

# THE RHODOTELLER



*Rhododendron 'Moon Indigo' photo by Jean Looy*

## Meetings & Events

- June 5 Executive Meeting @ Antje's 10 am
- June 11 CVRG work party 7 pm
- June 22 Members Open Garden @ Kirk Waugh and Yvonne Van den Brink's 12-4 pm
- June 22 Club Picnic @ Naomi and Carolyn's Garden 4 pm
- Sept 4 Executive Meeting @ Naomi and Carolyn's Garden 10 am.
- Sept 10 General Meeting @ Comox United Church 7:30 pm

## President's View

By Naomi Chester

*"The more one gardens, the more one learns; and the more one learns, the more one realizes how little one knows."* Vita Sackville-West

What a spectacular show of Rhododendron blooms we have witnessed over the past few weeks, with more to come! The perfect springtime temperatures have ensured that bloom times have lasted longer giving us more time to fully appreciate them. It has been a joy to spend the last few weeks touring the gardens of our members and associates who generously opened their gardens for us to share in their vibrancy. Our NIRS Mini Garden Tour for our members was a beautiful day out and it was wonderful to see so many of us coming together and sharing our passions for gardening. The Mother's Day Garden Tour was a great success with an excellent turnout and positive feedback from 99.9% of the public. I'd like to thank every single one of our members who volunteered their time to make these events happen and run as smoothly as they did. That would practically entail me writing down our entire membership which could take a while and more space than I have here! Suffice to say, thank you everyone! Our garden hosts, garden sitters, behind-the-scenes support, ticket purchasers, everyone! Thank you to Kathy Haigh, Nadine Boudreau and Carolyn Chester who have organized all of our main Spring events between them.

Our AGM on May 14<sup>th</sup> marked the last official meeting until September. We'll be gathering for our Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden (CVRG) work parties on the evenings of the second Tuesday of the month throughout the summer instead. The AGM saw a few changes to our Executive Committee and a new addition. We welcome Janet Campbell who will be joining us for the first time and serving as our Membership Chair. Kathy Haigh, already familiar to most as our newsletter editor, event organizer and social media creator, will be our new Vice President. Please join me in welcoming them in their new roles. We are excited for this next term and already have lots of ideas percolating that we will share in due course.

Our annual Summer Picnic is coming up on June 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Chester garden and we look forward to seeing as many of you as possible then. This is a highlight of our summer social calendar and a great opportunity to converse with fellow gardeners, have fun and enjoy the potluck. I promise there will be no deadheading involved, unless you feel inclined that is ;).

Since this is our last newsletter until September, I wish you all a beautiful summer and garden contentment.

See you soon,  
Naomi



*R. 'Muncaster Mist' photo by Lois Clyde*

## NIRS Members Garden Tour

By Kathy Haigh



Dozens of North Island Rhodo Society folks were thrilled to attend a members tour in the Bowser-Fanny Bay area on May 7, 2024. It was a lovely day to carpool to these rural properties south of Courtenay and see two beautiful private gardens and a native plant nursery.

First stop was at John Deniseger and June Bouchard's seaside home at Bowser. They have incorporated many Rhododendrons and special features among the tall trees that were on the property when they bought it. Their design aesthetic and attention to details are apparent throughout.

Second, was an escorted tour at Streamside Native Plants, located on highway 19A. New owners Jim Roberts and Cyndi Hampton offer a tremendous variety of plants native to BC and the Pacific Northwest for both wholesale sales to environmental organizations and retail sales to homeowners.



Third stop was at Ron and Rea Sutton's in Fanny Bay. Ron is a big-time plant collector, with an impressive display of over 400 varieties of Rhododendrons (most of them Species), Azaleas and roses. He can tell you when and where he bought each one! (You should recognize Ron's name as this newsletter's regular contributor of Plant of the Month.)

Thank you very much to Carolyn Chester for organizing this much-anticipated tour.

## Plant of the Month

By Ron Sutton

### **Rhododendron dendrocharis**

This species lepidote belongs to subsection moupinensia and comes from Sichuan China, where it grows on trees, rocks and cliff faces. It's considered a dwarf epiphytic shrub.

It has small 15-25mm shiny oval leaves, however my specimen has variegated leaves with a yellow border on the leaf edges. The single or twin, two-inch pink flowers open for me in late April. This plant will grow to be about two feet high in ten years and is hardy to 0°F or -18°C. As is the case with all epiphytic rhododendrons, it requires good soil drainage. It can take sun to part sun. My plant gets part sun.

Rhododendron dendrocharis is rare in the trade. I got my plant from Chimacum Woods in Washington, but it's sometimes offered by the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden. This photo of my plant was taken April 25, 2021 (right).



R. 'Blue Boy' photo by Lois Clyde

## AGM 2024 Reports (presented alphabetically)

### CVRG Report

By Maureen Denny

I am happy to report that all has gone well at the Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden this past year. Thank you to all the volunteers who came out to rake, sweep, weed, prune and deadhead the Rhodos. And a special thanks to Antje for providing coffee and to all who provided treats. Starting in June our Work Parties switch to the second Tuesday evening of each month at 7 pm. The dates are June 11, July 10, and August 14. Morning work parties resume in September. Remember that those attending will have their names entered in a draw for a gift certificate, to be held in September. The main task at the next work party will be deadheading the Rhododendrons, which is a huge amount of work. Please come and help! Bring a bucket and your own tools. Treats and coffee to follow at the picnic table.

### Library Report

By Noni Godfrey

It looks like the library book has gone the way of cassette recorders, music CDs and movie DVDs! The Internet seems to be the go-to vehicle for information these days. Photos, information, and data can be found much faster than thumbing through a book. I know some still prefer the look and feel of the printed page but unfortunately not enough to keep the library going on a regular basis. We haven't been putting the books out at the meetings and are relying on our members to review the list of books on our web page and let us know if you want to sign one out. Not many have requested so we are shutting down the library after this coming year.

We felt we still couldn't let go of the last 81 at this time so the current listing of those books is posted on our website for perusal. We will continue to make them available through the request system so anyone wanting to sign out books henceforth is asked to request preferably before or at the meeting and they will be located and signed out to you.

Two of our magazines, "The Garden", and "Gardens Illustrated" continue to be very popular with the members and I have renewed both for the coming year. "Fine Gardening" is not very popular, so we are dropping that magazine this year. Magazines will continue to be signed out as usual at the front of the meeting room.

*R. augustinii* UNK  
photo by Jean Looy



## Newsletter Report

By Kathy Haigh

Thank you to everyone who has submitted photos, articles, information and ideas for the Rhodoteller over the past year. In particular, I am grateful for my eagle-eyed proofreaders Diana Scott, Dave Godfrey and Naomi Chester. Members, this is YOUR newsletter, so please keep the input coming. The deadline continues to be mid-month for the following month's issue.

If anyone has a burning desire to try their hand at being our newsletter editor, I will happily give over the position and offer assistance if needed.

## President's Report

By Naomi Chester

For the period September 2023 to May 2024

Firstly, a huge thank you to everyone for your kindness and support in my first year as President. The club has had another great year with several new members joining and participating in our meetings and events. We have had a diverse program of speakers at our meetings that has continued to stoke our passions for gardening and learning.

The Comox Valley Rhododendron Garden (CVRG) continues to be a beautiful and well-maintained feature within the City of Courtenay. Our work parties have been well attended so far, though it is unclear just yet whether the incentive has encouraged more members to join in, we'll find out this summer... With May having been proclaimed "Rhododendron Month" by the Mayor of Courtenay, this area of the airpark walk is particularly well-loved by members of the public, especially with the rhododendrons in full bloom.



*R. 'Gletschernacht' ('Starry Night') photo by Jean Looy*

Our Christmas party was fun and well attended. Next month we will enjoy our annual Summer Picnic. These events offer a great opportunity to socialize with fellow rhododendron enthusiasts/avid gardeners. We had a mini garden tour last week that saw much of the membership come together for a beautiful day out. Our main fundraising events, the Rhododendron Sale and Show in April as well as the Mother's Day Garden Tour this past weekend were both great successes and showed yet again what can be achieved when the membership comes together to volunteer their time and enjoy themselves while doing so. (cont.)

We are anticipating restarting our propagation program this fall after a several-year hiatus. In the meantime, we are also exploring wholesale opportunities to provide plants at our sales for the interim period since our inventory was significantly reduced following the most recent sale.

The database of species and hybrids among our membership is coming along and your lists are still welcome. Over 25% of the members provided their lists by the original deadline and several more were received afterwards. This will be an ongoing project...

2024 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NIRS with the official ARS charter received on October 20<sup>th</sup> 1984. We will be celebrating this milestone with plans to be confirmed.

The District is currently in the early stages of planning for a 2026 Vancouver Island Rhododendron Conference with which the NIRS will likely be involved. We should have more information by our September meeting.

Finally, I'd like to thank Dan and Margaret Ryan for their multi-year service on the Executive committee as Membership chairs. Thanks also to Dave Godfrey for his dedication to the club. He is now relinquishing the Vice Presidency and several other roles but will remain on the committee. Thank you to each and every member, whether it's volunteering at events, bringing goodies, showing up to meetings or your generosity with fellow members/gardeners, it all helps to create the welcoming and friendly environment for which this club is known.



Looking forward to our next year together!

*R. 'Ramapo'*  
photo by Jean Looy

## Propagating Group Report

by Noni Godfrey, on behalf of the Propagation Group

Eight years ago, in May 2016, we were invited to the Smith's property to carry out our Rhododendron propagating activities and we inherited a few hundred plants from Charlie, the gardener, to get us started. This great opportunity of facilities and space for our club enabled us to take cuttings and propagate for several years. Because of this generous opportunity, the propagation group has filled the coffers of the club quite nicely. Our latest plant sale on April 28th brought in \$4,296.00 from our propagated rhodos alone!

Unfortunately, with the passing of the Smiths, and the uncertainty of the property's future, the group has not been taking cuttings or mass-producing plants. We estimate there are enough plants for the annual plant sale next year, but not enough to have draws during the year. Other arrangements will be made for those draws. Several other chapters on Vancouver Island are now propagating but unfortunately will not be selling to other chapters as their stock is minimal right now.

From our very first meeting on January 21, 2015 at Helena Stewart's house to the present day we have had many club members involved in growing and caring for our stock of Rhododendron babies. This past year we have had people watering, potting up plants, putting on shade cloth etc. No one has done more than our very own Antje Guertler, who continues to single-handedly in some cases, keep the stock organised, pruned, watered, and looking great! We all thank Antje for her dedication and hard work!

## Revenue Table Report

By Judy Walker & Maureen Denny

The revenue table provided income for the NIRS from April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023-March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024 of \$338.40. This year's revenue is notably less than past years as there have been fewer plants donated by members. Other garden-related donations such as tools, garden art, books and magazines, and garden produce, have been good additions to the table.



These generous donations by members provide funds each year that go directly towards society activities, such as hall rental, the Christmas Party and the June Picnic. Judy and Maureen thank all the members for making this such a fun and important addition to our society.

*Syringa Vulgaris Lilac & Iris*  
photo by Connie Prain





## Treasurer Report

by Noni Godfrey

Members may request to see the financial reports; they will not be put on the internet.

*R. 'Cyclops'*  
photo by Naomi Chester

## Ways and Means Report

by Aubrey Ferris

Our table revenues were down from the previous year but we did make some useful accessories available to our members. We buy at a good bulk rate and sell to members at close to cost. As a club, we get better deals by purchasing in large quantities.

We have experimented with adding non-plants items to raffles, which seems to have increased interest - especially for those who have all the rhodos they need.

We have secured the purchase of more "Greer's Guidebook to Available Rhododendrons" at a great price. New members especially may be interested. These will be available at meetings for the next few years.

Special thanks once again to Antje for getting the raffle rhodos from the garden to each meeting, Kathy for promoting raffles in the newsletter, Noni for doing the books, Valerie for making sure we were prepared for each meeting, and once again special thanks to all who participated in the raffles.

*Wisteria Sinensis (Chinese Wisteria)* photo by Connie Prain



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Newsletter submission deadline is the 2nd  
Saturday of each month.

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*R. floribundum* (above) and *R. 'Ilam Violet'* (below)

Photos by Jean Looy

