

# The Victoria Rhododendron Society

## *Newsletter*



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

April 2011 Thirty-First Year of Publication

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**MEETING 7:30**  
**MONDAY, April 4, 2011**  
**GARTH HOMER CENTRE, 811 DARWIN STREET, VICTORIA, B. C.**  
**Speaker: Don Martin, "Magnolias".**

**Don Martin** is a retired school principal. He and his wife Louise have a big rhododendron and magnolia garden in the Yarrow area of the Fraser Valley, which has often been open for visitors. He is involved with propagation, and he has connections with local nurseries. He is a past president of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society.

### **REFRESHMENTS**

Please let Betty Gordon know at 250-479-0210 if you are coming to the meeting and bringing goodies:

**Tim Peel, Dale and Roger Piper, Dick and Peggy Pitfield, Rhonda Rose, Ann and Mikkel Schau and Norma Senn.**

**Please wrap your cookies or snacks. Coffee and tea are supplied.**

**Assistance in setting out the food, milk and sugar, napkins and helping Betty in the kitchen cleanup is really appreciated.**

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### **A REVIEW OF HAROLD FEARING'S TALK ON "SPECIES RHODODENDRONS FOR THE GARDEN".**

by Theresa McMillan

Harold Fearing began his talk on March 7 with a contrast between hybrid and species rhododendrons. Hybrids are the favorites for growers and nurseries. They are the elepidotes, sold in pots, nicely budded up, and for a moderate price, rather like Home Depot's specials. With care, hybrid rhodo-

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dendrons bloom reliably, and form sun tolerant nicely shaped medium sized shrubs. However, after a time, many rhododendron growers become attracted to the harder to propagate and harder to grow species rhododendrons. Harold's garden is in full sun. It suffers from the strong winds that can afflict the Fraser Valley. But his collection of species rhododendrons has been doing very well.

He has many good reasons to grow these plants. They have a wide range of blooming time, from late winter to late summer or early fall. They vary in size from dwarfs to trees. The bark can be smooth and mottled or even be peeling to provide textural interest. The leaves can be tiny in the dwarfs, to huge, in the large plants like *R. sinogrande*. Many are fragrant, especially the rhododendrons in the *edgeworthia* subsection or in section *virea*. Harold has made a list of his 10 (or more!) favorite species rhododendrons. They include *R. lutescens*, an early pale yellow; *R. fortunei*, a mauve tree-like fragrant plant; *R. haematodes*, a 3' deep red; *R. augustinii*, a fine mauve bloomer, which can become quite tall; *R. albrechtii*, a deciduous plant which has deep pink blooms on mostly bare branches; *R. rubiginosum*, which tolerates full sun; *R. rigidum*, a big plant with mauve flowers and a gold center; the big leaved *R. rex*, slow to bloom, with red flowers; *R. schlippenbachia*, pale pink flowers on mostly bare branches; *R. yunnanense*, spritely with pink blotched flowers, and *R. cinnabarinum*, which grows tall and forms red bell-like flowers. His talk featured pictures of many beautiful blooming species rhododendrons. On the screen at the end of the talk, there appeared the words, "Species Rule!" It was hard not to agree.

## Possible Change of Monthly Meeting Dates

The VRS board is exploring the possibility of changing our monthly meetings to the **second Monday of the month**. Three up-island Rhododendron Societies have their meetings during the second week of the month. Aligning our monthly meeting dates with other island chapters would allow us to share the costs of our speakers. We would be able to recruit high caliber speakers that we may not be able to afford on our own. This would **not take effect until September 2011 and after consultation with the Garth Homer Society**, which we are in the process of doing. Those attending the last monthly meeting did not express any concerns with this change.

**Calvin Parsons,**  
President

## People's Choice Rhododendron Photography Evening (November 2011) By Peter Barriscale



## Background for the photography contest

This year, our April flower show has been moved to Hillside Mall. The VRS executive decided to pull the photography component from the show and give photography its own special night in the winter (November), when the flowers are not blooming. In pictures it's always spring. **So we invite you to pick up your cameras and start snapping.**

The entries will fall into 2 categories. **Hard Copy and Digital Color Entries.**

### Hard Copy

The hard copies will be the same format as presently used in the show. Namely a **black and white** section, along with a **color** section. All entries are to be 5"x7" mounted on a black mat, no frame. Mounted pictures are to be entered the night of the show at the November Rhododendron Society meeting. Entries will be returned at the December club meeting. Subjects can be rhododendrons or garden scenes in color or black and white. Label all pictures on the back with your name. Entry limit is 4 per category.

### Digital Color Entries

**Color** only electronic digital entries can be accepted on burned CD's, USB Memory Sticks, or submitted to a web address currently being set up (details of web site to be communicated at a later date). No hard slide entries. Electronic entries will have a **2-megabyte size limit in the jpeg format**, most pictures shown at our club meetings don't exceed 1 megabyte. Limit 2 is pictures per category. Listed below are the categories for the color electronic entries.

1. **Single truss (rhodo)**
2. **Whole plant (rhodo)**
3. **Foliage (rhodo)**
4. **Companion plant (your choice)**
5. **Garden scene (your choice)**

We would like electronic entries in as early as possible. Give your CD or memory stick to Peter Barriscale (all memory sticks will be returned to owners; please label stick with your name). Entry deadline for electronic entries will be the October Rhododendron Meeting.

### **Judging**

Judging will be done by the whole membership with a People's Choice format, voting for your favorite picture in each category. The name of the photographer will be hidden similar to the flower show.

The date will be November 14, 2011 at the regular club meeting.

First, second, and third place ribbons will be awarded for each category, plus an aggregate winner rosette ribbon based on a total point format. Ribbons will be awarded at the Christmas Pot Luck Meeting.

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## **OUR SHOW on SATURDAY,**

**April 30<sup>th</sup>**, Hillside Centre, 9:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

By Lois Blackmore

Plans for our show and sale continue to evolve in a very positive way. Please be reminded that all trusses must be show ready when they arrive at the mall. Our main purpose of the show this year is to expand the public's knowledge and appreciation of rhododendrons. Please bring in as many trusses as you are able as we want to overwhelm the public with the beauty and diversity of the rhododendron.

We can bring our trusses to the mall in the early evening of Friday, April 29, starting around 7 p.m.

There are storage tables in the hallway next to the mall entrance of Sears. We continue to need volunteers to help place the trusses in show position when the mall closes at 9 p.m., as only two people have volunteered thus far. We need at least four more. We will be able to start placing them unofficially before the closing of the mall, but cannot interfere with the shopping public.

On Saturday, there will be four to six sets of tables around the mall centre where the "ambassadors of rhododendrons" will stand to assist the public. They will distribute people's choice award information and encourage people to vote for their favourite rhododendron. They will answer questions and encourage interested people to sign up for our club, directing them to the membership table. The Centre encourages "subtle" engagement with the public, and does not want us to "corral" the public with our enthusiasm.

We need at least a dozen volunteers to do a 1 1/2 hour shift in assisting the public.

For those who receive their newsletter by e-mail, there will be an alphabetical list of Rhododendrons and other plants, like magnolias, with their classification. (For example, R. "Transit Gold" is in the 52 B class.) This list will enable you to do your entries at your convenience and will save the club quite a substantial sum of money.

For those who do not have Email, this information will be available at the April meeting. However, **ALL CARDBOARD ENTRY FORMS** with space for your name, name of your plant, and its category **MUST BE PICKED UP AT THE APRIL MEETING.**

As well, **YOU WILL NEED THE GREEN BOTTLES TO HOLD YOUR EXHIBITS FOR THE SHOW.**

If this is not possible contact Lois Blackmore at 250- 478-6615, Carol Dancer at 250-721-5273 or Madeleine Webb at 250-744-1785 and we will make arrangements for you to get them.

As well, posters advertising our show and sale will be available for you to put up in appropriate places.

We encourage you to take home your trusses after the show, as we must leave the mall in the condition we found it. Otherwise, the trusses will be thrown out.

**OUR 'RHODOHOLICS' SALE** will be on Saturday, May 7 at Abkhazi Gardens from 9a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Parking will be available at Margaret Jenkins School on Fairfield at Foul Bay roads.

We will need volunteers to help with the set up for our sale on Friday, May 6. Set-up will start around 4 p.m. Jobs include helping with table and tent set up, unloading and placing plants and generally getting everything in order for the sale the following morning.

On the day of the sale, we need cashiers, and four volunteers to tally plants. Tallying will include taking the sellers' tags to the office where Ann Widdowson and volunteers will keep track of sales and cash. We also need volunteers for our information table, members who can advise the public on the planting and care of rhododendrons.

If you have questions, please contact Lois Blackmore at [loisb@shaw.ca](mailto:loisb@shaw.ca) or 250-478-6615, Carol Dancer at [w.dancer@telus.net](mailto:w.dancer@telus.net) or 250-721-5273, or Madeleine Webb at [kenwebb@shaw.ca](mailto:kenwebb@shaw.ca) or 250-744-1785

## Some Tips on Exhibiting Rhododendrons

By Theresa McMillan and Alec McCarter

The success of our Show and Sale in April depends on our exhibits. A few hundred blooming rhododendrons add fragrance and colour to the show. Your entry may be just what the judges are looking for to award a trophy or a ribbon.

1. Entries are to be brought "show ready" to the Hillside Shopping Mall in the early evening of Friday, April 29.
2. A day or two before the show, go around your garden and make a list of the blooms you will pick on the Friday morning.
3. Organize whatever containers you will be using to transport your blooms to the show. The green ginger beer bottles or other small bottles will do. Be careful to avoid crushing the blooms. Fill the bottles with water almost to the top.
4. Picking blooms always takes more time than you think it will! When choosing trusses (flowers that came from one bud), select ones that have straight stems with the bloom on top. When choosing sprays (flowers that came from more than one bud), look for ones that will present themselves gracefully in a bottle.
5. Prune judiciously if need be to enhance the shape of a spray. Avoid choosing entries with bruises. Sometimes rain or frost damage is inevitable, but avoid it if you can.
6. Look for freshness. In a spray or truss, it is better to have one or more unopened flower buds (for they frequently open after they have been picked) than to choose blooms that are already open and going over.

7. Choose blooms with good-looking foliage. Avoid ones with chewed or otherwise damaged leaves. Some judicious snipping of damaged leaves can be done, but don't go too far because some foliage is needed. Do NOT trim off the bitten parts of a weevil-chewed leaf.
8. After cutting your truss or spray, plunge it deeply into a container of lukewarm water.
9. Later, you can make an oblique cut across the stem leaving the right length to make your exhibit look balanced, and do this under water.
10. This will help the truss to take up water and keep it fresh all day. You may then store your exhibit in its labeled water-filled bottle in the refrigerator.

To label your exhibit, put your name and address on the special entry form, the name of the rhododendron (like R. Transit Gold), and its classification ( B 52). See Lois Blackmore's article on the Show for more details.  
**DON'T FORGET** your green bottles and entry forms at the April meeting!



R. 'Black Satin'

## “Show and Tell”

(NOTE from the Editor: Norman Todd wrote this article several years ago, but it is just as amusing now. Even though we are changing where our Show is held from the old church hall to the Hillside Centre, you will find many similarities in choosing blooms, filling bottles, carrying your exhibits and so on. )

### By Norman Todd

.... I compete in the annual show perennially and even though most of our rhododendron branches with flower buds were torn off in the blizzard this winter, I am sure I will find enough to make the cut this time too. It's a lot of effort and it's always done in a human blizzard of frenzied shears and overturned unstable beer bottles. The plant names become mixed-up and individual flowers fall off the best trusses. An attempt – far too hurried – to trim the top leaf to remove the evidence of what a weevil has already removed results in a shape that would win a prize in origami. Squeezing all the bottles into a cardboard box that is far too small results in more mutilation to the best spray from the *augustinii*. It's a hassle all the way and time just evaporates like water from a birdbath in August. You bolt down a sandwich while filling in entry cards and it sits in your stomach like the plug of sand at the bottom of the bottle that you should have put in the bottom of the bottle in the first place, to keep the darned thing upright. When you get to the hall....– you wonder why you bothered because there are so few entries from the other members and the hall looks sterile and bare and the poor lighting brings out all the blue tones in your 'Jean Marie de Montague'. It's the same colour as the blood blister you have on your left index finger that you gave yourself when

you missed with the hammer trying to smash the stem of haematodes. It's no consolation that haematodes is well named.

Then you have to find which class your blue 'Jean Marie' should be in. You will be helped by one or more members – saying different things. They don't exhibit. ("Not a thing in the whole garden – that's the way the cookie crumbles. Ha, ha, ha"). They get their jollies from seeing the few exhibitors' unsteady hands trying to top up narrow-necked bottles with wide-mouthed spouts.

The hall floor is awash and a skating rink. You are in danger of doing a triple Axle. The show stewards have set up tables to conform to some impressionistic idea of colour harmony which has no numerical logic. Class 41 is next to Class 17. The organizer obviously had had difficulty at school counting after the number of fingers had been exceeded but has remembered saving all the red Smarties to the last.

When you do find the right place for your entry with the now sodden black paper skirt stuck to the half-empty bottle you find that some selfish show-off has nabbed the best place on the bench. Innocently, you move it to the side and put yours in its place. This assuages the tension in your stomach a little. But when you come back with another truss on the now routine quarter mile trek to find the right class, you find that not only has yours been moved right off to the far side but turned around to show the hole in the truss where you knocked the flower off with your sore finger and you remember your language matched the colour of your blue 'Jean Marie'.

Your stomach is now worse than ever. Then into the hall comes this cool cat who in successive leisurely trips brings in box after box of huge, multi-hued 45-flower trusses. The only consolation you have is that this latest

competitor hasn't a clue which classes his blousey barmaid trusses should go in either. You leave that to the two non-competing helpers to decide. Still it doesn't help your stomach much. But at least the hall is beginning to look a lot better. The non-competitive entries arrive and the hall starts to look resplendent. But there are still a lot of empty spaces. The judges are going to have an easy time this year, you think.

Once again you think that the rules should be changed to allow people to bring in entries on the Saturday morning. Then I have a flashback to my childhood. I recall my grandfather planning to put an entry of gooseberries in the local 'Cattle Show'. He had sacrificed all the fruit on the bush but five. They were as big as plums. On the night before the show someone stole all five. I don't remember the language but I think I remember the blue smoke rising in great clouds from his pipe. Maybe it is better to have all the entries in on the Friday night: anyway the judges will have little enough time to make the wrong decisions.

So you go home on the Friday night vowing that you will have better entries next year and that you will try to encourage others – with tiresome exhortations no doubt – to compete. And then you find you got a blue ribbon and a couple of Honourable Mentions and you decide you had a good time and the old stomach wasn't so bad after all.



This one got a  
**FIRST!**

## Coming Events

Date	Event	Place
Tuesday, March 29 <i>6:30pm to 7pm for Book Signing 7pm to 9pm for Readings and Presentations</i>	Des Kennedy, Author – memoirs and why he became a gardener and Elizabeth May, National Leader of the Green Party & candidate for Saanich Gulf Islands	Ridge Playhouse, Claremont High School, 4980 Wesley Rd. Victoria, BC
Wednesday, April 20	UBC Botanical Garden, Collectors Plant Auction	UBC Botanical Garden, 6804 SW Marine Drive, Van., BC
Saturday, April 23	Fraser South Rhododendron Society, Annual Plant Sale	Langley United Church 5673 – 200 <sup>th</sup> St., Langley, BC
Saturday, April 23	Plant Sale and Garden Open	Evelyn Weesjes, 10629 Derrick Rd, Saanich, BC
Saturday, April 30	Victoria Rhododendron Society Show	Hillside Mall, 1644 Hillside Ave., Victoria, BC
Saturday, May 7	Victoria Rhododendron Society Sale	Abkhazi Gardens, 1964 Fairfield Rd., Victoria, BC
Sunday, May 8	Plant Sale and Garden Open	Carmen Varcoe & Friends, 545-Old West Saanich Rd., Saanich, BC
Wednesday, May 11 – Sunday, May 15	65 <sup>th</sup> Annual ARS Spring Convention	Heathman Lodge, Vancouver, Washington, USA
Sunday, May 22	Plant-a-Holics Sale	Abkhazi Gardens, 1964 Fairfield Rd., Victoria, BC
Sunday, June 26	VRS Picnic	TBA



**R. “Transit Gold”, the official rhododendron for the V.R.S.**