

The Victoria Rhododendron Society *Newsletter*

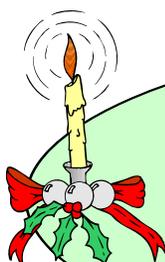


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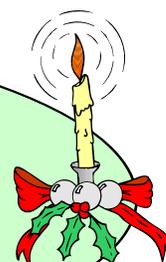
December 2009 Twenty– eighth Year of Publication

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Christmas Party
6:30 p.m. Monday, December 7, 2009
Garth Homer Centre, 811 Darwin Street, Victoria, B.C.
Theme: Victoria gardens
There will be pictures of blooming gardens and plants, especially rhododendrons, from several of our members.



For details of the party, see page 2

REFRESHMENTS for the Christmas Party

We are following the two-thirds savories and one third sweets for our pot-luck dinner. We provide a cooked ham, fruit punch and coffee and tea.

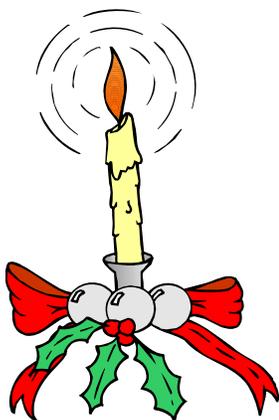
Would members A to M bring salads or savories, and N to W bring dessert items.

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Photos for the Christmas Party

We'd love to see pictures of your garden at our Christmas party on December 7. Select a few good pictures of your garden and Email them to Calvin Parsons at waterlily@shaw.com. Be prepared to tell other members a little about your garden.



Happy Holidays!





*The Victoria Rhododendron Society
annual Christmas Dinner meeting
will be*

*Monday, December 7
at the
Garth Homer Centre
at 6:30 p.m.*

*Members A to M please bring
a savory or a salad dish
Members N to Z please bring
dessert*

*The Club will provide a
cooked ham, punch and serviettes
Please provide your own dishes, cutlery and cups
Raffle donations, of plants and especially crafts
would be appreciated*

*Raffle proceeds will be donated to a local charity
but also please bring
non-perishables for the food bank*

*Program - Member's Garden Highlights
Photos from our members*



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A Review of November's Talk

By Theresa McMillan

Mike Stewart from Oregon spoke about several hybrids and hybridizers from the Pacific Northwest, particularly from the American side. The pioneers included Halfdan Lem, John Henry, Theodore VanVeen and Warren Berg. Four most frequently used plants for hybridizing today are R. yakushmanum, Lem's Cameo, Nancy Evans and Yaku Sunrise.

Mike told us about recent hybridizers like Don Wallace, the people at Thompson's Nursery, Nolan Blansit (who works in a city sized lot), Harold Greer and Harry Wright of Courtenay. Trends in the latest hybridizing focus on beautiful foliage as well as beautiful flowers. There is more freckling (irroratum hybrids) on the flowers. There were several "hose in hose" hybrids where large corollas added a double outer fringe to the flowers. And there was a lot of picotee or varying shades of colour (say from pink to white) in each flower.

One spectacular hybrid, "Melrose Flash" (a hybrid of Scintillation, Mrs. A. T. de la Mare, King of Shrubs and Holy Moses) was made by Merle Sanders. It was pink and cream with a green center and was very frilly.

The names of the new hybrids reflect their beauty; "Something Lovely", "Cloudburst", "Ring of Fire", "Many Moons", "Plum Beautiful", and "Seaview Sunset".

We were faced with so many colourful flowers on screen that I was reminded of Norman Todd's article in the VRS Newsletter last January. Why should fine wines be suitable objects to appreciate and write long articles about when we are faced with a gorgeous

(Continued on page 4)



fragrant rhododendron? Norm described “Nancy Evans”, used so much in hybridization, like a fine wine, but in plant terms. Its blooms provide an “eye-shattering display of deeply aureolin sunnyness”, and “a bud of fire-glowing rubification, which morphs majestically into the warmest of yellows with hints of hidden infernos....”

Some of the wonderful new hybrids Mike showed us will become commercially available in time—I can’t wait!

M.J. Harvey

Goldilocks and the Three Ferns

I don't have many ferns but there are three I am growing at the moment, all native to British Columbia, but which are seldom if ever offered for sale. All three are fascinating and deserving of more publicity.

After I started writing this I realised that one fern was too small for most people, one was far too big and difficult to fit into quite the right garden habitat, but that one was of medium size and would be just right. So here is their story, starting with little bear -- I mean fern.

1. Polypodium scoleri - Leatherleaf fern

I got this while hiking in Metchosin. It was growing near the shore among some twisted firs, on the side of a boulder away from the sea. It should be called Scouler's polypody but, like Rodney Dangerfield, Scouler don't get no respect so we call it leatherleaf instead. This fern is a tough little thing with creeping, surface rhizomes looking like little hairy feet (to people with a vivid imagination). From this we get the generic name, poly - many, pod-- feet.



On the hike I broke off a one inch piece of rhizome, put it in my pocket and when back home put it into a pot of soil with a small pebble on it to keep it in contact with the soil. It rooted and has multiplied a hundred times since.

This is not a fern you just plant in your garden among the Petunias. It is easily overwhelmed by taller plants and lost to sight. Where it can survive is on the north side of a fieldstone wall or, better, in a pot kept in the shade. I grow mine in a shallow pot (something ornamental is nice), in a mixture high in peat and Perlite. The pot stays on our porch by the front door much of the year or when there is nothing brighter to display. The individual fronds are evergreen and last for several years. The rhizomes will creep over the edge of the pot eventually.

Leatherleaf fern is drought-proof. It is adapted to drought in its shoreline habitat so if you are

going away for a month it will greet you unchanged when you return. Just don't leave it in the sun.

Readers will be familiar with the related but more common licorice fern. This can also make a good pot plant but is seldom grown except in the cut-leaf cultivar 'Malahatensis' discovered by our early, local nursery owner Ed Lohbrunner.

Licorice fern's survival strategy is the opposite of that of leatherleaf in that instead of producing tough, long-lasting fronds, it produces thin ones that dry off at the first sign of approaching summer drought. For this reason it is not favoured but the new crop of leaves bursts out a vivid emerald green with the late summer rains. You can see this on north-facing cliffs and road cuts and in my opinion makes it a very attractive fern.

As an inveterate hybridiser it is my ambition to produce the hybrid between these two polypodies. To do this one mixes the dry spores of the two, dusts them on a damp, sterile medium (peat-Perlite), covers them with plastic film and keeps them in the shade to allow the prothalli to grow. Hybrid sporophytes are produced when sperm from one species fertilise the eggs of the other. This is a random process but often one can distinguish the hybrid plantlets from the mass of parental forms. The resulting hybrid plants may be wonderful or they may be a dissonant combination of the parents. That is the excitement of making hybrids; you never know what you are going to get.

2. Woodwardia fimbriata

This is so rare that it has no common name - 'frilly Woodwardia' doesn't quite cut it. There are only three locations known for it in British Columbia: two on Gulf Islands and one on the Saanich Inlet where it is accessible by canoe and a scramble up a ravine. This was

recently confirmed by a group of naturalists. This is BC's largest fern. Agnes Lynn, who



was on the trip, tells me there were fronds up to six feet long. Its habitat is in shade and in ravines so anyone wanting to cultivate it has to provide both space and a sheltered location. But it is spectacular.

I saw it in a location less strenuous to reach, namely the Abkhazi Garden. Valerie Murray showed me where it was growing in dappled shade under Rhododendrons and permitted me to take a scraping of spores which germinated enthusiastically. If you want BIG, this is for you, but it takes time.

3. Polystichum andersonii - Anderson's fern
This is the just-right fern, moderate in size, non-creeping, with fairly narrow fronds to about 70cm/2ft. I would not have known this



fern if it had not already been planted in the

garden of our recently purchased house. It did not thrill me at first sight and I dug one up and potted it with a view to selling or donating it. However in spring 2009 it grew a neat ring of new fronds (it is semi-evergreen and I had trimmed off the old ones) so I stuck it on our porch as temporary decoration and it stayed there for the rest of the year. It makes an excellent specimen pot plant for a shady location but requires conspicuously more water than leatherleaf fern.

By early summer Anderson's fern started to form little galls or knots towards the ends of the fronds. These gradually enlarged and proved not to be a disease but plantlets since each produced small leaves. I had not known it was viviparous but by year~ end they were ready to be pulled off and grown on in their own pots. I found this most intriguing. Curiously the plant left out in the garden produced few plantlets.

We have a new family on our street; they introduced themselves, including young son Anderson. Surprised I said, "Oh, I have Anderson's fern growing on our porch. I'll have to give you a plant". They were tickled pink. So, Anderson, you will get your fern.

Random Thoughts on Fertilizers

by **Bill McMillan**

There is an old adage that 'Horses sweat, men perspire, and women glow', but in the Summer 2009 ARS Journal, Bruce Palmer tells us that rhododendrons transpire! That is, they give off water from the surface of the leaves and other surfaces. The plants have a high throughput of water, which is why summer watering in our climate is so important.

In the spring 2009 edition, the 'Tips for Beginners' section Terry Richmond, of Port Al-

berni, describes an organic fertilizer recipe and filler that he uses. The concept is to imitate nature's rhodo food as closely as possible. The fertilizer contains: 2 parts fish meal, 2 parts canola meal, 2 parts alfalfa, 1 part worm castings, 1 part dolomite lime, ½ part rock phosphate, ½ part bone meal, ½ part kelp meal, ½ part green sand, and ½ part langbenite (0-0-20 (potash)-10 (Mg) -20 (S)). The filler consists of 5 parts steer manure, 5 parts double screened fir bark, or 5 parts composted fish waste. Fertilizer and filler are mixed half and half.

Alan Murray devised another possible organic fertilizer. The Murray recipe contains 4 parts each of alfalfa meal, canola meal and blood meal, 2 parts dolomite, and 1 part each of rock phosphate, bone meal, kelp meal and green-sand.

Because all these ingredients release slowly, only one application (after blooming) is needed each year. This fertilizer may be available pre-mixed at Buckerfields on Keating Cross road or Bordens Mercantile off Quadra (if not, they have the ingredients). It takes a year to become effective, so apply 10-8-6 as well the first year you use the organic mix.

As Peter Cox commented: "The further the growing medium varies from nature, the greater the need to fertilize". So let your twigs, leaves fruit and needles fall to the earth and gradually transform into another usable organic fertilizer in subsequent years!



The International Rhododendron Symposium in Germany

Bremen, May 18-24, 2010

The registration for the 2010 anniversary meeting is now open. You will find the registration form in English on:
<http://www.rhodo.org/2010/index.php?lang=gb>.

There will be the International Rhododendron Symposium; a Jubilee Programme including excursions and post-meeting excursions. You will find more details on www.rhodo.org/2010, e.g. descriptions and pictures about the parks and nurseries to be visited.

The number of delegates is limited, so if you plan to attend, make sure to register as early as possible.

If there any questions or problems please contact Dr. Schepker. He is looking forward to welcoming many guests from North America.

UBC Species Conferences

By Ron Knight

Conference registrations are arriving each week from rhodophiles in both Canada and the United States. I wanted to send you one final reminder for this fall to mail in your registration now in order to ensure that a space is reserved for you and you are eligible for the early booking discount (\$130 before December 31st; \$155 after).

Conference details and a printable registration form may be obtained from the ARS District 1 website: www.rhodos.ca (click on "registration form" and "information" half-way down the page under April 9 – 11). Although there are 100 conference spaces

available, my prediction is that all seats at Level 2 will be sold out by the new year.

Level 2 is being taught by the Curator of UBC Botanical Garden, Douglas Justice, and is aimed at veteran rhododendron club members who are serious collectors, who already understand the basics of rhodo culture and care, and who want to focus on species selection, anatomy, classification, disease prevention, and identification. Level 2 classes will feature classroom and field experiences in UBC Botanical Garden, which is Canada's premier rhododendron garden. It contains one of the finest collections of species rhododendrons in North America and many of these plants will be in bloom during the conference weekend.

I will be teaching Level 1 classes which are aimed at newer rhododendron club members who want to learn all the basics of rhododendron culture and care. We'll be meeting in a classroom in the middle of the alpine garden at UBC Botanical Garden and will be discussing rhododendron selection, planting, transplanting, pruning, propagation, irrigation, pest and disease control, and problem prevention. Please tell the newer members of your club that The Ultimate Rhododendron Conference features classes designed especially for them!

If you have any questions, please contact me at: rcknight@telus.net
Hope to see you in Vancouver next April.

WANTED: A garden helper for a 3 hour block of time every two weeks. It could be from 9-12 or 1-4 any day, or whatever suits the helper.

If you know someone who is looking for such a job, please call Dorothy at 250-592-6343.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Mail to: The Victoria Rhododendron Society,
P.O. Box 5562 Station B, Victoria, B.C., V8R 6S4

I wish to received my Newsletter by E-mail I agree to be on the circulated club membership list

Last Name: _____

First Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City and Province: _____

Postal Code: _____ Telephone _____

E-mail Address: _____

Circle one of the following: Regular Member \$50 Local: \$25 Associate \$10
If Associate, which chapter do you belong to? _____

Amount Paid by Cash _____ or Cheque _____

Remember—Regular Members who have not paid their membership fees by December will not receive the Winter edition of the ARS Journal, so please remit your fees ASAP.



Member Activities: Judging at the 2007 Show and Sale