

# The Victoria Rhododendron Society

## *Newsletter*



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

October 2010 Thirtieth Year of Publication

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**MEETING 7:30**  
**MONDAY, October 4, 2010**  
**GARTH HOMER CENTRE, 811 DARWIN STREET, VICTORIA, B. C.**  
**Speaker:**  
Judith Jones “Ferns as Rhododendron Companion Plants”

**Judith Jones** specializes in temperate ferns from all over the world, including a knowledgeable selection of historic Victorian cultivars, xeric ferns, and selected fern allies such as Selaginella and Equisetum. She lectures widely throughout the US and Canada on selected fern topics.

### REFRESHMENTS

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

**Ted and Sheila Irving, Ian and Daphne Izard, Sue Johnson, Jason Jones, Wilf and Georgina Jones and Sharon Joseph**

Please wrap your cookies or snacks.  
Coffee and tea are supplied.

Assistance in setting out the food, milk and sugar, napkins and helping in the kitchen cleanup is really appreciated.

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### Review of Paul Wurz's talk on “Hidden Acres Rhododendron Garden and Nursery”

By Theresa McMillan

Paul Wurz's garden, “Hidden Acres” is a little north of Campbell River. It is an 8 acre piece of land, with about 2 acres of garden, and the rest used to graze cattle and grow hay.

The garden section has been growing to accommodate more hard to get rhododendrons. Paul propagates the special rhododendrons by using cuttings. Some of Paul's

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cuttings have arrived in the regular mail. Paul places the cuttings in special propagating rooms. One group of cuttings is warmed in an old water bed.

Paul has three greenhouses used specifically to keep rhododendrons from freezing in our winter's frost and cold and snow.

Paul probably has the most complete set of Lofthouse hybrids in B.C. He also has many of Frank Fujioko's hybrids.

Paul showed us pictures of several especially beautiful hybrids. "Jeda" is a fine double rhodo. "Party Orange" is also double and a very fine orange. "Yellow Petticoats" when grown in full sun becomes a clear floriferous yellow. "Faggeter's Favorite" is a large pink blooming plant with a better growth habit than Loderis, which tend to get leggy. "Queen Anne" is a double scented white and "Nelda Peach" is a frilly pink fragrant rhododendron. Paul had an interesting story about a small herd of elk who came into his garden a few years ago, browsed a little, then left. He is thankful they have not returned.

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### CORRECTION from last month's Newsletter.

In the September 2010 VRS Newsletter, the vase-like glass and metal trophy that Moe and Johanna Massa were holding was the Webb Trophy, not the Gibson Trophy. The Webb Trophy is given for the Peoples' Choice at the Show in May. They won it for R. Dexter Spice. The Webb Trophy was shared with Judy Gordon for her R. praetervisum (virea).

In the September 13 meeting, Jaqueline Bradbury gave the Gibson Memorial Trophy, a bronze bowl over a wooden base, to Moe and Joanna for the high aggregate, 90 points in First, Second, Third ribbons for plants brought into the Spring show in May.

Elizabeth England Lecture



**Tom Fischer**  
Editor-in-Chief, Timber Press

**"Mediterranean Garden Style in the Pacific Northwest"**

Friday, November 12th  
7:00 pm  
Salvation Army Citadel  
4030 Douglas Street  
(north off Mackenzie Avenue)

\$15  
Tickets available at all Dig This stores, Hardy Plant Group and garden club meetings

photo: Mary Bendarowicz

## **Mediterranean Garden Style in the Pacific Northwest**

Tom Fischer, the Editor of Timber Press, (the gardening and plant publisher based in Portland, Oregon) will give the 2010 Elizabeth England Lecture at 7 pm on Friday November 12th at the Salvation Army Citadel, 4030 Douglas St. (North off Mackenzie Avenue)

He will give an illustrated talk on "Mediterranean Garden Style in the Pacific Northwest."

Do you have a really dry sunny area in your garden? Are you trying to move toward a garden style which uses less water? Are you interested in Mediterranean plants from South Africa, Australia, or Chile that grow well in coastal BC? Would you enjoy a stimulating evening with a plantsperson of wide knowledge and engaging personality?

Tom Fischer is an articulate and lively speaker who commands wide respect in the United States. Fischer moved from the brutal winters of Massachusetts to Portland in 2004. He was taken aback by the near-drought conditions Portland experiences each summer. "Everyone thinks it's always wet, wet, here, but I didn't realize how dry and sunny the summers are", he says.

Sean Hogan, owner of Cistus Nursery on Sauvie Island, describes Fischer as intensely curious. Hogan recalls a time when Fischer became enamoured with penstemons and decided to collect as many as he could find. "He was like those people who bake too many loaves of banana bread; he was leaving penstemons on people's porches after dark just to get rid of them."

Fischer admits, "I like a certain air of spontaneity ... there are always new challenges, new plants, always surprises."

Give yourself a nice surprise on November 12th.

Tickets, priced at \$15, are available from all Greater Victoria Dig-This stores or at the door.

Buy yours early to avoid disappointment!

## Propagation Workshop - October 30<sup>th</sup>.

The Victoria Propagating Group, a very successful monthly group that has about 25 active members, will be holding a hands-on propagating seminar on October 30<sup>th</sup>. We plan to start around 10 am to let people from up island and the mainland get here. We will have a full day planned with an early group dinner so everyone can still get home that evening.

We will discuss all types of propagating with a very loose agenda so we can go just where everyone leads us. Many members of our Group will be there to offer their views about propagating cuttings, growing seeds, and alternative methods.

We will have a hands-on session in the garden and the propagator where all attendees will actually be able to take their own cuttings and stick them in Ken Webb's propagator so they can retrieve (we hope) some of their own "babies" next spring. There will be several lectures about seeds, cuttings and nurse grafting etc.

You should bring warm and dry clothes for working in the garden. There will be a nominal charge for lunch so that we can continue the excitement throughout the day. Due to room constraints we might have to limit or cut off the number of attendees – first come, first serve.

Please contact Ken or Madeleine Webb at [kenwebb@live.ca](mailto:kenwebb@live.ca) or 250-744-1785.

THE VICTORIA MASTER  
GARDENER ASSOCIATION  
Presents

### "MIXING IT UP IN THE URBAN GARDEN"

*A Day of Planning; Learning and  
Having Fun*

*Mary Winspear Centre*

*Saturday, January*

*29, 2011*

*8:30 AM to 4:00 PM*



*This all day session features:  
experts to speak on veggies; berries; fruit  
trees; chickens; bees and much more.....*

*Tickets purchased before November 1:  
\$45.00*

*The price includes: speakers; vendors; silent  
auction; lunch and nutrition breaks*

*November 1 onwards: \$55.00*

*And in addition, Sunday, January 30 we are  
sponsoring*

*Self-guided field trips priced at \$20.00 per  
person*

*More information at: [mixingitup2011@gmail.com](mailto:mixingitup2011@gmail.com)*



## **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL NOTICE !!**

**This year, the Victoria Rhododendron Society's dues must be in by November 15th.**

**This is particularly important for ARS members. If the dues are not paid by then you will not receive your Winter 2011 ARS Journal.**

**The Membership form is on the last page, or page 8, of this Newsletter. Please copy/cut out the form, and either mail your dues or bring them along with the form to the next meeting on October 4 or November 1.**

**Thank you.**

*An Invitation to View our Fabulous New Website.*  
*Une Invitation à Visiter notre Tout Nouveau Site Internet*



- Share your Information.                      - Partagez vos Informations.
- Advertise your Events.                      - Annoncez vos Activités.
- Increase your Membership.                - Attirez de Nouveaux Membres.

**Join Us and Access the World of Roses**  
**Devenez Membres et Découvrez le Monde des Roses**

[www.canadianrosesociety.org](http://www.canadianrosesociety.org)

## **Species on the Wild West Coast** **by Dora Kreiss January 2005\***

In 1973, my husband and I retired and moved from the East Coast of the United States to Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada. This introduced us to a new world of mild coastal climate and lovely gardens with many, many rhododendrons. Within a few years, we learned about rhododendron species and found ourselves especially intrigued by the large-leafed species. These became our focus and source of much enjoyment.

My one-acre garden, about 65 km (40 miles) west of Victoria, borders the Juan de Fuca Strait separating Vancouver Island from the Olympic Peninsula of Washington State. When my husband and I first started growing rhododendrons, we only planted a few around our house. The three-acre property was thick with young alder trees – typically the first plants to grow in logged areas – so we removed them and planted more rhododendrons. We now have almost 400 rhododendrons, most of them species rather than hybrids. I am particularly fond of my many large-leafed species, with leaves up to 50 cm (20 in) long.

To suit our location, we developed an informal woodland garden. The property had been heavily forested with evergreen trees. These were logged, leaving stumps and a few large logs on the ground, although considerably rotted by this time. The rhododendrons flourish under the remaining towering evergreen western red cedar, western hemlock and Douglas fir, and a few deciduous trees, mostly alder. Unlike some formal and orderly gardens, mine might almost be described as unkempt. Paths meander among the plants, stumps and logs, and the many evergreen sword ferns, with fronds as long as 1.5 m (5 ft.), that grow readily here.

Like many others, we admire rhododendrons for their wonderful flowers, but we've also learned to appreciate their foliage. Indeed, with many of our species, foliage is all that we've had to enjoy for the last twenty years or more because they still haven't bloomed. However, there is so much variety in the leaves: big, small, narrow, broad, dark green, light green to yellowish-green, no indumentum, and rich brown or yellowish indumentum. What also delights me is that I can enjoy the foliage year-round.

There is also a great variety in the shapes of these plants. Many are tall and tree-like, growing up to 7.5 m (25 ft.), some are compact plants at just 15 cm (6 in.), and others are bushes of various heights. Some have thousands of leaves that completely shade the ground; other more leggy ones have fewer leaves, allowing a view through the plant to the rest of the garden.

We didn't know much about rhododendrons when we first arrived on the West Coast, but little by little we learned more. After taking a class from Norm Todd through the University of Victoria, we helped form the Victoria Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society in the mid 1970s.

Initially, we bought mostly hybrid rhododendrons. As we learned more, we became interested in the wide variety of species, especially the large-leafed ones. Thirty years ago, I would have been amazed to discover that there were so many. Now my garden has some 300, some of them acquired from the Rhododendron Species Foundation. And there are many others that I don't have, so there is always something new to learn about rhododendrons.

Our temperate coastal climate with its misty air is wonderful for growing rhododendrons.

Summer temperatures only reach about 24°C (75 °F), and winter temperatures rarely fall below 10°C (50°F). We get 100 to 150 cm (40 to 60 in) of rain a year, mostly as a gentle rain from November through April. The natural vegetation in the region is that of a temperate rain forest. Following the rain is a dry season during which a drip irrigation system waters my rhododendrons – much easier than my former system of hoses and buckets.

Of my many favourite rhododendrons, here are a few of the large-leafed species:

*R. praestans*: This is my most impressive rhododendron. It stands about 3.6 m (12 ft) tall with huge dark green leaves, 53 by 20 cm (21 by 8 in), and light tan indumentum. Unlike the many rhododendrons whose prolific leaves conceal the trunks, it has fewer leaves, allowing you to readily see every branch. This makes it look much more tree-like than most rhododendrons. Although we planted ours about 30 years ago, it hadn't bloomed at all until one white bloom appeared in 2003.



*R. praestans*

*R. hodgsonii*: At 5 m (16 ft) this is one of my tallest plants, more like a small tree. The leaves, 45 by 18 cm (18 by 7 in), are shiny green with light tan indumentum. This slow-growing plant has yet to bloom although I've had it over 25 years.

*R. macabeanum*: This hardy species, about 5 m (16 ft) high, is also like a small tree. The leaves are wide and long, 38 by 20 cm (15 by 8 in.). An early bloomer, its prolific yellow



*R. hodgsonii*

flowers appear in February and March.

*R. thomsonii*: Another small tree-like rhododendron, this plant is covered with leaves (unlike *R. praestans*). The trunk has peeling red bark. In May or June, it boasts a profusion of deep red blooms.

*R. basilicum*: This has droopy dense foliage, long dark green leaves, 40 cm (16 in), with light brown indumentum, and peeling reddish bark. This stately small tree hasn't bloomed yet in my garden.

*R. mallotum*: this is another tree-like species, with fine chocolate brown indumentum under the large dark green leaves, 25 cm (10 in).

Some of my other favorite large-leafed species are *R. rothschildii*, *R. arizelum*, *R. rex*, *R. montroseanum*, *R. parmulatum*, *R. barbatum* and *R. arboreum*. My latest addition is *R. sinofalconeri*, a relatively new and unusual species on Vancouver Island.

(Reprinted from the summer 2005 edition of the ARS Journal, with permission.)

**\*Editor's Note: More than a hundred of Dora's plants now constitute the West Coast Bed at Finerty Gardens.**



**THE  
VICTORIA  
RHODODENDRON  
SOCIETY**

Website:  
<http://www.victoriarhodo.ca/>

All meetings of the society are open to the public and visitors are always welcome.

Of particular interest to gardeners is our Annual Show and Sale, held in April or May. The show has spectacular displays of flowers, and there is a great variety of Rhododendrons and other plants for sale.

Monthly meetings generally are held on the first Monday of the month at 7:30 pm (except June, July and August).

**The usual meeting place is the  
Garth Homer Centre**

**811 Darwin Street  
Victoria, B.C.**

Visits to superb local gardens are an annual Club spring activity.

**OUR AIMS**

The aims of the Victoria Rhododendron Society are to promote the cultivation, propagation and breeding of Rhododendrons, and also to foster knowledge, fellowship, friendship and enthusiasm concerning Rhododendrons and allied plants.

While the focus is on Rhododendrons, the interests of members as a group are wide. Talks on other shrubs, trees and herbs suitable for over- or under-planting are included, as are landscaping techniques.

**MEMBERSHIP**

**Full membership** includes membership in the VRS and the American Rhododendron Society of which we are an affiliated Chapter. This brings the ARS quarterly journal with expert articles and colour photographs. Also included is the right to participate in the ARS annual conventions, and the ARS seed exchange and pollen bank. Members also receive the Newsletter of the VRS.

**Local Membership** includes the Newsletter and participation in local events, but does not include membership in the ARS.

**Associate Membership** enables members of other Chapters to participate in the activities of the Victoria Chapter.

cut along dotted line

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

Mr.       Mrs.       Mr. & Mrs.       Dr.

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

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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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 \_\_\_\_\_