

The Victoria Rhododendron Society

Newsletter



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

April 2012 Thirty-Second Year of Publication

e-mail: wtmcmillan@telus.net

web page – <http://victoriarhodo.ca>

MEETING 7:30

MONDAY, April 2, 2012

GARTH HOMER CENTRE, 811 DARWIN STREET, VICTORIA, B. C.

Speaker: Bill McMillan “Rhododendrons at Glendale Gardens of the H.C.P.”

BILL MCMILLAN is an active member of VRS. Since 1999, he has been curator of the Rhododendron Garden at Glendale Gardens of the Horticulture Center of the Pacific in Saanich. This talk features bloom through the seasons in the Rhododendron and Hosta Garden there.

REFRESHMENTS

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

Heather Dickman, Meredith Dickman, Leslie Drew, Anne Allen and Ian Duncan, Paul Frost, Pat Fuller and Carrie George

Please wrap your cookies or snacks. Coffee and tea are supplied. Assistance in setting out the food, and helping Betty in the kitchen cleanup is really appreciated.

In This Issue

- **Notices from the Board** pg. 1
- **March's talk** pg. 2
- **R. “Transit Gold”** pg. 3
- **Neem Oil in the garden** pgs. 5-6
- **Upcoming Events Notices** pgs. 7-8

Board News

from Calvin Parsons

Tea & Coffee - Betty Gordon needs someone to begin training to prepare the coffee and tea and goodies for our monthly meetings as she has been capably handling these duties for some time now. Bill would also like to train someone to handle the raffle tickets. If you are interested in these important tasks, please talk with Betty and Bill.

Garden Tours – We are looking for members who would be willing to open their gardens for other members to tour. Your

VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY BOARD

President:

Calvin Parsons 250-590-0489
waterlily@shaw.ca

1st Vice President

Peter Barriscale 250-385-3950
pbarris@shaw.ca

Past President:

Jacqueline Bradbury 250-389-1379
jacqbradbury@shaw.ca

Treasurer:

Ann Widdowson 250-479-9167
awiddowson@shaw.ca

Secretary:

Norma Senn 250-595-7276
normasgarden@telus.net

Members-at-Large:

Lois Blackmore 250-478-6615
loisb@shaw.ca

Sharon Joseph 250-383-1756
undergroundca@yahoo.com

Theresa McMillan 250-478-3515
wtmcmillan@telus.net

Carolyn Marquardt 250-477.8387
tonymarquardt@shaw.ca

Gareth Shearman 250-385-4302
shearman@victoria.tc.ca

Madeleine Webb 250-744-1785
kenwebb@shaw.ca

Ken Webb 250-744-1785
kenwebb@shaw.ca

Newsletter Committee:

Theresa McMillan 250-478-3515

Bill McMillan 250-478-3515

Linda Gilmore 250-642-2256

Joyce Whittle 250-656-7313

Calvin Parsons 250-590-0489

Website:

Bill McMillan 250-478-3515

Calvin Parsons 250-590-0489

(Continued from page 1)

garden doesn't have to be perfect! We think most of us are so interested in your rhodos that we would not notice how straight your flowerbeds are or the condition of your driveway! You pick the day and time, we will advertise in our newsletter and website. We all learn from seeing other members' rhodo collections. Please email Calvin Parsons or Lois Blackmore to be included on the tour. (email addresses are to the left on this page).

Photograph Your Garden – Just a reminder to start taking photos from your garden so you can be part of the monthly Garden PowerPoint of members' gardens.

Photos can be sent to Calvin or Lois.

New Ideas – New ideas are always welcomed from our membership. Perhaps you can find a spot where you can become more involved in the VRS. Lois will have many opportunities for your involvement with sign-up sheets for our various plant shows and sales at our March and April meetings.

MARCH'S TALK

BY THERESA MCMILLAN

On March 12, Ken Webb gave his first formal talk, and his wife, Madeleine, provided the photographs for their trip to an ARS Conference in Bremen Germany on May 2010.

The Webbs have visited 16 countries especially to see rhododendrons. They have seen everything from the Amish people with the horses and buggies, the gleaming towers of New York City, and the beautiful houses in Long Island.

In Bremen, in northern Germany, Madeleine took pictures of a 400 year old skinny house at the end of a narrow lane, hundreds of bicycles, even a few MacDonald restaurants. And

thousands of rhododendrons.

The May of 2010 was especially warm, and practically every rhododendron in the large Bremen Rhododendron Park and in the huge nurseries was in full glorious bloom.

The Webbs wondered what these large gardens would look like in a few weeks, when all the trusses would be spent, and no other plants to add their blooms, and no earlier or later flowering rhododendrons to add more variety to blooming times.

Mass plantings in single colours are popular in Germany. One popular rhododendron, grown by the thousands for mass plantings, is Percy Wiseman.

In one nursery, there was a 4 acre propagating area, where 500,000 rhododendrons in two gallon pots were all being sprayed day and night with a water-fertilizer mixture.

The environment is very important in Germany, so the excess fertilizer solution was being drained into a large pond filled with irises. The plants purify the solution, and the recycled water is ready to use again.

The various rhododendrons being propagated were all grafted into Cunningham's White rhododendron root stalk, the rhodo of choice for many growers, and not only in Germany.

R. "Transit Gold"

by Theresa McMillan

Many people have admired pictures of our logo, an orange-yellow hybrid rhododendron called "Transit Gold". Peter Barriscale has just done two beautiful pictures of it for our updated logo, one with a black background, and the other white.

What is the story behind the original hybrid?

In the ARS Journal for Winter 1989 (Vol. 43, Number 1), on page 31 there is a photograph



of "Transit Gold" taken by Stuart Holland. Stuart pollenized Greig's cream form of Royal Flush and Ludlow and Sherriff's *cinnabarinum* ssp. *xanthocodon* 17521.

The cross was made in the spring of 1963 and the seed sown indoors later that year. "Germination was good," he said, "and I grew on about twenty plants from which I selected one for naming and one other as a very good plant. I designated the plant "Transit Gold" in May 1984 somewhat reluctantly because I have never been entirely certain that it is not similar to other *cinnabarinum* hybrids."

The "Transit" in "Transit Gold" came from Stuart's garden on Transit Road in Oak Bay.

His friend, Bill Dale, registered "Transit Gold" in 1989, the year Stuart died. Bill Dale moved the original plant from the Holland garden and planted it in his own, fearing it would not be looked after well enough. Several members of the Propagation Group of the Victoria Rhododendron Society took cuttings of "Transit Gold" from Bill Dale's garden and Evelyn Weejes' garden, so a number of the plants are to be found now in VRS members' gardens.

Why aren't there more of these beautiful plants? Powdery mildew, which came to Victoria in the 1990s with a vengeance, killed many of them, including the original

in Bill Dale's garden.

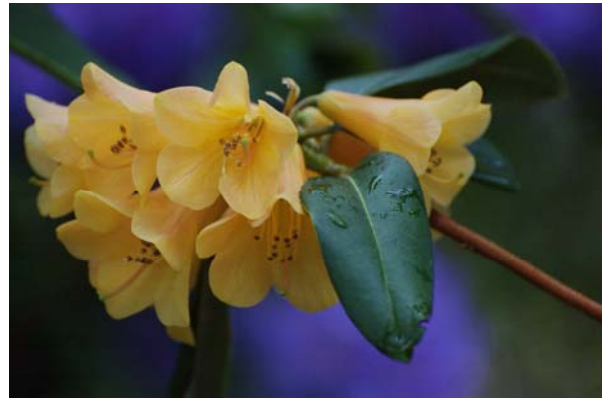
I remember visiting the Holland garden, the Dale garden, the Weejas garden, and the University of Victoria's Finnerty Gardens, and seeing many choice plants clearly failing. There were "Royal Flush", "Lady Roseberry", and other cinnabarinum crosses, the glorious yellow *R. wardii* and the arbutus-like *R. thomsonii* with red bell trusses. There were bare branches, with fewer and fewer leaves, and even those ones with brown blotches beneath and yellowish ones on top. Within a few years, most were gone.



R. thomsonii in glorious bloom

However, today there are several rhododendron "Transit Gold" in Victoria, thanks to the Propagation Group, and the rhododendrons are in good health. They need a bit of special care. Like other mildew-susceptible rhododendrons, they need excellent drainage, perfect ventilation, and a fair bit of sun.

In the ARS Journal for Summer 2011 (Vol. 65, number 3), Doug Blenkarn of Nanaimo describes a method he uses on new growth of susceptible rhododendrons. He sprays with 20 ml of magnesium sulfate (epsom salts) to 1 liter of water. This approach has cured the mildew problem in his garden.



R. "Transit Gold"

If you want your very own *R. "Transit Gold"*, check with the Propagation Group, headed by Ken Webb (250-744-1785 or kenwebb@shaw.ca). You could get cuttings of one of the "Transit Golds", join the Group, and try growing the plant yourself. There will be a Propagation Workshop on October 13. More information will follow in this Newsletter.

Or if there is enough demand for more of these rhodos (or any special rhododendron), the Propagation Group will undertake to propagate them.

Your new, unusual-looking rhododendron with golden bells would be a memory of Stuart Holland and his Transit Road garden in Oak Bay. It was a garden that inspired enthusiasm for rhododendrons in several of our members. Stuart had a motto "if the gate is open, the garden is open".

Neem Oil

Reprinted from the Winter 2011 edition of the ARS and *modified from the B. C Council of Garden Clubs "The Bulletin," Sept/Oct 2010)*

Neem oil is a vegetable oil pressed from the fruits and seeds of neem (*Azadirachta indica*), an evergreen tree which is native to India but has since been introduced to many other areas of the tropics. Neem oil is generally light to dark brown, bitter and has a rather strong odour that is said to combine the odours of peanut and garlic. It is comprised of mainly tricyclerides and large amounts of triterpenoid compounds which are responsible for its bitter taste.

Neem oil is not used for cooking purposes but is used for preparing cosmetics (soap, hair products, body hygiene creams, hand creams, etc.). It has also been used in traditional medicine for the treatment of tetanus, urticaria, eczema, scrofula and erysipelas.

Formulations made of neem oil also find wide usage as a biopesticide for organic farming as it repels a wide variety of pests including mealy-bug, beet army-worm, aphids, cabbage worms, thrips, whitefly, mites, fungus gnats, beetles, moth larvae, mushroom flies, leafminers, caterpillars, nematodes and Japanese beetle. It can be used as a household pesti-

cide for ants, bedbugs, cockroaches, houseflies, sand flies, termites and mosquitoes both as a repellent and larvacide. Neem oil also controls black spot, powdery mildew, anthracnose and rust fungus.

Studies done when azadirachtin (the primary active ingredient in neem oil) was approved as a pesticide showed that when neem leaves were fed to male albino rats for 11 weeks, 100% (reversible) infertility resulted. Neem oil and other neem products such as neem leaves and neem tea should not be consumed by pregnant women, women trying to conceive, or children. Long-term use can cause liver damage.

Azadirachtin acts by deterring certain insects from feeding and interferes with the normal life cycle of an insect--feeding, molting, mating and egg laying. Using neem oil allows you to target pests that eat your plants and only kills insects that ingest the sprayed foliage, hence leaving honey bees and lady bugs alive.

Unless consumed, neem oil is not known to be harmful to mammals, birds, earthworms and insects. When applied as a preventative, neem oil should be applied on a seven to 14 day schedule. To control pest or disease already present, it is recommended to apply neem oil on a seven day schedule.

The Use of Neem Oil on roses, a personal view by Theresa McMillan

May 23rd, 6 pm to dark, Lois & Roy Blackmore, 758 Walfred Road, Triangle Mountain.

When I read this article last winter, my first thought was roses! I love rhododendrons too, but they are relatively trouble free.

Roses require water, and fertilizer and so much more. Aphids, beetles, caterpillars are insect pests. Funguses like black spot, mildew, rust take their toll.

A Neem oil spray seemed good to try. So I used it last summer. Usually my roses look lovely in spring with green leaves and beautiful flowers. Then over a few weeks, most of the leaves are gone due to all the rose pests. The plants struggle with few leaves to produce a few more flowers.



Roses in containers, protected by a neem oil spray, August 2011

I don't know whether it was the new drip system on my containers, and/or the neem oil spray, but my roses were gorgeous all summer. They were full of green leaves, buds and flowers well into fall.

Garden Tours

The following members have opened their gardens for tours in 2012. Watch for the list to grow!

April 29th, 1-4 pm, Thurston Lacalli, 2054 Renfrew Rd. near UVic.

May 13th, 1-4 pm, Agnes & David Lynn, 3913 Woodhaven Terrace

May 16th, 3-6 pm, Ken & Madeleine Webb, 5008 Old West Saanich Road

VRS Rhodo Sales *SPECIAL*

Members Only 10% off our new selection of rhododendrons will be held Thursday, April 19th from dawn til dusk and Friday, April 20th from dawn til noon at Calvin Parsons' home, 937 Rankin Road, Esquimalt just off Craigflower Road (up from Can. Tire).

This is **your chance to pick first from over 390 rhodos** before we start our public sales on Saturday, April 21st.

Upcoming Events

2012	Event	Place	Fee
Fri – Sat, April 13 - 14	Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Garden Show & Sale 13 th 1- 8 pm 14 th 9 am – 3 pm www.virags.ca	Cadbora Bay United Church 2625 Arbutus Rd, Victoria, BC	Donation
Thur – Fri April 19 - 20	VRS Members Only – 10% Off Sale Calvin Parson 19 th dawn to dusk 20 th dawn to noon	937 Rankin Rd Esquimalt BC	
Sat, April 21	Rhodo Show and Sale	Westshore Town Centre 2945 Jacklin Rd, Langford, BC	Free
Sat, April 28	Plant Sale and Garden Open 10 – 12 pm wide assortment of shrubs, rhododendrons, perennials and ferns	Evelyn Weesjes 10629 Derrick Rd, Victoria, BC (north on West Saanich , left on Downey, left on Derrick)	Free
Sat – Sun, April 28 – 29	Spring Plant Sale www.hcp.ca 9 – 4 pm	HCP 505 Quayle Rd Victoria BC	
Sun, Apr 29	VRS Garden Tour 1 – 4 pm Thurston Lacalli	2054 Renfrew Rd, (near UVIC) Victoria BC	Free
Fri – Mon, May 4 – 7	ARS-ASA International Convention Info Contact and registration information	Asheville, North Carolina	~\$515 US
Sun, May 6	Humungous Plant Sale 10 – 1 pm	University of Victoria Look for 'plant sale' signs	TBA
Fri – Sat, May 11 - 12	Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society Vancouver Garden Tour CVRS Bus Tour	Two-day tour of special gardens of the Vancouver area	\$320
Sat, May 12	Rhodo Sale	Abkhazi Garden 1964 Fairfield Rd Victoria BC	TBA
Sun, May 13	Plant Sale and Garden Open 10 – 2 pm Large selection of woodland perennials, Pacific Coast Iris hybrids, hydrangeas, ferns, geraniums & fuchsias.	Carmen Varcoe 5450 Old West Saanich Rd Victoria, BC Some parking available next door at Gazebo B & B. Please note sale and open garden is on a new date this year not in April as in the past.	Free

2012	Event	Place	Fee
Sun, May 13	VRS Garden Tour 1 – 4 pm Agnes & David Lynn	3913 Woodhaven Terrace Victoria BC	Free
Wed, May 16	VRS Garden Tour 3 – 6 pm Ken & Madeleine Webb	5008 Old West Saanich Rd Victoria BC	Free
Sat, May 20	Plant a Holics Sale and Garden Open 9 – 12 pm Tearoom open: 10 am	Abkhazi Garden (250 598-8096) 1964 Fairfield Rd Victoria, BC Parking at Margaret Jenkins School	Free
Wed, May 23	VRS Garden Tour 6 pm to dark Lois & Roy Blackmore	758 Walfred Rd Victoria BC	Free
Wed – Sun, May 23 – Jun. 2	Nine Night Hosted Deluxe English Garden Tour www.travelandcruisedeals.com/homepage or call Liz: Cruiseplus Management Ltd, Lantzville, BC 250-390-0220 or 1-800 854-9664 e-mail: info@cruiseplus.ca	London and Cornwall, UK	\$3299.00 CAD per person
Sat, May 26	Rhodo Show and Sale	Tillicum Centre, 3170 Tillicum Rd., Victoria, BC	Free
Sat, June 2	Cowichan Valley Garden Club 1 – 4 pm Annual Spring Flower Show and Plant Sale cowichanvalleygardenclub.com/	St. Peter's Anglican Church Hall 5800 Church Rd (off Maple Bay Rd) Duncan, BC.	Admission
Sun, June 24	VRS Picnic 12 pm	Webb's Rhododendron Garden 5008 Old West Saanich Rd Victoria, BC	Free