

The Victoria Rhododendron Society

Newsletter



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

February 2009 Twenty-ninth Year of Publication

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web page – <http://victoriarhodo.ca>

Meeting

7:30 p.m. Monday, February 2, 2009
Garth Homer Centre, 811 Darwin Street, Victoria, B.C.
Speaker: Patty Brown, “Winter Interest”

Patty Brown was in charge of the Doris Page Winter Garden at the Horticultural Center of the Pacific (“Glendale Gardens”) for six years.

She is a horticultural technician, a graduate of the HCP, and has her own business, “Brilliant Blooms, Floral and Garden Design”.

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FEBRUARY REFRESHMENTS

Sue Johnson, Jason Jones, Liz Keay, Robert and Linda Kreiss and Ed Kubek are asked to bring wrapped refreshments to February’s meeting.

Please phone Johanna Massa at 250-642-5491 to confirm.

Help for Johanna and Heather Dickman is always welcome.

Our VRS PRESIDENT RESIGNS

For reasons of health, Margaret DeWeese has been forced to step down as President of the Victoria Rhododendron Society.

We offer heartfelt thanks for all her efforts for our Society. Margaret was the Abkhazi Trophy winner in 2008.

We hope for her speedy recovery.

A Review of January's talk, "RHODODENDRONS 101"

By Theresa McMillan

Bill McMillan began his talk on the natural habitats for rhododendrons in the 21st century. The greatest number of species has developed in Asia, where high mountains and deep valleys have caused thousands of different, and isolated habitats.

In his very well illustrated talk, Bill showed us the different flower forms and leaf variations in rhododendrons. To add to the decorative quality of the plants, there is often brown indumentum coating the underside of the leaves or hairy tomentum on top of the leaves.

The fragrance of some rhododendrons and azaleas is often not known to garden lovers, but is a delight.

Bill spoke about the cultivation of rhododendrons, including planting, fertilizing, mulching, pruning, and dealing with pests and problems.

He showed us pictures of pruning of leggy rhodos, which will rejuvenate them and make them more attractive plants.

Bill concluded with the acronym, WASH the LADS. The first part, W.A.S.H. came from a talk by Norman Todd,. The W. stands for water, because our climate does not follow the monsoon pattern of the original rhodo home, wet summers and dry winters. Our rhodos need watering in the summer. They also need A. for acid soil, a pH of 5.5 being ideal. Rhodos need S. for shade. An average of half a day of sun is needed, however, to ensure proper setting of flower buds. H. is for humus, like bark mulch, which gives the right acidity and airiness beloved by rhodo roots.

Bill added "the L.A.D.S." to Norman's acronym. The L. stands for loam, the best type of

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soil for rhododendrons. The A. is a repeat of A. for acid. The D. stands for drainage, which is critical for rhododendrons. They tend to die of root rot in soggy conditions. Bill has been planting rhodos in a coarse sand mixture and above ground level to ensure good drainage. The S. stands for shallow planting. A healthy rhododendron should have a shallow shield-shaped root ball.

Up the Garden Path for November, 2008 (re-printed from the YAK newsletter —Fraser South Rhododendron Society)

By Norma Senn

As some of you know, I just moved to Victoria. This has been something I've wanted to do ever since the first time I visited in 1974 and spent an evening watching the hummingbirds visit the hardy fuchsia hedges at the motel we stayed at along the Gorge. I decided then and there, that some day, I'd get to live here.

In spite of this being part of a long cherished dream, I found leaving my home and garden in Aldergrove to be much more of an emotional wrench than I had imagined. Part of the problem was finding homes for lots of my plants as my new garden is, sigh, smaller than what I had before. However, I did find some willing people to take many of my plants. Overall about 5 pickup truck loads went to new homes. Many of them were given away with the caveat, that if at all possible, people would try and root some cuttings for me. However, there were several plants that had to stay and cuttings weren't possible at the time.

So, what plants do I miss the most? Well, I



had two gorgeous *R. calophytums* that had just reached the point where they were blooming regularly in late March. Both are good clear pinks that held their colour well. These were plants my Dad had started from seed, and so were hard to leave behind on two counts: a fond memory of Dad and his propagating house and two really gorgeous specimens. As well, I had two large plants of *R. fortunei* hybrids also seed-grown by Dad and these were also great favourites. They bloom in mid-May, and the flowers open a delicate peachy-pink, but gradually fade to soft golden-pink. They have the added bonus of being slightly fragrant. The seed for all 4 plants came from the RSF in the early 80's, so I'll have to see if I can get hold of seed and try to grow some replacements.



Another plant I was sorry to leave behind is *R. fraseri*, partly because it's a pretty little thing, and partly because of its history with me. The plant was originally a "party favour" from the banquet dinner for the first Victoria ARS conference. I kept it in a pot for several years until I finally had a garden in which to plant it. It fitted in well as an understory shrub to a couple of dogwoods overhead. *R. fraseri* has small, hot pink flowers that show up well from a distance. I hope to find another small plant of this azalea and a spot to plant it here. After all,

I'm in the "land of George Fraser", and it's a charming namesake for this early rhodie pioneer.

The rest of the plants in the garden can pretty much be replaced, and I guess the hunt for some of them will be part of the fun of a new garden. Of course, I'll have to find places to plant things, but I've already decided the large clumps of Pampas grass can go! I've made one nursery crawl since I moved and already bought a small *Viburnum x bodnatense* 'Pink Dawn'. This is one of my all time favourite plants, and I'd not want to be without it. It's one of those wonderful plants that offers something of interest all year. Especially pleasing are the bright pink flowers that appear sporadically throughout the winter culminating in a burst of blooms in spring. The summer foliage is a bright, clear green that develops good fall colour.

Another favourite I'll plant eventually is *Cornus mas*, the cornelian-cherry dogwood. This also provides landscape interest all year. To me, this is really one of our best harbingers of spring as it blooms reliably in early March. The chartreuse-green flowers are small, but the tree will be covered in them. As well, bright red fruits are borne in late summer and these are great favourites of many birds. Fall colour and interesting bark in the winter make this tree a great asset. I collected some fruit from my "old" tree, and I hope will be able to get some seedlings started for my new garden.

While I left lots of plants behind, I also moved many. I think there were something like 78 one-gallon or larger plants in Nancy Moore's pick up truck. I'm not going to tell you about all of them, but one plant I absolutely refused to leave behind was R. 'Allison Johnstone'. It's in a 100 litre pot, so this was a challenge to lift into Nancy's truck. Allison Johnstone blooms in April, and it has smallish, delicate

flowers of an unusual colour that Greer describes as amber pink. The leaves are fairly small and look neat and tidy and, to my eye, are slightly on the blue-



green side. I've maintained my plant in a container for about 15 years, and the plant seems happy to remain potted. I try to remember to give it some slow-release fertilizer every May and some liquid feed later in the summer. However, if I don't get around to this, Allison is very forgiving, and keeps on looking lovely and blooming reliably.



I also brought 'Egret' and 'Razorbill', two of my favourite Cox hybrids. Egret has small white flowers with a bit of a



ragged edge and Razorbill has tubular deep pink flowers that fade over time. Both are small plants that grow well in containers. I



also brought R. 'Seta' which blooms in March. It has tubular pink flowers and the foliage is a bright, deep green. Since it blooms so early, this is one plant I move to a sheltered location once I see bud colour and then usually I have flowers for close to a month. I've promised some cuttings to Harold Fearing, so perhaps a few of these might eventually make it into one of the FSRs plant sales or raffle.

While I'll continue to miss my old garden, I get the fun of starting over, and I'm now in a true Zone 8, so perhaps I'll be able to grow a few slightly more tender things than previously. And, by the way, I will still be an associate member of FSRs and I hope to attend the occasional meeting when I'm back on the Mainland.

Glendale Gardens & Woodland

By Jane Tice

Glendale Gardens & Woodland is run by the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, a not-for-profit society created in 1979 with the dream that Victoria could and should be-

come a centre of excellence for horticultural education. In the years since, on 43 hectares of Crown Land leased from the Provincial Government, Glendale Gardens & Woodland has been created. The Society has over 2000 members who support the gardens financially; many also volunteer their time working in the gardens, on construction and maintenance and in administration. The Gardens have a small paid staff working in administration, education and in the Gardens.

Most of the land is vital green space and is designated as a conservation park devoted to the preservation of the native flora and fauna. The Glendale Trail, designed to allow access without damage to the ecosystem, is a part of the Saanich Centennial Trails Program and includes loops for birdwatchers and dog walkers. A wetland, known as Viaduct Flats, has become an important wildlife sanctuary and as part of the Colquitz waterway, is vital to the on-going restoration and enhancement of historical salmon habitats. A weir built in 2005 will help to maintain the water level. An observation platform followed and gives birdwatchers a clear view of the many returning species. A pair of bald eagles began a nest in the spring of 2008; an exciting indicator of the rebalancing of the ecosystem.

The year-round gardens of Glendale are beautiful examples of the potential inherent in every season. Glendale has an extensive and successful system of volunteer-directed demonstration gardens supported by local garden societies and individuals. The Doris Page Winter Garden, begun in 1984 in partnership with the Victoria Horticulture Society, is a world class example of an all-season garden. The Takata and Zen gardens show off Japanese garden style. A ceremonial teahouse, finished in 2008 completes the picture.

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Vegetable gardens, orchards and a herb garden demonstrate sustainable garden practices for food production. The drought tolerant and Mediterranean gardens are designed to make the best of the challenging climate. The native plant gardens hold a wealth of native plant material that can be integrated into any garden. The children's garden is a great favorite for school tours. The garden shows how to attract wildlife, like birds, bees and butterflies. There are other gardens devoted to hardy fuchsias, heathers, ornamental grasses, lilies and irises to complete the picture.

The rhododendron garden was created in 1985. Tucked into natural woodland with light ranges from full sun to full shade, hostas, hardy fuchsias and other perennials have been added for year-round interest. The wide selection of rhododendron species and cultivars also provide a variation of foliage texture, shape and colour, adding immeasurably to the overall interest of the garden. The heavy clay soil has required heavy amendments; not adequately done at the conception, a much needed renovation began in 1994. Supported by the Victoria Rhododendron Society and supervised by Norman Todd, the work included 15 cm of coarse sand and 30 cm of leaf mulch to be spread over the site. The plan also included improvements in the drainage. The current curator, Bill McMillan, continues this work with the continued support of the Society and a dedicated group of volunteers.

Educational programs at Glendale include an accredited 10-month full-time Landscape Horticulture Certificate Program at Pacific Horticulture College, (PHC) and the Master Gardener and Junior Master Gardener programs. Under Community Education, courses are offered in a broad range of subjects, including a 30-session course on Sustainable Gardening. A new slate is offered every spring and fall with classes for the novice as well as the experienced gardener. Many have a practical hands-on aspect that

takes advantage of the gardens and greenhouses.

Events at the Glendale continue year round, including semi-annual plant sales, a spring Heather Sale, The Arts at Glendale Gardens, a two-day event in August, and The Organic Islands Festival in July.

The Gardens, just 12 km from downtown Victoria, are open year round. In the summer, they are open from 8 am to 8 pm- Monday to Friday, from 8 am to 6 pm on Saturdays and Sundays. The winter hours are 9 am to 4 pm.

General admission is \$10.00

Seniors over 60 & students \$7.50

HCP members' guests are \$5.00

Members get a 10% discount on plants bought at Glendale Gardens.

**VRS (YOUR)
ANNUAL SHOW and
PLANT SALE**

25th Apr 2008

(Set-up April 24th)

VOLUNTEERS SIGN -UP SHEETS WILL BE CIRCULATED AT THE FEBRUARY MEETING

(MANY THANKS TO THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY VOLUNTEERED)

***Please help
make the show a winner !***

The Annual General Meeting

Elections of officers for the ensuing year are scheduled to take place at the AGM to be held during the March 2nd meeting.

If you are keen you could contact Bill McMillan or Dean Goard.

Nominations should be submitted in writing to the Co-Chair of the Nominating Committee at least seven days in advance of the AGM, signed by the proposing member and authorized in writing by the person so nominated. Additional nominations to the Board, not to exceed two in number may be made from the floor at the AGM. No one shall be nominated for president or vice president until he or she has been a member of the Society for at least two years. Only full members of the ARS can vote or be elected to the Board.

ARS 2009 Rhododendron Rendezvous

The ARS Rhododendron Rendezvous is being held in Everett, WA, April 29 to May 3, 2009.

For more details, see the Cascade Chapter's web site at www.ars-2009-convention.org.

There will be on-line registration with credit payment available about January 27.

WRIGHTMAN'S ALPINES ORDERS

If there is any interest in putting in a group order to Wrightman Alpines this year, please contact Jacq Bradbury. The new catalogue is out at:

www.wrightmanalpines.com.

Last year, the price for postage worked out to an extra dollar per plant. Orders would need to be in by the end of February with payment due when the plants are received. Please reply to jacqbradbury@shaw.ca

NOTICES

New ARS Journal editor

Sonya Nelson has stepped down, and the new journal editor for the American Rhododendron Society is Glen Jamieson. Newsletters and articles should be sent to:
Dr. Glen Jamieson, 804 San Malo Cr.
Parksville, BC, Canada V9P 1S4
Email: ars.editor@gmail.com

VRS Finance Committee

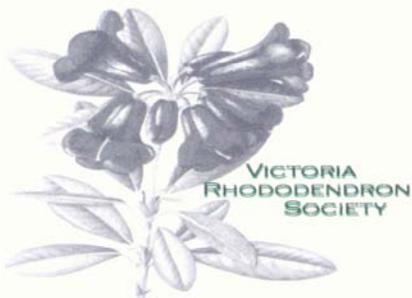
First let me assure you that our finances are rock solid and there is no hint of impropriety in their administration. Kudos to Ann Widdowson for taking on the job of treasurer.

Nevertheless we (the board) have a tendency to deal with financial matters in a rather ad hoc and case-by-case fashion. Considering the size of the club's endowment this may not be best, but that's unlikely to change much if left solely to your hard working board of directors. So we are asking if any club members are interested in serving on a finance committee to report to and advise the board.

The terms of reference remain to be determined and could well be partly defined by who steps forward. Some things to consider are spending oversight, budgeting, and investment decisions.

Another item may be whether, as a club, we should have some grand project for the longer term, or content ourselves with small disbursements here and there.

If you have any interest in being on the finance committee please contact Arthur Ralfs at acralfs@shaw.ca



Key to the Symbols



General Meetings
Garth Homer Center
811 Darwin Street
Saanich



VRS Show and Sale
Cadboro Bay United Church
2625 Arbutus Road
Saanich



Propagation Group Meetings
(contact Ken Webb
to be added to the
email list.)



Summer Picnic
See May Newsletter for
details on location and time



Garden Tours



ARS Convention

2009

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July							August							September						
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VRS Spring Show and Sale

ARS Annual Convention
Everett, Washington

Picnic

ARS Western Regional Conference
Tacoma, Washington