

# The Victoria Rhododendron Society *Newsletter*



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**OCTOBER 2012 Thirty-Second Year of Publication**

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web page – <http://victoriarhodo.ca>

**MEETING 7:30  
MONDAY, October 1, 2012  
GARTH HOMER CENTRE, 811 DARWIN STREET, VICTORIA, B. C.  
Speaker: Bill Terry,  
“The Perfect Garden: Plant Hunting in Tibet”**

Since 1994, Bill Terry has lived on the Sunshine Coast of British Columbia, with his wife, Rosemary, pursuing a lifelong ambition to create the perfect garden. Bill specializes in plant propagation and also lectures on the Blue Poppy and its relatives and raises the plants for sale. His collection of Asiatic poppies (*Meconopsis*) is the most diverse in North America. Bill believes gardening is the most optimistic of occupations, which explains why gardeners tend to live to a great age.

## **REFRESHMENT LIST**

**Will the following members please let Betty Gordon know at 250-479-0210 if you are coming to the meeting and bringing goodies.**

**Joe and Linda Harvey, John and Alison Hawkins, John and Jeannette Howard, Lorraine Hoy, Donna Humphries and Sue Johnson.**



The blue poppy, “meconopsis”

**Please wrap your cookies or snacks. Coffee and tea are supplied. Assistance in setting out the food, and helping Betty in the kitchen cleanup is really appreciated.**

## VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY BOARD

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### September's Talk

By Theresa McMillan

Dick Beamish's talk on the Rhododendron Year on Hammond Bay was a beautifully photographed collection of over a hundred rhododendron blooms. The pictures were taken in filtered light so that the details of the individual flowers were clear. The variety of colours was enough to make any gardener become a "rhodoholic". The names of many of the rhododendrons, like "September Song", and "Apricot Fantasy" add to their appeal.

For many gardeners, too much sun, shade, unsuitable soil (clay!), overmulching on their rhodos results in leaves that do not do justice to the flowers, and are a sure cause of failure to win prizes in Rhododendron Shows.

Dick Beamish takes great care of the leaves of his plants so that the rich green background makes a fine contrast to the colourful trusses.

In addition, Dick has pictures of Hammond Bay itself. It is a beach near Nanaimo on the eastern edge of Vancouver Island, a sheltered bay good for fishing or birding. Perfect for gardening too!

**The Victoria Propagating Group is going to hold another Propagating Workshop.**

**This time it will be on Saturday, October 13th, 2012.**

Again it will be at Madeleine & Ken's house – 5008 Old West Saanich Road, Saanich, B.C. This will be a hands on type of thing where everyone will be able to choose cuttings and actually stick them in our propagator. We will be working mostly outside and in the garden, so warm and dry clothes will be necessary. Talks and discussions will include most of the local propagators and hybridizers. The charge will be \$25 and will include a hot lunch and coffee breaks.

We will start around 9:30 am to give people from the mainland and up island time to get here. We hope to finish with an early dinner at a local restaurant (not included) to give enough time for everyone to get home if they have to.

We are very lucky to have Dennis Bottemiller from the Rhododendron Species Foundation here to give us some tips about how he runs his propagation greenhouses at RSBG.

For registration and questions email Ken & Madeleine at kenwebb@live.ca or phone 250-744-1785.

Please register early because we do have limited space.

Victoria Propagating Group.

## **News from the Board**

### **From Calvin Parsons**

1. VRS membership approved subsidizing the cost of the full ARS membership for 2013. Fees will be \$30 Full Membership, \$25 Local Membership, and Associate Membership \$10. Fees for 2013 will be due by the November 5th meeting.
2. VRS membership approved \$500 grants to Abkhazi Gardens and HCP Glendale Gardens for 2012.
3. VRS will submit a proposal to hold the 2015 ARS Convention after a show of significant support from the membership.
4. We are looking forward to discussions with everyone regarding the future of our trophies.

# People's Choice Photography Evening Nov. 5, 2012

The entries will fall into 2 categories. **Hard Copy and Digital Color Entries.**

## **Hard Copy or prints**

The hard copies will be the same format as was used in the past shows. Namely a **black and white** section, along with a **color** section. All entries to be 5"x7" mounted on a black mat, no frame. Mounted pictures to be entered the night of the show, November 5, 2012 rhododendron meeting. Subjects can be rhododendrons or garden scenes in color or black and white. Place a sticker on the mat with your phone number and title of the photo. These photos may be taken home at the end of the evening.

## **Digital Color Entries**

Electronic entries will have a **2 megabyte size limit in the jpeg format.** Most pictures shown at our club meetings don't exceed 1 megabyte. If your photos are larger than 2 megabytes they will take a long time to upload and will use up too much data space. **Limit 2 pictures per category.** We would like electronic entries in as early as possible, entry deadline November 1.

To enter:

Log onto

<http://victoriarhodo.ca/plogger/plog-admin/plog-upload.php> **username: vicrhodo**  
**password: uploader1**

## **Click on Login Button**

Ensure that you are on the **Upload screen**

Go to **Existing Album** and highlight one of the categories listed below that best describes your entry.

- 1. Plogger Test Collection Single Truss Rhodo 2012**
- 2. Plogger Test Collection Whole Plant Rhodo 2012**
- 3. Plogger Test Collection Foliage Rhodo 2012**
- 4. Plogger Test Collection Companion Plant 2012**
- 5. Plogger Test Collection Garden Scene 2012**

Go to **Filename** and click on **Browse Button**

Find the photo you want in your files, click on specific photo and then click **Open**

Click on **Picture Caption** and enter your **7 digit phone number**

Click on **Description** and enter a **title** e.g. Haida Gold, Butchart Garden

Click on **Upload Button** and your picture and data should upload. You should receive a confirmation message that your upload was successful.

Click on **View** and then click on a portfolio to see your entry or the entries of others

Please do not try and delete pictures.

**Judging**

Judging will be done by the whole membership with a People's Choice format using the attached excel form. The name of the photographer will be hidden similar to the flower show. The date is November 5, 2012 at the regular club meeting.

**Vote for one picture in each category.**

First, second, and third place ribbons will be awarded plus an aggregate winner rosette ribbon based on a total point format and best in show rosette. Ribbons will be awarded at the Christmas Pot Luck Meeting.

If you want, you can clip out this ballot, view the entries before the show and start making your choices for the on-line digital pictures.

Ballot form:

<b>Digital Slides</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>	<b>Title</b>
<b>1. Single truss</b>		
<b>2. Whole plant</b>		
<b>3. Foliage</b>		
<b>4. Companion plant</b>		
<b>5. Garden scene</b>		
<b>Prints Mounted 5x7 Black Matte</b>		
<b>Color</b>		
<b>Black and White</b>		
<b>Best In Show</b>		



R. "Kiwi Magic", Glendale Gardens

## WHENCE COMETH OUR FLOWERS

Mahonia x media Charity  
A Personal View

One of the fascinations of plantmanship is how our allegiance to different genera and species changes over time, often dependent upon random encounters or circumstances.

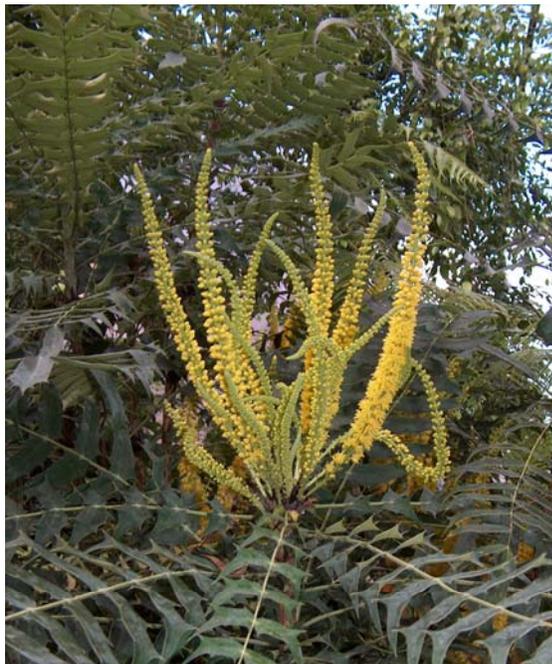
I was reminded of this last November, seeing a humming bird in the bright cold sunny weather scurrying around looking for, and finding, nectar from the bright yellow racemes of Mahonia x media Charity. My first introduction to the Asiatic Mahonias was in the late fifties. I was examining at the University of Aberystwyth and had taken the opportunity to visit the wonderful garden at Bodnant, in North Wales. Although on that particular day it was closed to the public I ventured in a back entrance and was confronted by Mr. Puddle the Head Gardener, who is credited with introducing Magnolia stellata rosea and who very generously said that he would escort me around the garden. Bodnant is essentially a shrub and tree garden and at that time of year there was little in flower but I was captivated by seeing for the first time, Mahonia japonica Bealei which had been introduced from China around 1849 by Robert Fortune of tea fame. I have to digress to claim Fortune as another, of a long line, of Scottish plant collectors. Robert Fortune left the small plants he had collected to send back to England in the temporary care of T.C. Beal in Shanghai and hence it was named in his honour. In this instance it is a thick upright shrub about six to seven feet tall with overlapping spiny pinnate leaves and beautiful long racemes of fragrant lemon-yellow flowers. This encounter with the Asiatic Mahonias led me, a few years later, to grow M. lomarifolia. To my mind the finest species but because of its questionable hardiness I grew it in a pot and when in flower, if the weather was likely to

be frosty, it was brought into the house and into the bathroom where I anticipated that the moisture in the atmosphere would keep it happy. Since this particular bathroom was not all that large it was frequently an ordeal to avoid the sharp spiny ends of the leaves when coming out of the bath.

M. lomarifolia and M. japonica Bealei are the parents of M. x media Charity. Although it may be somewhat of a moral issue as to whether we should encourage our humming birds to stay and over-winter, there is no doubt that the bright yellow fragrant flowers of the Mahonia will not only brighten our hearts on these dark early winter days but will do the same for those humming birds who decide to stay around.

Hamish Robertson.

(Editor's note. This article came to me from Gareth Shearman. It was written by Hamish Robertson, a long time VRS member who died several years ago. Thanks to Gareth, and Linda Gilmore who put the article into digital form.)



Mahonia lomariifolia

## Weeds: What they tell us

Dr. Mark Konrad Sewickley, Pennsylvania  
(reprinted from the Summer 2012 edition of the  
American Rhododendron Society Journal.)

In the grand scheme of things, weeds have much to tell us. For instance, they tell us that the soil is acid or alkaline. In the former you will find sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), corn marigold (*Glebionis segetum*), spurrey (*Spergula* spp.), the scentless mayweed (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*), bracken (*Pteridium* spp.), sow thistle (*Sonchus* spp.), coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*), nettles (*Urtica* spp.) and wild pansy (*Viola tricolor*; syn. hearts-ease).

In the latter you will find wild mignonette (*Reseda luteola*), white mustard (*Sinapis alba*), musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*), wild carrot (*Daucus carota*) and henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*).

If the soil is waterlogged, you will find moisture-loving weeds such as horsetail (*Equisetum* spp.), fitches (*Hemizonia fitchii*), mares tails (*Hippuris vulgaris*), redshank (*Persicaria maculosa*) and the cotton grasses (*Eriophorum* spp).

If the soil is heavy, you will find creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), creeping bentgrass (*Agrostis stolonifera*) and coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*).

If the soil is light, you might find small nettle (*Urtica urem*) and perhaps couch (*Elymus repem*; syn. twitch).

Lots of vetches (*Vicia\_spp.*) together with kidney vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraritt*) indicate nitrogen deficiency.

Weeds have other functions. They can be described as silent miners. Chicory (*Cichorium intybus*) has surprisingly long roots that effect tunneling. As the roots swell, they move the soil while helping to increase its warmth. At the same time it lets in air and helps with drain-

age. Dandelion is another deep rooter, often boring into the subsoil, helping to break it up while cultivating and aerating. Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) has roots that creep just below the surface as well as many tap roots. These plants are valuable agents for promoting water absorption and warmth. Weeds can also act as indicators. Some weeds have a particular ability to accumulate some definite mineral substance or substances, which may be deficient or lacking in the very soil in which they grow. This is not understood, but it may be that because many elements occur naturally in the environment, they are able to collect certain elements from the air very much in the same way that peas and beans and other members of the Leguminosae family are able to fix nitrogen from the air.

Bracken may indicate the soil is lacking in potash, but it has the power of concentrating potash in potash-deficient land. The nettle, on the other hand, somehow manages to extract lime (calcium) from an acid soil, while lupines (*Lupinus* spp.) have the power of gathering zinc. They do this by searching out these elements over a wide area. Consequently, they can be valuable on a compost heap.

It can be said that weeds have a practical value in that they provide the traces of mineral foods that plants definitely require. Other weeds have a role to play in alkaline soils. Henbane is very common. Though the soil may be rich in lime, the henbane contains very little lime at all but is rich in phosphorus.

Rich, well-cultivated gardens usually abound in groundsel (*Senecio* spp.), chickweed (*Stellaria media*) and small nettles. Their function seems to be to gather silicic acid, a food that tends to become deficient in gardens that have been worked for many years. Sorrel always grows in acid soil but, in fact, is rich in calcium.

There are other weeds rich in lime that are given the name of calcium-efficiency

plants. These include the plantains (*Plantago major*), spurrey and wild pansy. On acidic garden lawns will be found dandelions and daisies in addition to plantains, all of which will indicate acidity and yet contain calcium.

Weeds such as vetch, rape (*Brassica napus*) and clover (*Trifolium* spp.) always indicate that the soil is deficient in nitrogen and yet they themselves will be rich in plant food.

Weeds such as yarrow and chamomile (*Matricaria recutita* and *Anthemis nobilis*) containing potash indicate potassium deficiency in the soil. The yellow dock is rich in iron and so is chicory. The wild marigold contains sulphur and the wild strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*) calcium and phosphorus.

In summary, it is easy to see why weeds should be placed on the compost heap. By learning weed recognition it is possible to judge the condition of the soil and how to deal with it.

Reference

Shewell-Cooper, WE. 1978. *Soil, humus and Health: an organic Guide.*

David & Charles, UK: 128 pp.

Dr. Konrad is a member of the Great Lakes Chapter



Creeping buttercup  
(*ranunculus repens*)

**VRS REGISTRATION FORM FOR NEXT YEAR 2013—**

Please mail in the dues or pay the dues at or before the NOVEMBER 5, 2012 monthly meeting.

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

I wish to receive my Newsletter by E-mail

I agree to be on the circulated club membership list

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First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City and Province: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle one of the following: Regular Member \$30\*    Local: \$25    Associate \$10

If Associate, which chapter do you belong to? \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Paid by Cash \_\_\_\_\_ or Cheque \_\_\_\_\_

\* subsidized by VRS