

The Victoria Rhododendron Society Newsletter



Box 5562 Postal Station B, Victoria BC Canada V8R 6S4

Garth Homer Centre, 811 Darwin Street, Victoria, B.C.

June 2007

Twenty-seventh Year of Publication

e-mail: mdeweese@shaw.ca

web page www.victoriarhodo.ca

Monday, September 10th at 7:30 p.m.

Ken Denman, the lead author of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports that have been in the news recently,
On climate change and the future of Victoria gardens

Website

VRS Board

President:

Bill McMillan

478-3515

wtmcmillan@telus.net

Past President & Membership:

Dean Goard

592-6915

deangoard@shaw.ca

1st Vice President:

Margaret deWeese

748-0538

mdeweese@shaw.ca

2nd Vice President:

Jacqueline Bradbury

389-1379

jacqbradbury@shaw.ca

Treasurer:

Ann Widdowson

479-9167

awiddowson@shaw.ca

Secretary:

Theresa McMillan

478-3515

tmcmillan@telus.net

Members-at-Large:

Karen Morrison

477-8281

bkmorrison@shaw.ca

Lois Blackmore

478-6615

loisb@shaw.ca

Dick Pitfield

592-4261

rpitfield@telus.net

Arthur Ralfs

479-2629

acralfs@shaw.ca

Newsletter Committee :

Margaret deWeese

748-0538

Joyce Whittle

656-7313

Peggy Pitfield

592-4261

Pat Fuller
Arthur Ralfs

370-2170
479-2629

This Issue:

Western Regional Rhododendron Conference	pg.1-2
New Members	pg.2
Notice of Motion	pg.2
Vancouver Rhodo Species Study Sessions	pg.3
2008 Fee Schedule	pg.3
VRS June Picnic	pg.2-3
VRS 2007 Trophy Winners	pg. 3-5
VIP's for a Day by Tom Widdowson	pg. 6-7
Cowichan Valley Fall Visit	pg.7
List of Speakers 2007- 2008	pg. 8

Refreshments

The following are on the list for bringing goodies to the September meeting: **Martina McComb, Arlene McGinnis, Nadine Minckler, Bonnie Moro, Karen and Burns Morrison, Al and Liz Murray.** Please contact **Theresa McMillan** to confirm. Many thanks from all of us!

**Western Regional Rhododendron Conference
September 21 to 23, 2007
Best Western Agate Beach Inn
Newport ,Oregon**

Hi fellow ARS members,

My name is **Donna Sell**, and I'm a member of the Portland Chapter of ARS helping out with publicity. I'd like to draw your attention to the newly added event of the Western Regional Rhododendron Conference to be held September 21 to 23, 2007 at the Best Western Agate Beach Inn in beautiful Newport on the Oregon coast. We have a great lineup of speakers from around the world, ready to share their knowledge and passion for plants and gardening peppered by some of the keenest humor west of NYC! There will be panel discussions, plant sales, garden tours, raffles and auctions. Specifics, including the registration form can be found on the following link: <http://www.rhodies.org/temp/westernregional2007.pdf> It will also be in the next ARS journal.

You may contact me by either email at 2donna@boardermail.com or phone: 503-670-1728.

Best regards and we hope to see you there!

Welcome New Members

Thurston and Mary Kay Lacalli write:

We moved to our present home, on Renfrew Road near Mt Tolmie, 5 years ago. The property has a number of large Douglas fir, medium-sized cedars and oaks and, finally revealed after a year of stripping away ivy, extensive areas of natural rock. My original concept for the garden was that it should have a natural look, with an under-story of not-too-bushy plants to complement the large trees. Moss, ferns, Japanese maples and shaped conifers would give year-round interest and an overall Japanese look, with a token representation of plants with summer flowers. I thought as well that this would suit the soil, derived largely from decayed oak leaves and conifer needles, and renewed automatically for me every year. I was especially interested in experimenting with lepidote rhododendrons, for their woodsy look and delicate leaves, and also on the assumption that they

would not require as much water as bigger-leaved shrubs.

Fat chance. In the event, I discovered that establishing nursery stock in marginally improved soil with next-to-zero moisture retention, invasive networks of conifer roots, and resident populations of at least 4 weevil species, requires real dedication. To date I've planted over a hundred rhodos, mainly dwarf or small forms, and they are only now, after several years, beginning to prosper. But I'm still picking off weevils on a daily [nightly, actually] basis. Greatest satisfaction so far has come from Bob's Blue, which flowers massively without fail, Anah Kruschke, which survives in a really sunny hot spot, and Mt. St. Helens among the deciduous rhodos, for it's beautiful multi-tone flowers, fading from bright orange to salmon-pink. My experience with cedar roots suggests that williamsianum hybrids do better than most, but I've had real problems getting azaleas established. I think the main problem is that the comparatively deep pots used widely by nurseries encourage rhodos, and especially azaleas, to become severely pot-bound, and I wonder when they will twig to the problem and substitute shallower, broader pot that better suit the natural pattern of root growth. Mortality among the little baby plants would be so much less. In summary, many frustrations, but we already have a garden that I cannot leave in April, for fear of missing even a part of the sequence of spring flowers

Nadine Minkler

Margaret Argue writes: I am really a hardy plant kind of person though I grow a few rhodos and, I might add, not particularly well! My garden is exposed seaside and has a very high water table year round. I joined because I am convinced that I would learn more about rhodos and their care. I confess to being pretty much ignorant about them.

Doug and Barbara Newton write: We joined the VRS in order to be able to exchange information with other members and to learn about propagation from the experts in the society.

Notice of Motion

A motion will be brought forward at the October meeting to allocate monies for a bursary of \$250 for a student of the Pacific Horticulture College program and operating grants of \$400 each for Glendale Gardens and Woodland (Horticulture Centre of the Pacific) and Abkhazi Garden.

Spring Species Study Sessions

These study sessions will be Canadian based in Vancouver and given by **Douglas Justice** out of the UBC Botanical Gardens. Registration will be limited to 35 so if you are interested please contact **Bill McMillan**.

VRS Fee Schedule for 2008

ARS Full Membership \$50
VRS Membership \$25
Associate Membership \$10

Meeting Driver Volunteers

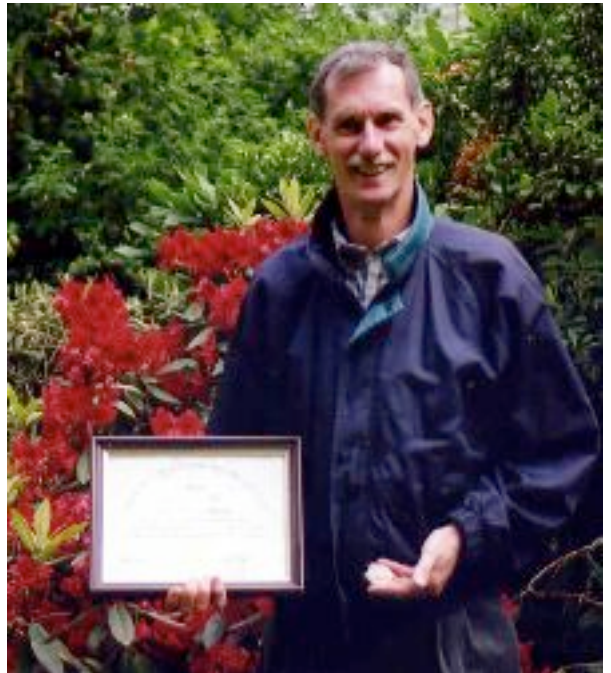
A sheet will be passed around at the September meeting for volunteers to pick up members who no longer drive at night. Your name and phone number will be available to those who would like a drive for the meetings and then he/she or they will contact you prior to the meeting.

June Picnic

The 2007 VRS Picnic was successfully held in the garden of **Ann and Tom Widdowson**, 4635 West Saanich Road. Forty eight intrepid souls bundled up and arrived bearing food, plants, chairs and an appetite! Dean and his wife, Ann, cooked the barbecued salmon to perfection and we thank them for doing this. Each person had a couple of chances to win from a grand selection of donated plants, the majority being our favourite genus, the rhododendron. Trophies from the Show and Sale were presented to the following winners at this very friendly social occasion. The sun shone and the garden glowed with late blooming rhododendrons. Many thanks to Ann and Tom for providing us with such a venue.

Trophies for 2007

ARS Bronze Medal Ian Duncan



The Citation reads:

The Victoria Rhododendron Society is pleased to bestow its Highest Award, the Bronze Medal, to Ian Duncan in recognition of his many contributions over the years.

In the past Ian has been a Board member, Chairman of the annual VRS Show and Sale, and won the Abkhazi Plate. For the 2005 ARS convention he did yeoman work in preparing the opening video presentation, organizing audio-visual support and taking on many other tasks throughout the event.

Today Ian continues to provide outstanding service to the Club on an ongoing basis. Each year he organizes his vacation time so he can continue to spearhead set-up and tear-down for the Show as well as preparing the sound system in the hall. At virtually every meeting he is our expert technician to ensure that slide and digital projectors perform, to troubleshoot and to ensure that the sound system is 'sound'.

In a summary it is with great pleasure that we award Ian the ARS Bronze medal to recognize his outstanding contributions to the VRS.

Herman & Hella Vaartnou Plate

Best Fragrant Rhododendron Truss or Spray (not an Azalea)

Burns & Karen Morrison

R. edgeworthii



Fothergilla monticola



The Jim Calder Memorial Trophy

Best Species Truss or Spray

Norman Todd

R. charitopes



Jean and Norman Todd Trophy

Best Lepidote Species in a Container

Norman Todd

R. litangense



Mary Henderson Memorial Trophy

Best Hybrid Rhododendron

B&B Gordon (Bill and Betty)

R. "Horizon Monarch"



Mary's Memorial Cup

Best Rhododendron Companion Plant

M&J Massa (Mo and Johanna)

The de Rothschild Challenge Trophy

Best Rhododendron in Show

B&B Gordon for *R. "Horizon Monarch"*



The Gibson Memorial Trophy
High Aggregate
M&J Massa



Angus and Mary Boyd Trophy
Best Entry by a Novice
Roy Blackmore
R. "Razorbill"



The Webb Trophy
People's Choice
A.C. Brown
R. "Paprika Spiced"

Thank you to **Johanna Massa** and **Dick Pitfield** for taking the photos at the picnic. The photos have been placed in a **special archival photo album** .
*. Photo insert sheets will be made available for willing members at the September meeting to take home to choose eight 4 x 6 prints of their gardens for the album which will be kept on display at meetings.



Princess Abkhazi Tray for Service
Margaret deWeese

The following two trophies will be presented at the September meeting

The Alex McCarter Bowl

Best NW Hybrid

Judy Gordon

R. "Elsie Watson"

The George Fraser Memorial Trophy

Best Vancouver Island Hybrid

Norma Buckley

R. "Transit Gold"

Tom Widdowson has given us a most interesting account of Ann's and his trip to India which I think segues from the picnic in their most interesting 100 year old garden:

V.I.P.'s for a Day

Tom Widdowson

My father-in-law, **Dr. Leslie C. Coleman**, was Director of Agriculture for many years in Mysore Princely State, in south India. He founded the Coffee Research Station at Chikmagalur, the University of Agriculture at Hebbal (near Bangalore), researched various insect pests, and so on and so forth (sorry, no rhododendrons!). In 1934, towards the end of his stay in India, he organized the construction of a sugar factory at Mandya, just outside Mysore, even providing financial guarantees for it.

Ann had been told that there was a bust of her father in front of the sugar factory. When our friend Prasad offered to take us to visit Mysore on Thursday, she asked if we could stop at Mandya to take a picture of it. Sure enough, it was there, behind a chain-link fence and a sign saying "NO photography!". So we went around to the main entrance at the side, and had a chat with Security. "This is Dr. Coleman's daughter, who has come all the way from Canada, and would very much like to take a picture of his bust." Security seemed a bit doubtful, but phoned Management. Management said "Dr. Coleman's daughter?!! Bring her to our office right away!"

So we had tea and cookies in the manager's office, then moved to the assistant manager's office, then out to the bust, taking photographs all round. Prasad gave them his

cell phone number, for the exchange of photographs, and we were off. Mission accomplished (we thought) and in only a couple of hours.

That evening in Mysore, Prasad's phone rang. "We would like to organize a reception on Monday in honour of Dr. Coleman's daughter and her husband." "I'm sorry, but I don't see how that is possible. Tomorrow, they are going up into the Biligirirangan Hills to visit the grave of Dr. Coleman's first wife. On Saturday, they are going to visit General and Mrs. Nanda up in the mountains in Coorg. Monday, they are returning directly to Bangalore, and Tuesday, they fly back to Canada." "No problem. We will send a car to pick them up at Coorg Monday morning, take them to the reception, and deliver them back to Bangalore by 6 PM."

I rather unkindly told Ann that she would have to make a speech, and that I would have my camera ready to make a video of it to amuse the folks back home. The car actually came up to Coorg Sunday evening, so that the driver would be sure of finding us in the morning. They arrived on the dot on Monday morning, and we were soon heading down to the plains.

Passing through a town near the large and successful Tibetan colony west of Mysore, we saw all sorts of activity, with monks and other Tibetans rushing around. Something was happening! As we reached the entrance to the colony, a banner stretched across the road "Welcome to H.H. the **Dalai Lama**!" made it all clear. The police waved us to a halt and we, together with a few hundred other people, settled down to wait. Finally, an unpretentious car appeared in the distance and came to a halt in front of us. A presentation was made. We did not see His Holiness, as he was in the side of the car away from us, but we got a good look at the presenter, who had to be the most beautiful girl in the colony. Then the car continued on into the colony, and we were on our way.

Our encounter with the **Dalai Lama** had made us late, but we made a rest stop (fortunately, it turned out) on the outskirts of Mandya. Arriving at the road leading to the factory, we saw a huge crowd by the side of the road. An accident? No, us! Somewhat reluctantly, Ann got out, and I fell in behind her. The high school marching band was there, as smartly turned out as its

American equivalents, but unlike them, all male. Marigold garlands were draped on us, and the drum major escorted us to a platform on the back of a pickup truck nearby. The band then set off at a slow march towards the factory, with the pickup following behind, halting at the potholes to avoid shaking us off. We waved graciously to the multitude; at least we hoped it looked gracious and not sheepish. We were given flowers to throw to them. It is not too easy, I found, to throw a flower. Many I threw to the women and children in the affordable housing behind a chain-link fence on our right fell short, to their evident frustration, but I finally got it right. A few of the boys kept up with us and made quite a collection; I hope they did not think that the one with the most would get a prize.

We turned in at the gate where Security had viewed us doubtfully Thursday afternoon and proceeded a couple of hundred metres past the works. At the administration building, we got off and continued with our way lined by school girls throwing flowers at us (some were pretty good shots). A platform had been erected in front of THE STATUE, with two thrones in the centre for us, flanked by lesser chairs for top management and a politician or two. I was provided with a white and gold turban (Ann said it suited me). More garlands around our necks. When we were disappearing, they were removed and more added, presumably provided by other interested parties. Bouquets of flowers, baskets of fruit The management gave us a box made of mirrors, which opened to show a portrait of Dr. Coleman (based on the bust, which was based on a photograph) with smaller portraits of the Maharajah, his Diwan (Prime Minister), and Mahatma Gandhi, together with a laudatory play on the letters of Ann's name. The union gave us a piece of marquetry (inlaid wood) about three feet long and 16 inches wide, with a special inscription.

A politician made a speech in Kannara, the local language. When you are on a platform with a politician making a speech, it is always difficult to maintain a proper expression of rapt attention. When the speech is in a language you don't understand, you wonder, is he telling a joke? Or is he saying something like "If the market for sugar does not improve, there will be layoffs."? Then the microphone was passed to Ann. She apologized for not speaking in Kannara, and thanked them for their wonderful welcome. She was encouraged

to say a bit more, and said it. Then it was my turn. I said much the same thing, and added that we were happy to accept the welcome on behalf of my father-in-law, Professor Coleman. This seemed to serve (being the No. 2 attraction has its advantages).

We then adjourned to the manager's office, where we were interviewed by the *Deccan Herald*. The subject of the bad market for sugar came up, and Ann said she hoped it would improve. Our driver then gathered up the gifts, flowers, fruit and garlands and we headed out of town for a quiet lunch at a roadside restaurant. He dealt with the formidable Bangalore traffic and delivered us back to Prasad's place right on the dot at 6 PM.

The next morning, there were sounds of much merriment from the servants' quarters as it turned out that the local Kannara television had a pretty complete coverage of our performance, starting with Ann's cautious emergence from the car and ending with my speech, and then repeated it. I must say that it looked not too bad. The Kannara edition of the *Deccan Herald* also had a feature article on us, with a colour picture.

The organization impressed us. Starting from 5 PM Thursday and over the weekend, the management laid on the car, the marching band, the schoolgirls, the politicians, the flowers, the fruit, and the gifts by Monday noon. The union gift was perhaps a customized off the shelf item, but the management gift must have been created from scratch. The event apparently went off without a hitch. The sugar factory, as an old fashioned piece of heavy industry, under state or cooperative ownership, must face an uncertain future in these days of privatization. We hope the people welcomed our visit as a hopeful omen, and not as a promise of more solid, material help. We did notice that they were into the production of ethanol, so maybe they will be able to ride the boom in that.

Cowichan Valley Fall Visit

A trip to view Fall colour in the Cowichan Valley is being planned for October 20th. Those interested in carpooling to Maple Bay and Cherry Point please contact Margaret deWeese 250-748-0538.

Proposed Itinerary

Leave Victoria at 10 a.m.

Arrive Margaret deWeese's garden 11:00 a.m.

Lunch at the Quamichan Inn 12:30 p.m.

Cherry Point Winery Tour or Cherry Point

Rhododendrons 2:30 p.m.

Arrive Victoria approx. 5 p.m.



Margaret deWeese's garden



Quamichan Inn

Editor's Note

This is my last newsletter as Theresa McMillan is kindly taking it on. I wish to thank Joyce Whittle for her precise editing and Peggy Pitfield for the distribution of the newsletters. They lightened the load immeasurably.

Margaret deWeese

Show Judging Workshop

Bill McMillan is setting up a Judging Workshop to be held at Glendale Gardens for all who are interested in knowing how the judging is conducted at our annual Show. More will be announced in a future newsletter

Speaker List for 2007-2008

September 10th: **Ken Denman** On Climate Change and the Future of Victoria Gardens

October 1st: **Garth Wedemire** Rhododendron Species Foundation, Federal Way, Washington State

November 5th: **Paige Woodward** Species Paeonies Hunting species in the wilds of Tibet and Sichuan December 3rd : **Carol Dancer** Tasmania Rhododendron Conference and Travels Down Under

January 7th: **Norma Senn** How Plants Changed and Determined our History. 10,000 years in 40 minutes

February 4th: **Agnes Lynn** Part two :Chasing the Seasons with Local Wildflowers

March:3rd: tba

April: 7th: **Dalen Bayes** on Rhododendron Hunting in the Arctic

May 5th: tba



Unnamed seedling Vireya grown to perfection by Jose Almandoz in Spain