

# The Victoria Rhododendron Society

## *Newsletter*



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

February 2013 Thirty-Third Year of Publication

e-mail: [wtmcmillan@telus.net](mailto:wtmcmillan@telus.net)

web page – <http://victoriarhodo.ca>

**MEETING 7:30**

**MONDAY, February 4, 2013**

**GARTH HOMER CENTRE, 811 DARWIN STREET, VICTORIA, B. C.**

**Speaker: Agnes Lynn, “Rhododendron Companions”**

Agnes Lynn has been working on her garden since 1985. She has learned from some of the most knowledgeable plantspeople in the area, most of them members of the Victoria Rhododendron Society. Although she loves rhododendrons, she feels they need other companion plants to make for an interesting home garden so she'll show some of these easy care plants from her garden. Her husband Dave is the photographer and helps in the garden under duress!

### **REFRESHMENTS**

Would the following members please let Betty Gordon know at 250-479-0210 if you plan to come to the meeting and bring goodies.

**Nadine Minckler, Bonnie Moro, Karen & Burns Morrison, Patricia Murray, Carrie Nelson and Florence Newcombe**  
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.

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### **March's Meeting**

March is the time for our **AGM**, which includes selecting our new VRS Board for April 2013 to March 2014.

Many members of the executive will be continuing in their positions. However, there will be new positions open for President, Vice President and Secretary.

## VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY BOARD

President:

**Calvin Parsons** 250-590-0489

waterlily@shaw.ca

1st Vice President

**Peter Barriscale** 250-385-3950

pbarris@shaw.ca

Past President:

**Jacqueline Bradbury** 250-389-1379

jacqbradbury@shaw.ca

Treasurer:

**Ann Widdowson** 250-479-9167

awiddowson@shaw.ca

Secretary:

**Norma Senn** 250-595-7276

normasgarden@telus.net

Members-at-Large:

**Lois Blackmore** 250-478-6615

loisb@shaw.ca

**Sharon Joseph** 250-383-1756

undergroundca@yahoo.com

**Theresa McMillan** 250-478-3515

wtmcmillan@telus.net

**Carolyn Marquardt** 250-477.8387

tonymarquardt@shaw.ca

**Gareth Shearman** 250-385-4302

shearman@victoria.tc.ca

**Madeleine Webb** 250-744-1785

kenwebb@shaw.ca

**Ken Webb** 250-744-1785

Kenwebb@shaw.ca

**Newsletter Committee:**

Theresa McMillan 250-478-3515

Bill McMillan 250-478-3515

Linda Gilmore 250-642-2256

Joyce Whittle 250-656-7313

Calvin Parsons 250-385-1970

Madeleine Webb 250-744-1785

**Website:**

Calvin Parsons 250-590-0489

## January's Talk

**By Theresa McMillan**

Jeff DeJong gave us an excellent talk on the Floriades, a garden exposition that takes place every 10 years in the Netherlands and Belgium. The Utrecht Botanical Gardens in low-lying Holland has one of the largest alpine gardens in Europe. To provide the alpine plants with the excellent drainage they need and less humidity, the gardeners built several rock piles to accommodate them.

Other gardens include one where rhododendrons are severely pruned to form interesting formal shapes, but very little bloom. There were several very formal knot gardens, patterns outlined in boxwood hedges, like the ones in Versailles, France.

Floriade 2012 had extraordinary sculptures using plant material to form cyclists, green tables, green walls and lawn chairs.

No trip to the Netherlands would be complete without views of millions of tulips bulbs in bloom. Unlike gardeners here in Victoria, the gardeners there do not have to fight with squirrels and deer. There aren't any.



**Tulip fields in the Netherlands**

The Victoria Horticultural Society | HARDY PLANT GROUP 2013 Elizabeth England Lecture

Presents

# 100 Plants That <sup>almost!</sup> Changed the World

*"...some of the unusual stories and relationships that humans have had with plants throughout history and the consequences of those relationships. The stories are a mixture of light hearted and entertaining, sometimes bizarre and occasionally shocking!"*  
CB

with

## CHRIS BEARDSHAW

Well-known British landscape architect, award winning garden designer and popular broadcaster, author and garden writer who is currently writing a monthly column for *The English Garden* magazine.

**Sunday, February 17th  
3:00 PM**

**Salvation Army Citadel  
4030 Douglas Street  
(north off McKenzie Avenue)**

Tickets \$15

Available at VHS and Hardy meetings,  
*Dig This* stores and at the door.





## Plant Rustlers

(reprinted with permission from the Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society Newsletter, February 2013)

*In response to Ron Rabideau writing:*  
“Someone stole my 3' plant of the Haag-form that I had in a 7 gallon pot but luckily I had taken cuttings and now have some small plants.”

*Bruce Clyburn writes about his efforts to stop rhododendron thieves.*  
“Here's what I resorted to last spring after the electrical utility clear cut the power line right-of-way alongside my garden. I did about 20+ plants. Not guaranteed but it did confuse would-be thieves enough that the stealing stopped.  
(See to the right, ed.)

Obviously a pair of bolt cutters would have made short work out of my defense system. Before I chained the plants I had lost 5-6. One was a 6-ft Flautando but like you I had cutting backups.”



[Editor: When we donated rhododendrons to Vancouver Island University, in their old location, the gardener planting them linked them all together with steel wire placed under the mulch. Any one trying to steal one would have found that they would have to take all 20. Luckily, none were stolen even though the location was very public and not populated at night. They have now been moved to the new campus, just to the right [north east side] of the main entrance.]

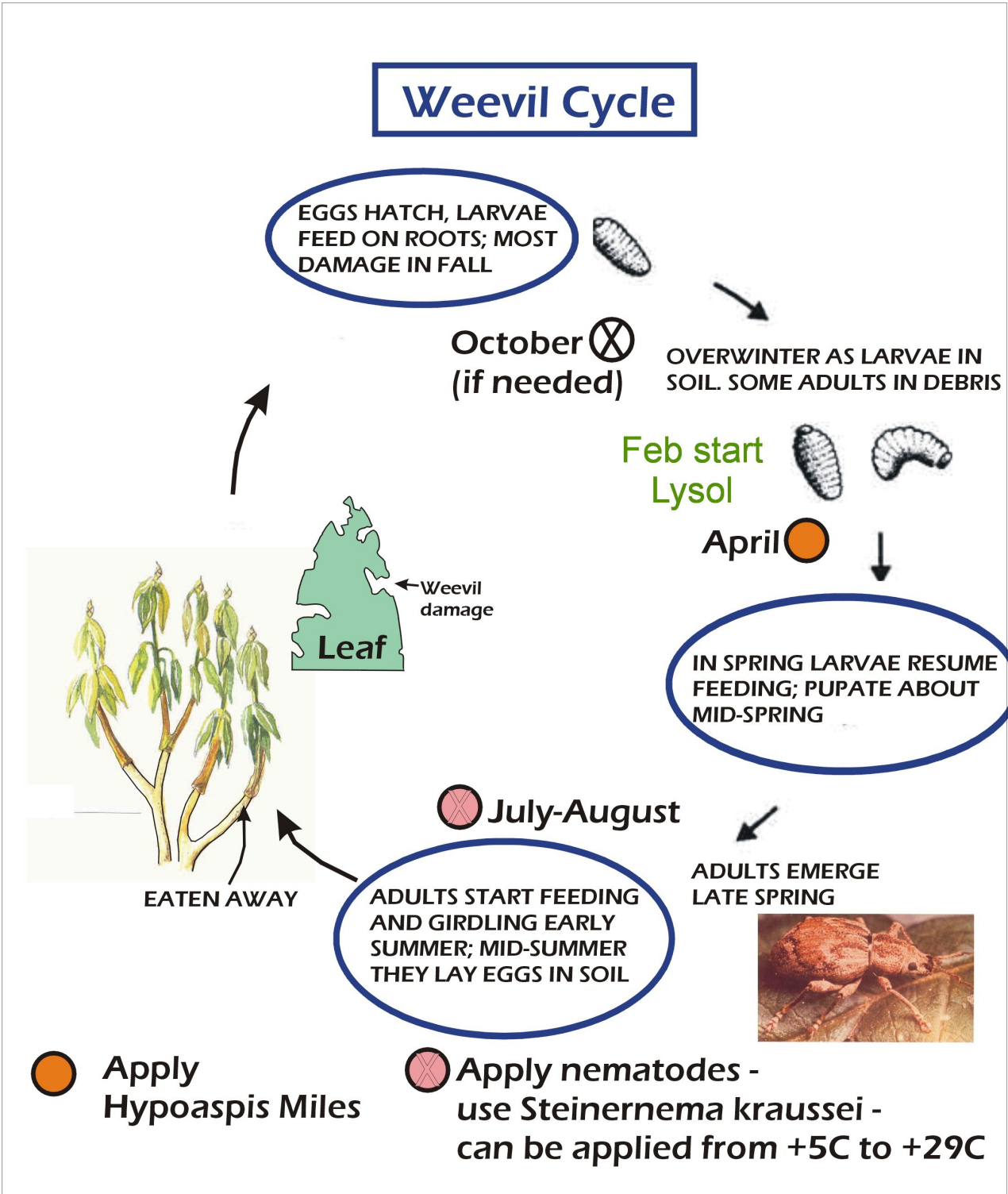
### NOTES FROM LOIS BLACKMORE, SHOW CHAIR

**Next month, in March's meeting, LOIS will be asking for volunteers for our first show in April, at Tillicum Mall, on the 27th.**

**As well, we will be trying a new event, the SPRING FLING. Further information will be coming during the meetings and in future Newsletters.**

**WEEVILS!!!! The LYSOL treatment.**

In February, apply diluted Lysol every 2 weeks for 2 months to both weevil chewed and adjacent (up to a meter away) plants. **Dilution is 1 cup of Lysol in 4 litres of water, or as Mary Parker says, 2/3 of a cup in a green watering can! Water the whole plant, stems and all.**



## **Growing rhododendrons: it's a guy thing.**

**The Plant that's a centrepiece of West Coast gardens has a surprising fan base among men!**

**By Steve Whysall**

**(With thanks to Archie Brown, one of our members, who photocopied this article and gave it to me a few weeks ago and to Steve Whysall who gave permission to reprint this article from the Vancouver Sun, May 3, 2012)**

If there is one plant that defines, separates and distinguishes a typical West Coast garden from all other gardens across Canada, it is the rhododendron.

This broad-leaf evergreen is the quintessential plant and indispensable component of a coastal garden, providing superb architectural structure as well as fabulous flower displays from early spring through to summer.

Rhododendrons love our climate, flourishing in cool acidic soil in the woodlands of towering cedars, firs and hemlocks as well as in the protected part sun/part shade shadows of large deciduous trees.

You can build a West Coast garden with a Japanese look or recreate the flowery profusion of an English cottage garden, but at some point, you are always going to feel the urge to find a place for rhododendrons.

They cry out to be included, no less than a croque monsieur cries out for cheese. If the coastal garden were Tom Cruise, it would whisper to the rhododendron: "You complete me."

Now, if you know nothing about rhododendrons, you will be able to hold your head up in the company of rhodo experts if you know these basic truths. Rhododendrons come in a vast range of colours and sizes, some that can grow as big as trees, others that are small and mounding and are almost like ground cover plants. It's a mistake to think all rhododendrons are 6-by-6 blobs of pink. It is also vital to under

-stand azaleas are also rhododendrons, even though the name is different.

. If you were to come to face to face with a gang of rhodo fanatics, you need say only two words to win them over: indumentum and species. These two words are like access codes to the inner sanctums of rhododendron haughty-culture. Don't ask me why, but indumentum - the soft, hairy, suede-like under-surface of some rhodo leaves - makes rhodoholics go weak in the knees. They even use the word as the title for their newsletters.

. Same thing happens when they hear the word species, which refers to the unadulterated, pure-bred originals of the genus rather than the great unwashed, more vulgar ubiquitous hybrids with no pedigree. Species rhodos, especially ones such as calophytum and macabeanum that have super-sized leaves, are simply considered the classiest of the bunch.

After years of observing the rhododendron society closely, I have also come to some conclusions, not totally scientific, but I believe I have enough evidence to support my theories.

For instance, I believe rhododendrons appeal more to men than women, especially red rhodos. If you sent a man into a garden



**R. Taurus, one of the best red rhododendrons**



centre to buy a plant, any plant, I am confident he would emerge with a red rhododendron. I have anecdotal evidence of this gathered over 20 years. As for the rhodo being primarily a genus that appeals to men, I simply ask you to look at club memberships; the ratio of women to men in most garden clubs is 80-20 but with the Vancouver Rhododendron Society it is the reverse, about 75 per cent men to 25 per cent women.

Sources? I checked with garden clubs in Langley, Ladner, Dunbar and South Surrey, and I also have a secret inside source, a longtime member, who must remain anonymous, counting heads for me in the VRS. (I need a Deep Throat for this kind of dangerous work.) This is not the case in England, where garden club membership is more evenly divided, perhaps because of the history of men being involved with victory gardens during the Second World War.

I have also wondered if the reason men love rhodos so much more than women do is because they (the rhodos) do have the appearance at maturity of tough, chinky chain mail with the large, sturdy, glossy, evergreen leaves overlapping to form the layered looks of armour.

[See to the right. Ed.]

That spells protection from excessive yard work, freedom from high-maintenance requirements, and, best of all, years of uninterrupted spare time. It does seem that men could feel much safer around rhododendrons? Just a theory.

My pal and rhodo expert, Joe Ronsley, former president of the Rhododendron Species Foundation and Vancouver Rhododendron Society, who finds this whole line of questioning absurd, says, "Nonsense; a euphemism."

He knows I am being a little mischievous and tongue-in-cheek, but, well, the cult of rhododendrons is just one black ball short of a secret society, I tell him.

However, Ronsley is less emphatic about my theory that men, more than women, are more in love with red-flowering rhodos.

"At least two women I know have a prejudice

against red, though both concede that in the landscape at a little distance red can be more effective than any other colour. Up close, other colours tend to have more nuances of shading and texture."

Great places to find rare and unusual rhodos as well as tips on how to grow and maintain them is at the Victoria Rhododendron Society's sales, [See Upcoming Events p. 8 Ed.]

But remember, if you send your husband on his own to the sale, he is going to come back with a red rhodo. Guarantee it.



R. Strigilosum, in all its armoured glory has indumentum under its leaves, and rich red blooms making it the perfect rhododendron for a male gardener.

<b>2013</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Fee</b>
Sun Feb 17	Chris Beardshaw's talk	Salvation Army Citadel, Victoria	\$15
Sat. April 27	VRS Show	Tillicum Mall, Victoria	
Wed – Sun May 1 - 5	<u>ARS 2013 Convention</u> Hosted by the Olympia Chapter of the ARS	Seatac Airport Marriott Seatac, Washington	Variable
Thur - Sat May 9 - 11	2013 CVRS Tour to Washington State	Gardens in Washington State area and one in BC	\$500/p. dbl or \$600/p.single occupancy
Saturday, May 11	VRS Sale	Abkhazi Garden, Victoria	
Saturday, May 25	VRS Show	Westshore Mall, Victoria	