

The Victoria Rhododendron Society

Newsletter



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

November 2008 Twenty-eighth Year of Publication

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Meeting

7:30 p.m. Monday, November 3, 2008
Garth Homer Centre, 811 Darwin Street, Victoria, B.C.

Speaker: Glen Jamieson “Plant Collecting in Borneo”

Glen Jamieson has been a research scientist for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, working at the Pacific Biological Centre in Nanaimo. He has an interest in rhododendrons, and markets vireyas through his company, “Sans Pareil”. The talk especially focuses on vireyas. .

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NOVEMBER REFRESHMENTS

Joan Gibb, Lloyd and Linda Gilmore, Maureen and Gerry Glaum, Dean and Ann Goard and Bill and Betty Gordon and John and Judy Gordon are asked to bring wrapped refreshments to November’s meeting. Please phone Heather Dickman at 250-478-9725 to confirm.

Help for Joanna Massa and Heather Dickman is always welcome.

OCTOBER’S TALK was presented by Garth Widemire. Garth and his wife, Avril live on a two acre property in the eastern part of Maple Ridge. Garth is a retired high school teacher whose hobbies are photography, hiking and gardening. He has been on trips to Nepal and Yunnan, China to see rho-

dodendrons in the wild. Garth is a member of the RSF where he serves on the Photography Committee. Currently, he is on the Board of Directors of the ARS as Director at Large. He enjoys visiting gardens and has presented a number of different talks to District 1 Chapters in the last few years.

Over the last four years, he has visited Mike Bale's Lu Zhu Garden (on Mt. Woodside near Harrison Hot Springs) on ten different occasions and taken almost one thousand digital pictures. From these pictures and scanned images of pictures from the early years at Lu Zhu, he has created a presentation entitled "Lu Zhu - A Plant Collector's Passion."

REVIEW OF OCTOBER'S TALK

By Theresa McMillan

Garth Widemire has visited Mike Bale's garden, "Lu Zhu" (morning mist) ten times in the last four years, taking hundreds of pictures of the rhododendrons and other plants and vistas of the garden.

In 1976, Mike Bale bought 25 acres of land overlooking Mount Cheam and the Fraser Valley. Then in 1989, he discovered what he wanted to do with the land when he attended the ARS Convention in Victoria. He admired gardens such as the one at Abkhazi.

He had part of his site cleared in 1992. It was perfect, a mountain slope often bathed in mist and rain. He began planting rhododendrons.

Garth's presentation of the beautiful rhododendron blooms at Lu Zhu was set to music. The colour of the flowers and health of leaves of the plants were remarkable.

Vistas of the garden showed rock faces, a waterwheel, a bridge, and large stones artistically arranged, as well as views of Mount Cheam and the wooded valley below.

Garth had taken several pictures of plants such as "Apricot Fantasy", showing how differing conditions affected the leaves and blooms.

It was wonderful for me to see a picture of "Lady Chamberlain", a Cinnabarium hybrid we lost years ago to powdery mildew, looking its exquisite best in Lu Zhu's moist conditions.

Garth also included several pictures taken by Mary Berg, showing the garden in its early days. Bare ground and small rhododendrons were everywhere, and the forest surrounding the garden and views of the mountain and valley were easily seen.

Only 16 years later, as Garth's pictures show, the plants have grown so much that

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some vistas have been lost.

However, many viewers would think that being surrounded by rhododendron blossoms in white, many shades of pink, orange, yellow, mauve, and red is delightful.

The VRS members and visitors on a dark, cool, rainy October night were reminded as we looked at Garth's pictures and listened to the music why we have become "Rhodoholics".

Dear Fellow ARS Members,

My letter to you is long overdue since taking on the duties of President at the Annual Meeting in March. And so I would like to begin. The organization that you have created is a good one. Since its inception some twenty-nine years ago the Victoria Rhododendron Society has shown leadership and financial acumen. It has interesting and well attended lectures, but most of all it is an inclusive and friendly atmosphere for rhodo enthusiasts to meet once a month to share friendship and advice. As well, there is a dedicated Propagation Group under Ken Webb's leadership (the group is headed out to Tofino as I write). The other valuable service which is provided both for ourselves and the general public, is our Annual Show and Sale. When I first attended the Show Norma Buckley and Judy Gordon were co-chairs. I was astonished by the beauty and the organization to detail which was on display at the Cadboro Bay United Church. I had been asked to judge and so I had not been involved with the frenetic set up the Friday before. I arrived to the smell of Betty Kennedy's fresh muffins, coffee and the sun streaming through the high windows illuminating the colour graded trusses, the species rhodos, the companion plants and the artistic flower arrangements Norma was setting on the tea tables. I can't say I did a great job as a judge, but I was impressed by the efforts put into that day.

Now it is down the road a fair bit and many members have done such a lot of work that perhaps they are too tired to be asked to consider adding an Open Garden Tour to the list of "to do's". There are many newer members who want to take their turn. I know I hung back when the dedicated people did the work, meeting after meeting and I wondered when I might be asked. It took a long time for me to realize that I would not be asked. I needed to

say "May I do that?" Some of those people no longer attend and I wonder if I had volunteered earlier, whether they would still be giving their energy to our aging club. I like the idea of an Open Self Guided All Rhododendron Garden Tours for the general public on Saturday May 23 to encourage interest in the genus rhododendron and in our organization. We need new members. The gardens would be volunteered. VRS members would not be charged. No tickets would be sold at the gate nor would they need to be checked as the tickets will be sold at the Annual Show and Sale and in Garden Retail Centers. May 23 is late but many late blooming rhododendrons will be out as well as the wondrous new growth. The purpose of the Garden Tours is to help fund our sellers without whom we would not have a sale and thus little revenue for the club. We could then charge a lesser fee to non-member growers which would encourage growers from north of Victoria to attend, bringing with them a variety of new collections. A second part of the monies (should we do well and Lois and I have every confidence that we will) would be to make a large donation to Glendale Gardens so that in the future we may have a suitable display facility for all the Victoria gardening clubs. I ask for a positive response.

Thank you,

Margaret deWeese, President

**The Victoria Rhododendron Society
Newsletter, YOUR NEWSLETTER, is
asking for new material, notes, pictures,
articles....**

**Please submit to Theresa McMillan,
editor, either by mail,**

**562 Hallsor Drive,
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OR by email,

wtmcmillan@telus.net

A TALK on Nov. 17th, Monday, St. Ann's Academy Auditorium. \$15.

Tickets are available at all Dig This locations and at Cadboro Bay Books.

John Grimshaw will give the Victoria Hardy Plant Group's Elizabeth England Lecture this year. It will be titled 'My Kind of Plants'. You can see from his CV that he grows all sorts. He is a specialist on snowdrops, South African plants and has a new book out about trees.

I like the fact that he promises to be eclectic and opinionated. I think that is how Eliza-

beth England would have described herself. Because of his fee and shared travel costs from England please note the ticket price of \$15.

Valerie Murray

Abkhazi Garden is remaining open this fall, Monday to Friday.

Enjoy a complimentary stroll through the garden or meet a friend for lunch or tea, from 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Our new chef prepares fresh scones, muffins and soup daily with local ingredients.

Join us for an evening with Ian Wright UK's National Trust Special Advisor on Phytophthoras.

The National Trust owns many large gardens throughout Britain and Ian has been front and centre in the Phytophthora issue dealing with destruction of infected gardens as well as national and management actions to deal with the three species of this disease.

The British Government has received a report that unless action is taken, every garden in the UK will have infection within 20 years. Action within the next 5 years is critical to stop the spread of this disease.

Learn about the UK experience directly from this expert as well as what the BC ornamental nursery industry is doing to minimize the risk of this disease moving into gardens of BC.

Also included will be an informative review of the biology and life cycle of Phytophthora, the species that is of concern to West Coast Gardens as well as symptoms and effects of this disease.

Co-presented by: Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society

Register by October 20th, 2008 to ensure seating.

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Fax:

To register, send this completed form to:

Fax: 604-574-7773 or **by email:** ichang@bclna.com

AGENDA

7:00 pm Welcome

7:10 pm *P. ramorum*

Biology and Symptoms

Dave Woodske, Nursery Specialist BC
Ministry of Agriculture & Lands

7:25 pm Phytophthora:

'A Wake-Up Call',

Ian Wright, Special Advisor, National Trust, Britain

8:25 pm BC's Nursery Industry:

Taking action against *P.*

ramorum

Hedy Dyck, BCLNA *P. ramorum*

Nursery Certification Manager

8:55 pm Questions and Answers

Tuesday October 28, 2008

7:00 PM – 9:15 PM

University of Victoria

Room 105

Harry Hickman Building

3800 Finnerty Road

Victoria, BC

Generously Sponsored By... University of Victoria
Finnerty Garden, VRS, MARS, Cowichan Rhododendron Society and others.

Trees That Love Chainsaws

by M.J. Harvey – March, 2001

Let me set the scene: Years ago someone, possibly you, planted the cutest little holly bush next to the door, or possibly in front of the window.

Fast forward to today: There is a big, black, hulking monster darkening the room, blocking the path and attacking visitors. This holly has the Darth Vader syndrome.

Usual remedy: Call in a contractor to cut it down, dig out the stump and haul away the branches. Possible cost: In the hundreds of dollars.

Hatracking

There is an alternative which you can do yourself with the aid of leather gloves, long loppers and a saw. What you do is to cut off all the branches leaving just stubs from six inches to a few feet sticking out from the main trunk. Then cut off the top of the bush at the height you would like. The result is a leafless horror. You tremble in fear of a visit from the militant Victoria chapter of the SPCP. But do not fear. Holly is one of those plants which have the ability to sprout from old bark. During the next growing season the stubs will sprout healthy shoots covered in leaves and in the second year you will have the perfect downsized tree. Everyone will admire your skill.

Don't believe this? Go to Fred Galle's book *Hollies – The Genus Ilex*. It is in the library. Open it to colour plates 207-209. These show in succession an example of an overly large tree; the immediate result of hatracking; and a year later. You'll be surprised. This book is incidentally a wonderful reference published by Timber Press 1997 and sponsored by the Holly society of

America. Borrow it and dip into it – it is too large to actually 'read'.

For instance did you know that the dried leaves of South American *Ilex paraguayensis* are the yerba mate which is brewed into a tea? Or that in North America aboriginal males would ceremonially drink the tea of *I. vomitoria*, with the bravest one the one who did **not** throw up? Or that the English would boil the bark of English holly to make birdlime which was a great benefit since it enabled poor people who could not possess a shotgun to have a nice sparrow pie? (For recipes see Calvin W. Schwabe – *Unmentionable Cuisine*, p 245) So what else bark sprouts? Think Australia – a dry continent dominated by Eucalyptus trees. The several hundred species of Eucalyptus are mostly adapted to bush fires which race through the groves. Being full of terpenes the leaves burn off spectacularly but after a fire the charred branches rapidly sprout new shoots.

Several gum trees, as they are called, will grow vigorously in open, dry sites in Victoria. The best species are the snow gums, *E. pauciflora* ssp *niphophila* and ssp *debeuzevillei* (Jounama snow gum). These have glorious grey-white trunks with the bark shed in irregular patches. Another favourite is the silver dollar *E. perriniana* with its circular juvenile leaves clasping the stems. They are favourites for flower arrangements. Never plant *E. gunii*. The bark is dull and shaggy without the decorative appearance of the snow gums. Mine grew to 20 feet in 9 years from a 12 inch seedling before I made fire logs from it.

It was Ted Irving who looked at my little gum and suggested I cut it off at ten feet. I was rather surprised it had grown at all and thought he was crazy to suggest topping it. Then the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific lopped off their huge snow gum in a most brutal fashion. It was crudely devastated. But by the end

(Continued on page 6)

of the year it had long shoots covered in leaves and looked glorious – and smaller. The silver dollar gum has to be cut down severely every year or two to keep it producing the rounded juvenile leaves. Otherwise it

switches to the elongated adult form of leaf. Fig tree too big, can't reach the fruit? Just cut it down to a metre or two. OK now, chainsaws at the ready!

Extreme sports? How about Extreme Pruning?

by Theresa McMillan

In the mid-nineteen seventies, Bill and I bought a small green-leaved shrub in a pot. It wasn't in bloom, but the label, *Rhododendron* "Anna Rose Whitney", and the picture of deep pink blooms, made it wonderful.

We didn't know any better, so we planted our first rhododendron in a bad spot, by the front door, and too close to it, too close to the cement foundation, and against the front of the house, which faces south.

We began visiting Stuart Holland and his garden, and learned a lot about rhododendrons.

We added sun-tolerant rhodos along our south-facing wall, and found they all fared better than "Anna Rose Whitney".

The plant had grown tall and bloomed very well. But it needed pruning to keep it away from the front door. Its ugly lime-green foliage was hard to turn green, in spite of temporary fixes with the fertilizer, Miracid. In May, its masses of deep pink blooms, beaten by the strong sun, wilted fast. The spent trusses were very sticky to dead-head, and were traps for many an unwary bumblebee.

We should never have planted "Ann Rose Whitney" where it was; we've seen in other locales, and with shade protection, it is quite a handsome plant,

But our plant, after thirty years, had a big root ball, and was way too big to move, so...out came the pruners and the saws.



Bill sawing R. Anna Rose Whitney, Sept. 08



The area is ready to plant smaller, more manageable rhododendrons—*R. luteum* 'Golden Comet' and *R. 'Marcia'* have since been added.