

The Victoria Rhododendron Society

Newsletter



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

June 2008 Twenty-eighth Year of Publication

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June Picnic

12:30 pm Sunday, June 22, 2008

**At Ann and Tom Widdowson's garden
4645 West Saanich Road,
fairly close to the Wilkinson Road/
West Saanich Road intersection**

VRS PICNIC JUNE 22

Our June picnic will be held at the Widdowson's (see the address above) on June 22 at 12:30 p.m. There is parking for about 20 cars on the lawn of the Widdowson property. Extra parking is available on the opposite side of West Saanich Road (the side nearest the house is a bike lane).

You are asked to bring a wrapped savory or dessert. Punch, tea and coffee are provided. Barbequed salmon will be cooked to perfection by our volunteer chefs.

Please bring your own cutlery and plates, and don't forget a chair to sit on.

A free raffle ticket is given to each member, so a donation of a plant or rhodo is kindly requested. Each person is a winner!

Trophies from April's Show and Sale will be presented to the winners.

It's a club affair not to be missed!

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Review of May's Talk on "Travels in Ecuador and Peru"

by Theresa McMillan

Glen Jamieson's talk on "A Continent without Rhododendrons, Travels in Ecuador and Peru, the Amazon and the Galapagos" was a really unusual one to give to a Rhododendron Society.

Glen described several trips that he and his wife Dorothy and, at times, his daughter and her boyfriend, had in South America. Some highlights were the number of high volcanoes along the Andes Avenue of volcanoes. A

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number of volcanoes like Cotopaxi (height 5897m.) which is fairly close to Ecuador's capital, Quito, are active.

There are a vast number of trees and plants in Ecuador, but finding correct botanical names for them was difficult because there were no books to describe them.

The valleys of Ecuador have thousands of greenhouses growing winter flowers for the luxury trade with North Americans.

Much of the native vegetation, like the *Polylepis sericea* tree, is in retreat because of habitat loss. Quick growing eucalyptus trees and other non-native trees cover mountain slopes.

In Peru the coastal area was dry and foggy, with little vegetation to be seen in Lima, the capital. Peru's most famous tourist site, Machu Picchu, is approached from the city of Cusco to lessen the effects of "puna" or altitude sickness. The Incan ruins were spectacular.

Glen showed us pictures of exotic sights, farmers stamping the harvest of potato plants to make a kind of freeze-dried potatoes, homes built on sticks on floating islands, strangler figs, walking palms, or a kind of breadfruit with round fruits sprouting from its trunk.

The Galapagos Islands were another world of incredibly tame iguanas, seals, tortoises, and birds. Snorkeling revealed beautifully coloured fish.

From Incan history to geological upheavals to Darwin, Glen's talk provided an interesting spectrum for us to enjoy.

MY WIFE HAS GONE AND LEFT ME (in charge of her garden)

Yes, my wife Anne, has left me. No, not for another man, but for a woman. Well actually only for 10 days and only to visit her sister in Ottawa. But she did leave me in charge of

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her 'babies'. Not the bipedal, humanoid type, but the ones that stick down permanent roots, although I understand that some folk's kids do attempt to put down roots and not leave the familial nest. I have been left in charge of nurturing and watering and weeding the garden.

Anne's babies are numerous and of varying ages and temperaments. Some were acquired

when we were first introduced to rhododendrons as being about the only deer proof plant around, other than daffodils. If they were human children I would be expecting these guys and gals to be leaving the homestead on their own as they are now about 19 years old or a bit more. We did not propagate them but adopted (purchased) them as yearlings. They are now big and tall, strapping lads and lasses. In fact some of their siblings of a similar age got too big for their britches and were forcibly removed from the household garden and either sold or pawned off on unsuspecting gardens. Some of you may have some and I sincerely hope they are behaving themselves. Others are well situated and glowing in health and vitality, while a few are just not fitting in and don't take well to their environment but tend to sulk and droop, or take after my side of the family, red heads, and burn at the least bit of sun.

Over the years more children have crept into our lives. Acquisitions from perpetually buying multiple tickets at the monthly meeting plant raffle. Not to mention the annual show and sale. Or multiple visits to Ken & Dot Gibson's to obtain cuttings to propagate. Or the annual picnic which seems to be take food, leave with more plants.

Now, my thumbs are not green. I am not a gardener. My thumbs are either black and blue from being pinched by pliers or smacked by a hammer, or red from infection due to woodworking splinters. Green they are not. Anne gardens. I dig holes. I build trails. I put in drip irrigations systems. I build stone walls. I build wooden structures. I build raised beds. I sift dirt. I do not garden. Leaving me in charge of the 'babies' gives me the heebie-geebies.

If we had been sensible and had children of our own, perhaps one of each, I could see my way to attending to their needs for a week and a half. But plants! This place is like the old woman who lived in a shoe and had so

many children she didn't know what to do. After eight days of nurturing I thought I should do an inventory to see if the children that had departed us during Anne's absence would be so numerous that perhaps I should also depart prior to her return. So tonight I went out and counted. I have never done this before. And as the biblical saying goes, ye shall reap what ye have sown. Boy, has Anne ever sowed!

I wandered the paths and byways of the garden, the nursery beds, the decks, and the greenhouse. I was specific and focused. Only Rhodos or azaleas. The count was three hundred and three planted or in containers. Another two hundred and twenty eight in pots. Who knows how many were playing hide and seek in the woods with me that I did not find? And I am responsible for the health of all these children. All five hundred and thirty one of them, give or take.

Just to show you how much of a gardener I am not, consider this. My mother, who had four kids, would occasionally mix our names up, but she did know them all. My great, great grandmother had fourteen children and she never mixed them up or called them by other than their full and proper names. Me? Of five hundred and thirty one accounted for children, I can name two.

One, Anna Rose Whitney, because when we adopted her, she was twelve feet tall and had a root ball about four feet across, and I was the one to dig her out and drag her to the pick-up, lever her up and in, then once home, repeat the process in reverse order. As an analogy, if you had given birth to a 250 pounder, would you forget? I didn't.

The second, or rather sept-econd, is seven of the same. In our early days of me digging and Anne gardening I was asked which spots we should put these babies into. My mind said, oh no, if we spread them around I'll never keep track of them, but my mouth said, let's put them all in one spot and create a

mass planting. So we have a cloud of PJM. Now PJM is a jam word. Three little letters, easy to remember. Not like those marmalade words such as Schlippenbachii, or Longesquamatum.

The other five hundred and twenty three children go through life being referred to as, 'ask Anne, she knows'. And amazingly she does.

So, if you do not see me at the picnic in June, it is because on day 9 or 10 disaster struck Anne's garden, multitudinous quantities of our babies have succumbed to malnourishment, or sudden oak syndrome, or the blight, or weevils, or too much fertilizer, or too little fertilizer, or not enough water, or too much water, or heat stroke, or heaven help us all, six feet of snow, or a hole in the deer fence and bambi got in, or, or, or..... How can one be a gardener and remain sane? I can't stand it. I just might leave.

Respectfully submitted, non-gardener,

Ian Duncan

The 2007 VRS Show and Sale

by Bill McMillan

We moved our Show and Sale to Glendale Gardens (the former Horticulture Center of the Pacific) this year. To coordinate with us, the people at Glendale even changed their Spring Perennials Sale date to match our Show date. This arrangement worked well – it reduced our workload, and lowered the number of VRS volunteers needed. The site within the gardens setting was appealing and because they could provide logistical support, a number of expenses were avoided. As with any site change, there were challenges

and we made some mistakes but generally the Show and Sale went very well. I've been told that it takes several years at a new location for your customers to find you again but signs at the Government House sale and our previous location helped.

April 26th was very pleasant, and despite the cold, frosty spring, when so many plants were reluctant to bloom, it was an impressive Show! There were unusual entries albeit some of the usual spectacular entries, like R. 'Horizon Monarch', were simply not in bloom. Plants that would normally have finished blooming were common, and plants needing greenhouse protection stole the Show! According to our count, not as many people came through the Show this year but with four other competing events underway and a new location, I thought we did well. Sales were down a bit but expenses were also down. Final accounting will be done when the Treasurer returns from the Scottish rhododendron convention.

The usual preparations leading up to the Show included advertising, letters requesting 'raffle' donations, sign preparation, myriads of Xeroxing and paper cutting, logistical preparations, and calling for and organizing volunteer work schedules. Our thanks to Jacquie Bradbury for running two afternoon workshops to train new judges, and also to the people who took the workshops. Due to these efforts, we were able to call on 8 judges and to have trained clerks who could step in where there was a need, such as a judge having an entry in a class he or she was judging.

We did not run a raffle this year but items in the Silent Auction were hotly contested. We offer a huge thank you to the members and local businesses who donated such wonderful material, and the sellers who donated plants. The silent Auction brought in \$1135!

Donations were received from members:

- Ian Duncan and Anne Allen; Joe and Linda Harvey; Johanna and Moe Massa; Madeleine and Ken Webb; Joan Peet; Lois Blackmore; Margaret deWeese; Karen and Burns Morrison; and Don and Joyce Whittle. Local businesses who supported our Show with donations include:
- Garden Ornaments; Arthur Ralfs; Eljay Irrigation Ltd.; WesTech; Elk Lake Nursery; Glendale Gardens; Le Cocteau Nursery; Meadow Oak Nursery; Russell Nursery; Art Knapp Nursery; Lynn's Little Elf Garden Center; Urban Oasis Garden Centre; and Cannor Nursery.

Please tell these businesses how much we appreciate their support when you shop at their outlets!

Again the response to the call for volunteers was outstanding. We had 38 volunteers, and many took on organizational roles and multiple chores. It is music to any coordinator's ears when a volunteer says: "My shift has ended, is there anything else I can help with?"! The Show committee consisted of Dick Pitfield and Ian Duncan spearheading set-up and takedown, Bill McMillan as Chair and handling publicity, Margaret deWeese championing the Silent Auction, Ann Widdowson handling Accounting, Lois Blackmore arranging food and signage. Jacqueline Bradbury dealt with award ribbons and collected, cleaned and arranged engraving for the Show trophies.

As in the past, notices were placed on our own and other gardening websites, sent to the ARS and various magazines, and a copy of the discount coupon was slotted into the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific's and VHS newsletter as well as being featured

on several websites. It also helped that the show was mentioned in Helen Chestnut's column in the Times Colonist newspaper and Jennifer Blyth of Black Press put our notice and a photo in their "Around the House" column. New posters were prepared and distributed to many garden centres around Victoria and signs were placed in many locations around town, at Cadboro Bay United Church and at the Government House sale. We also advertised the Show by word-of-mouth to other clubs at various presentations. Show Rules and Schedule were available at the April meeting, circulated by E-mail, and placed on our website.

Thursday evening April 24th the crew of Ian Duncan, Dave Mackas and Ken and Madeleine Webb arrived at Ann and Tom Widdowson's home, loaded up the Show materials and moved them to Glendale Gardens. Glendale's Executive Director Robyn Burton and Head Gardener Michael Dowling provided exceptional cooperation and liaison in preparation for the Show. Glendale even bought extra tables, and provided cashier and food services on the Show-Sale day.

Friday morning April 25th the set-up crew of Tom Grogan, Peter Barriscale, Ev Van Eerden and Michael Challen coordinated by Dick Pitfield and Ian Duncan set up the trophy display, put up the tables, added tiers then covered them with black plastic and added skirts. Once the hall was ready we set up a canopy (Glendale's) near the entry area and several tables where Show entries could be prepared. New volunteers filled the Ginger beer bottles and we were ready to accept entries. Given that we had a new location and layout, the set-up went very smoothly with some improvements to the preliminary design that I prepared. Later, Ena Vandermale brought in lunch for the Set-Up crew.

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Once the display area was assembled, Arthur Ralfs, Don Whittle and Margaret deWeese set up the Silent Auction area and placed items. Margaret DeWeese brought cookies, Glendale brewed coffee and later, Ena Vandermale arrived with sandwiches for a very welcome food break. I set up a display of propagating methods in the student room using a demonstration model constructed by Mo Massa and plants from Mo and Lloyd Gilmore. I also had a continuous slide show of blooms going on Saturday.

Theresa McMillan, Bonnie Moro, Peter Barrisdale and Doug Newton received entries and helped where there were problems. As expected, submissions were less numerous than last year but our set-out crew of Judy Gordon, Ann Widdowson and Dean Goad organized the entries into an eye-pleasing layout. To our surprise, we were able to leave by about 8 pm. The plant list was redone this year; if you noticed any errors please let me know so they can be corrected.

A big thank you to Exhibitors who entered trusses, sprays and plants, and those who submitted photographs – your entries make the Show! New members in particular are strongly encouraged to bring in material next year. It is always fun to see how the judges respond to your entries and judging is never done in a mean way. Happily we had more photographic entries this year and I have received suggestions for changing the category to encourage even more. There are excellent photographers in the VRS! Betty Gordon and Anne Allen photographed elements of the Show and they will be features on the VRS website soon.

Very early Saturday, the 26th, Dick Pitfield set out signboards to direct people to the Show. We thank Bill and Carol Dancer for having carried out this task for many years when the Show was at the church.

We wanted to open the Show early, so we arrived at about 7 am. Robyn Burton got the coffee started for the judges and Theresa McMillan brought in the traditional Judge's snack. The judges got to work at 7:30 am. It got a bit chaotic at times with 8 judges and 16 clerks. However, thanks to experienced judges Betty Kennedy, Joe Harvey and Alan Campbell, brave novices Burns and Karen Morrison, Dave Mackas, Calvin Parsons and Peter Barrisdale, able clerking by Bill and Betty Gordon, Keiko Alkire, Ken Webb, Theresa McMillan, Ellen Wellborn, Judy Gordon and Norma Buckley, and trophy clerk Anne Allen the final trophy was awarded and we were able to open the doors on schedule at 9:30 AM.

Dick Pitfield and Ian Duncan coordinated the Saturday set-up crew of Carolyn Marquart, Roy Blackmore, and Doug Newton as they helped the Sellers position plants. Admissions shifts were ably handled by Carolyn Marquart and Gary Shearman, Betty Whitlock and Pat Owen, and Joyce Whittle and Thurston Laccali. People's Choice award tickets were handed out to the attendees. Margaret deWeese coordinated the Silent Auction, helped by Lois Blackmore, Michael Challen, Peggy Pitfield, Dorothy Griffin and Linda Harvey. Again this year, the donations were fabulous and many thanks to all who "volunteered" to pick up the raffle items!

Joe Harvey and I were kept busy answering rhododendron questions for attendees and Glendale had Master Gardeners to answer general questions.

Ann Widdowson prepared floats for the Admissions and Silent Auction Friday and distributed them Saturday morning. In the computer room, Don Whittle and Dean Goad and Michael Challen separated and sorted seller

tags, and tag pick-ups were recounted and entered into the computer by Ann Widdowson. Dean Goard picked up tags. Again this dedicated group did a first rate job. Ann Widdowson left for Scotland right after the Show, so a final accounting awaits her return.

The importance of the Sellers to the success of the annual Show and Sale cannot be overstated. The percentage that the club receives from plant sales provides a major source of the monies we use to pay speaker honorariums and fund other Club activities during the year. Rhododendron Sellers this year were Firwood Nurseries Ltd. (Norm Todd helped by Gordon Pirie), Les Clay Nursery, Ralfs Nursery (Arthur Ralfs), and the VRS Propagation Group.

As three o'clock neared, Les, Norm and Gordon packed up their stock, but Arthur decided to continue on Sunday because the Glendale sale is a 2 day event. Exhibitors retrieved their trusses, plants and ribbons and teardown got underway in earnest. Dick and Peggy Pitfield went to retrieve the Show directional signs and teardown and clean-up were completed in about an hour by Ian Duncan, Johanna and Mo Massa, Margaret deWeese, Carolyn and Tony Marquart, Ken and Madeleine Webb, Theresa McMillan, Don Whittle, Dave Mackas and others. After a last check for overlooked items, another Show and Sale officially came to a close. However, a number of us followed the trucks to the Widdowson's and helped offload supplies back into their winter storage area, then more than 20 of us celebrated completion of another successful Show by enjoying a Chinese food

Trophies for 2008			
Award	Purpose	Winner	Plant
The George Fraser Memorial Trophy	Best Vancouver Island Hybrid	Judy Gordon	R. 'Cowichan'
Herman & Hella Vaartnou Plate	Best Fragrant Rhododendron Truss or Spray (not an Azalea)	Burns & Karen Morrison	R. 'Lady Alice Fitzwilliam'
Jean and Norman Todd Trophy	Best Lepidote Species in a Container	Norman Todd	R. <i>rubiginosum</i>
Mary's Memorial Cup	Best Rhododendron Companion Plant	E.J. Whitlock	<i>Erythronium revolutum</i>
The Jim Calder Memorial Trophy	Best Species Truss or Spray	Anne Allen and Ian Duncan	R. <i>lindleyi</i>
The Mary Henderson Memorial Trophy	Best Hybrid Rhododendron	Ken Webb	R. 'Yellow Hammer'
The de Rothschild Challenge Trophy	Best Rhododendron in Show	Anne Allen and Ian Duncan	R. <i>lindleyi</i>
The Gibson Memorial Trophy	High Aggregate	Bill McMillan	n/a
The Webb Trophy	People's Choice	Burns and Karen Morrison	R. 'Pretty Baby' and R. 'Marie Starks'
Angus and Mary Boyd Trophy	Best Entry by a Novice	Lloyd Gilmore	R. 'Sooke Clouds'
The Alex McCarter Bowl	Best NW Hybrid	Not Awarded	

dinner at a restaurant in the Royal Oak shopping centre.

My apologies if your efforts were not recognized in this report. With so many volunteers, it would be easy to omit someone who should have been credited.

Chairing the last five Shows has been challenging and rewarding. I have also enjoyed getting to know many of you in the process. Always, the success of the Show is a credit to you, the members of the Victoria Rhododendron Society. Your support has been wonderful! Thank you.

Garden Visits

Whittle Garden April 22

Our thanks to Don and Joyce Whittle both for opening their garden and for their hospitality on a cold spring evening,

Johnson Garden May 18

The weather was great and the garden spectacular. Thanks to Sue Johnson for inviting us to take part in this memorial garden opening. Having a rhododendron named after him seems a fitting tribute to Charley.



Rhododendron Charlie Johnson

Discount opportunity

Sandra, Urban Oasis has offered 10% off at her Urban Oasis Garden centre at 4085 Quadra St. for all VRS club members. See: www.urbanoasisgardening.net

ARS Western Regional Convention

Hilo, Hawaii,

September 25 – 28, 2008.

Some rhododendron club members might be interested in combining next fall's ARS convention with a fall holiday in Hawaii. The conference should be interesting. Likely, there will be lots of opportunities to learn about Vireya rhododendrons. The conference location in Hilo, on the Big Island of Hawaii, is near where the local volcano is constantly spewing lava into the sea. Also near Hilo is a very large and very beautiful tropical botanical garden; the orchid section alone is worth the price of admission. Moreover, many conference attendees in past years have reported that they have enjoyed the Western Regional conventions even more than the national ones.

Regarding air travel, both Air Canada and Westjet have direct flights to Maui from Vancouver and from there it is easy to take any one of several daily inter-island flights to Hilo. I booked on the phone with Westjet for 2 people in March. The total cost from Vancouver to Maui, with all taxes and fees included, was \$908. This seat sale apparently lasted until mid-April. Flying with Air Canada on the same days (with their cheapest on-line booking for 2 people) would have cost \$1926.

Conference details will be posted soon on the ARS website at : www.rhododendron.org.

Ron Knight

ARS District 1 Director