta ..... sharply toothed

Growth habit: nana .....dwarf
erecta .....upright
pendulous .....weeping
adscendens.....ascending
arboretum .....tree like
annua .....annual
giganteum .....very larg
stolonifera .....with stolons

Colour: bicolor .....2 colours
discolor .....2 colours on
.....leaves
cyaneum .....blue flowers
sulpureus.....sulfur coloured
roseum.....rose coloured
carnea.....flesh coloured
luteum.....yellow coloured
nigrum.....black

Fragrance: fragrans .....fragrant flowers
odoratissimum.....most fragrant
Foetida .....unpleasant

If a name has "oides" which means "like" in the name such as ledoides, this tell us that it is like the ledum or Labrador Tea or let's look at R. cyanocarpum, what is its description? Or R. canadense "albiflorum"?

DATES OF COMING EVENTS

April 16th - CVRG work party at 9:00 am

April 26th - NIRS Rhodo Sale and Show

May 10th - NIRS Mother's Day Garden Tour.

May 12th - NIRS AGM at Ron Cameron's garden.

May 14th - CVRG work party at 9:00 am

June 13th - NIRS Annual Pot Luck Picnic, in Carolyn and Harris Chester's garden.

pest Alert

…by Leslie Cox

Heads up, Gardeners! There is a new pest invading our Valley. It is the Pieris lace bug, Stephanitis takeyai…also known as Andromeda lace bug.

This is a fluid-sucking insect which pierces the epidermis layer on the underside of the leaves to feed, causing discolouration. Their feeding activity can cause premature leaf drop, thereby reducing the overall plant vigour of your shrub.

Originally native to Japan, I found mention this pest was discovered in English gardens sometime during the mid-1990s. However, another published paper by the Entomology Department at the University of Connecticut, claims this Japanese alien was brought into the United States as early as 1945.

Does not really matter when it arrived in North America, or whether it arrived on a direct flight from Japan or enjoyed a refreshing lay-over in England. Suffice to say the pest is here and we need to deal with it.

Actually, we do have some native lace bugs species of our own. One is the rhododendron lace bug, Stephanitis rhododendri. As its name suggests, it feeds on rhododendrons.

If I may be so bold as to even suggest such a thing…this is one nice feature about lace bugs. They are largely what is called "species specific" in their selection of plant hosts.

In the world of insects, proper identification is critical in determining whether they are friend or foe. Very often, identification is hindered because all insects have several larval or nymph stages…most of which look nothing like the adult form which is featured in your insect identification book. That is where knowing an insect is species-specific can be helpful.

So…if you find lace bugs on your rhodo, for instance, you can be pretty assured it is a native pest which means there are native predators that will come to your aid.

Not so with alien pest infestations. Often their native predators have not made it to the foreign shores yet so they have free-rein to feast away…and multiply…without being harassed.

(Note: I did find mention that Pieris lace bugs have been found on rhododendrons, so do not leave untreated.)

Okay…checking out your Pieris for alien infestation. First clue is leaf discolouration. Foliage will have developed a pale mottling.

Another clue is excessive leaf drop. This may be hard to determine as all evergreen plants will naturally shed at least some of their foliage towards the end of winter.

Third clue…check for brownish-black excrement spots and cast skins from moulting nymph stages on the undersides of the leaves…both on the ground and on the shrub.

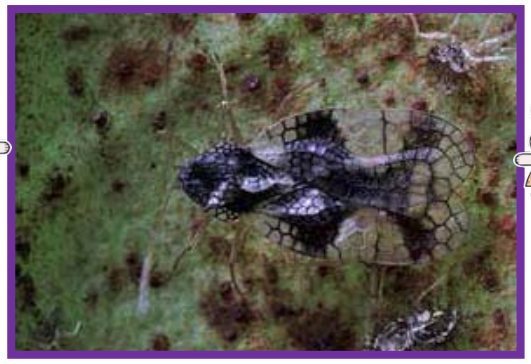
Fourth clue…check for overwintering, dark-coloured eggs laying along the mid-rib on the underside of the leaves.

If positive for first, third and/or fourth clues…start to feel a little panic. With no known predators, control is up to us. And no one really gives any hints towards an organic solution.

My suggestion would be to hit the leaf undersides with an insecticidal soap mixture and best to treat the pests in the early nymph stage when their bodies are soft. Eggs begin to hatch towards the middle of May so keep a watch for the tiny, dark-coloured, flattish critters. Don't delay in spraying as initially, young nymphs stay in a cluster making it easy to coat quite a few in one fell swoop.

Repeat soap treatment in ten to fourteen days. Don't forget! My research disclosed this pest can have four to five generations per year! With each adult female capable of laying up to 300 eggs…well, you do the math.

For more information on this pest, and a few others, visit my website: www.duchessofdirt.ca



Member Profile

Garth & Sue

…by Helena Stewart

Strangely, the "A-word" (addict) was only mentioned once in a recent conversation but there's little doubt that, when it comes to rhododendrons, Garth Wedemire is a bonafide rhodoholic.

Sitting in the Wedemire's gracious Comox living room and staring through a bank of windows at a garden that wraps around the property, early blooming rhodos create splashes of fuchsia, pink and crimson. Companion plants fill the spaces between, but the rhodos are the star performers. It's when the eye moves over from the beds to the patio that the scale of Garth's addiction becomes obvious. There are pots with rhodos everywhere—big ones, little ones, dozens and dozens of them.

The rhodos for Garth are not just ordinary plants: "There's a mystique about them," he says. "Many have a history and when you have rhododendrons you collect their stories. Perhaps someone gave you the plant, or maybe you started it from a special cutting."

Even though his passion for rhodos came a bit later in life, as a child Garth was surrounded by colour—the flaming reds and hot corals of tropical hibiscus and the mauves and pinks of bougainvillea were everywhere. Born into a family that had emigrated from Germany to Jamaica in the 1830s as indentured farmers, Garth grew up south of Montego Bay. He doesn't remember but he may even have seen rhododendrons growing in the mountains in the north of the island.

When he was nine years old, Canada and the United States opened their doors to migrants from Jamaica, so the family emigrated and the dazzling colours of the Caribbean were replaced by the grey concrete of post-WW2 Toronto. He went to the University of Toronto specializing in Science (with post grad studies in astronomy) and moved on to computer programming with IBM. After a couple of years, the company transferred him to Vancouver where he then did an honors course in math. "I just wanted to become very knowledgeable about math," he says.

Meanwhile, Sue Grant, born in Vancouver (a good distance away from Toronto and Jamaica) chose a career in health care, which consisted over the years of many phases, including patient care management, advanced care planning and consulting. While she was in high school, her best friend was a girl named Avril, who later met a math teacher named Garth and were married. Ask Garth how he met Sue and he says with a chuckle, "Her best friend introduced us." The threesome became very good friends over the years.

Garth says that his interest in plants may actually have been sparked when he was given a cyclamen and was intrigued by how the leaves "seemed to be growing backwards." His formal introduction to rhododendrons however was through his father-in-law who was a good nurseryman and grew rhodos. As interest grew, he became a member of the Vancouver chapter of ARS, won a Bronze Medal from the Fraser Valley chapter and a silver medal from the ARS, learned to propagate rhodos and then helped to put together a local rhodo club in Maple Ridge where he lived and taught at the time.

Sue, whose mother was an avid gardener, just always seemed to be interested in gardening. Later, when she lived with her sister, the pair had a flourishing garden in Coquitlam specializing in rudebeckias. (Garth, bitten by the rhodo bug, contributed a rhodo to that garden.)

Tragically, Avril became ill and passed away. But now that he was retired from teaching, Garth continued to devote time to ARS activities and work on the board of the Species Foundation. He also found time to nurture his long-time friendship with Sue who, like Garth, was getting bitten by the bug. They married in 2010.

Ask her what makes rhodos special: "What I find so enjoyable about rhododendrons is that they are all so different and really have such a long season," says Sue. "It's a plant that has it all: foliage, great colour and such a variety of shapes and forms. (With their shallow root base) they're even mobile!"

The move to the Comox Valley came when Garth and Sue realized they simply had too many plants for the small quarters they had on the Mainland. "Besides," Garth says, "I just missed gardening." Like a true addict, Garth just kept buying and propagating plants: "We had to find a place for our vast holdings," he says.

Recipe Requests

Marmorkuchen (*Marble Cake - Peter Guertler)*

Whip: 5 Egg whites, room temp. set aside
Beat: 5 Egg yolks with 200 Grams sugar until creamy, then mix in:

1 C Oil	1 tsp Vanilla
1 C Eggnog	300 Gr. Flour
1 tsp Baking Powder	

Fold: Egg whites into mixture and pour 2/3 of the dough into Bundt pan.

Mix: remaining 1/3 dough with 3 Tbsp Nutella, then lightly mix with fork to marble it into main batter.
Bake: at 300^0 F for approx 1 hour
After cool down, dust with icing sugar

Lime Sugar Cookies *(Linda Billings)*

3¼ C flour	1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp salt	½ C butter, softened
2 C sugar	2 tbsp vegetable oil
Zest of 2 limes	¼ C lime juice
2 eggs	

Preheat oven to 350^0 F and prepare 2 or 3 cookie sheets with parchment paper.
In medium bowl, mix together flour, baking soda and salt.
In large bowl, beat sugar, butter and oil until pale and fluffy. Add lime zest and beat again a minute or 2 until well mixed. Scrape sides and then add lime juice, mixing in well on medium. Add the eggs one at a time, beating on medium until well mixed. Add flour mixture and mix on low speed until just combined.
Using a 1 oz scoop or soup spoon, drop dough on prepared cookie sheets about 2 inches apart. Squish each one slightly and sprinkle with a pinch or 2 of sugar.
Bake until just golden at the edges, 8-10 minutes. The tops will be slightly crackled, but still puffy and shiny in the centre. They will fall and crack as they cool. Let cool for a few minutes on the cookie sheet and then remove to a cooling rack.
Makes at least 30 cookies.

Viking Cookies *(Jill Gould)*

2C butter, melted	2 C brown sugar
2C white sugar	1 tsp baking powder
1tsp baking soda	1 tsp salt
4 eggs – beaten	2 tsps vanilla
½tsp cinnamon	¼ tsp cardamom or nutmeg
4½C flour	3C white chocolate chips
3C rolled oats	

Preheat oven to 350^0 F.
Cream butter with both sugars. Add the baking powder, baking soda, salt, eggs, vanilla, and spices, mix thoroughly.
Add the flour in one cup increments, mixing after each addition, then add white chocolate chips and stir thoroughly.
Add the oatmeal and mix, dough will be quite stiff.
Drop by teaspoon onto a greased cookie sheet. They will spread a little (even after squishing).
Flatten the cookies on the sheet with a greased metal spatula (or your **very clean** hand). They don't need to look like pancakes.
Bake for 12 to 14 minutes, or until they are an attractive golden brown.
Cool cookies 1 to 2 minutes on cookie sheets, then remove to a wire rack to cool completely.
Yield: 10 to 12 dozen delicious cookies depending on cookie size

April Goodies

Sue Grant - Lily VanderHorst
Michele Spender - Cathy Storey