

# The Victoria Rhododendron Society

## Newsletter



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

October 2013 Thirty-Third Year of Publication

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web page – <http://victoriarhodo.ca>

**MEETING 7:30**

**MONDAY, October 7, 2013**

**GARTH HOMER CENTRE, 813 DARWIN STREET, VICTORIA, B. C.**

**Susie Reynolds,**

**“Meerkerk, a peaceful woodland garden.”**

Susie Reynolds, the garden and nursery manager, will talk about Meerkerk Gardens on nearby Whidby Island in Washington State. This well-known rhododendron garden was founded by Ann and Max Meerkerk in the early 1960's. They gradually expanded the garden to 10 acres of rhododendrons surrounded by an additional 43 acres of woodlands with 4+ miles of nature trails.. Ann Meerkerk left the gardens to the Seattle Rhododendron Society in 1979. Now it is a not-for-profit garden that is open to the public and is a delightful place to visit.

### **REFRESHMENTS**

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

**Keiko and William Alkire, David Ballantyne, Peter Barriscale, Joan Bekius, Roy and Lois Blackmore**

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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## REVIEW OF THE SEPTEMBER 9TH MEETING

The panel discussion on growing perfect rhododendrons was well attended, with several members of the public asking our rhododendron growers how to improve their plants.

For many, the surprising answer from the “experts” was to grow rhododendrons in the sun (contrary to a common belief), in fact, as much sun as the rhododendrons could stand, taking into account that big leafed rhododendrons do better—without leaf burn—in partial shade.

Proper mulching was another topic of interest. A thick layer of mulch right up to the trunk of the rhododendron is hard on the plant. Mulch that close to the plant often prevents the rhodo from getting enough water or fertilizer, so it appears sickly and has little bloom.

Other topics were poor drainage, or proper summer watering, and spreading the roots of pot-bound rhododendrons from the growers.

Many of our visitors, as well as the members, left the meeting with plants from the raffle, new “babies” to watch over in their new homes.

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## ARS BRONZE MEDAL

The Victoria Rhododendron Chapter of the A.R.S. is pleased to bestow its "Highest Award" to Gareth Shearman for his many years of service to the Chapter. Gareth set up and maintained our internet site when such technical wizardry was new to us. He has diligently maintained our membership records since 2008. He has contributed his time and expertise at our shows, sales and conventions and hosted the executive meetings at his office for many years. He has been an active member of the propagation group. We are honoured to award Gareth the Bronze Medal. September 2013

## For the Cat Who has Everything (a perfect Christmas present, ed.)

by Norman Todd

*The following article was published in the VRS newsletter of December 1993. It has also been reprinted in "The Complete Wit and Wisdom of Norman Todd, (2011) available from the VRS. The article is learned in history, rhodo-botany, Latin, feline psychology, and whimsy above all.*

Did you notice the word 'who' in the title? If you do not think of cats as persons, this article will not interest you. It will interest you if you are in that most frustrating of situations when you just can't think of the ultimate present for that most significant cat in your life – to be given on that very, very special cat day. I have the answer and it may surprise you. It is *Rhododendron roxieanum* var *oreonastes*.

Don't turn off right now because you think *Rhododendron roxieanum* var *oreonastes* will be too difficult a name for your cat to appreciate – just hang in and read a bit more.

You see, cats don't know many things by their names. And it is pretty well useless trying to get a cat to understand abstract things, e.g., things like 'the Natural Law Party' or 'relativity'. Cats recognize most things by smell. That is how they recognize pretty well all tangible things; smart cats can even sense a few abstract things using this sense.



Anyway, *Rhododendron roxieanum* var *oreonastes* sends cats into paroxysms of ecstasy. We all know that paroxysms do not always occur as pleasant events but when you see that closed-eyed Cheshire look on your cat's face and feel the vibes from its tremulous twitching little nose, you will know this paroxysm is a good one.

You could also object to using a fairly abstract word like 'paroxysm' for your cat's intemperately orgasmic raptures, but even if your cat does not know that precise word, you can be sure it has a complete fix on the idea.

*Rhododendron roxieanum* var *oreonastes* is a classic rhododendron fit for the garden of the most fastidious connoisseur. It kind of looks like a land-based green sea urchin.



(That is *Strongylocentrotus droebachiensis*, just in case your cat is of the more than normally curious type, still alive and might like to know that).

*Rhododendron roxieanum* var *oreonastes* belongs to the Taliense affiliations and, at least from a nurseryperson's point of view, possesses all of the bad qualities of that tribe, i.e., it is almost impossible to propagate from cuttings, is not easy to graft and, as it takes eons to bloom, it is hard to get

seed and when you do, it might not be viable. When it does bloom, however, it is a real joy to behold and if you find yourself in the position of beholder, you could be excused for having one of these paroxysms all to yourself.

Being such a coveted plant, it makes sense for those who do own this rare and expensive rhododendron to be discreet and selective in letting the fact of your ownership be widely known because most of the specimens of *Rhododendron roxieanum* var *oreonastes* in captivity are of a very portable size and visitors could have a paroxysm of envy and greed which could even end up in thievery.

You might think, then, that it would be logical, if you value your status as a collector of rare plants more than the love of your cat, not to tell your cat you have one in your garden.

However, I would advise against not telling your cat because it is a sure bet that your cat will sense the precise minute *Rhododendron roxieanum* var *oreonastes* crosses your lot line. And anyway, you, having read this far, must be darn nearly desperate to let your cat experience one of those incontinent paroxysms.

If you know your Latin (I don't, so I'm just waiting for someone to tell me this paragraph is all nonsense) you will quickly intuit that the name itself – *oreonastes* – gives away about this interesting reactionary feline phenomenon. The *roxieanum* part of the moniker is something of a letdown because it's one of these commemorative names, eternally memorializing a **Mrs. Roxie Hanna** of Tali-fu, China, who was a friend of the plant's discoverer, or at least describer, **George Forrest**. Too bad we don't know more about Mrs. Roxie Hanna - perhaps - who knows – she may have had a weakness for aromatically induced paroxysms.

It's the *oreonastes* bit that is the mother lode. The 'oreo' portion really means 'mountain' in Latin, but cats are not too well versed in dead languages and, get this, they recognize the modern meaning of 'oreo' ie., 'cookie'!

Ah ha! So then we move on to the '*nastes*' bit. You may not believe this, but this is the exception that proves the rule; cats have almost instant recognition of what '*nastes*' means in Latin. They do not make the correspondence to the modern English meaning of '*nastes*' ie., 'unpleasant', but go right to the Latin word '*nasitortium*' which means 'distortion of the nose'. You look at your cat in its oreonastical paroxysm and you will see what '*nasitortium*' means. The Romans knew what it meant and so does your cat. Nasturtiums evidently gave Romans nasal paroxysms and that's why they called them nasturtiums.

Romans almost certainly never said or smelled *Rhododendron roxieanum* var *oreonastes*. It's almost impossible to be absolutely sure what kind of paroxysms they would have had had they done so. Most likely, they would have given it a very wide berth after Pompey's 67 B.C., army's unfortunate run-in, which quickly developed into a run-out, with the poisonous honey from the Pontic azalea (*Rhododendron luteum*). In that instance, Pompey's army surely had a debilitating and paralyzing collective paroxysm that cost most of the soldiers in the army their lives at the hand of Mithridates, King of Pontus.

Perhaps this does bring up a cautionary point. Watch out that there are no predators around when your cat is having its paroxysm because they are sitting ducks (??) in that state and to compound it, you yourself, might end up having a paroxysm of grief when looking at the moribund remains of your pet.

At this point I'm sure you want to know how I came by all this dope on God's ultimate gift to mousers. Well, the first *Rhododendron roxieanum* var *oreonastes* I had I kept in a pot. At that time, I did not know how addictive it was to cats, but anyway it must not have been cat-accessible. Probably I kept it in the greenhouse, and it got to be about fourteen or fifteen inches tall and in age produced a flower bud. I must say my mind ran to thinking about installing special security devices to protect from human predation but I was guilelessly unaware that there were four – count them – “Tristan”, “Smudge”, “Timmy” and “Kate” – incipient paroxysmatic pussies right in my very own home.

I wondered why all of those exquisite narrow, lanceolate, indumented botanical marvels of advanced photosynthetic evolution were lying around the base of the plant. Then the flower bud disappeared and I had to look more closely.

We all know what rododendron hairs are but the hairs I found were 2.1 to 4.6 cm. long, glandular, glabrous, white, sometimes black and white, orange flushed brown or black. These weren't rhododendron hairs. They were cats' hairs.

Next piece of evidence. At last year's club picnic I won the door prize – a *Rhododendron roxieanum* var *oreonastes*. It was a beautiful plant in a four gallon pot. It had been expertly grown by **Clint Smith**. I went home thinking that the '93 picnic was the best we had ever had.

It sat on the deck where it could be admired from the kitchen window – by people. But it was admired much more closely by the purring pussy cats that lodge (dare I admit to thinking ‘temporarily’) at 5631 Batu Road. They had an orgy of

paroxysms and one of the main branches was amputated – covered with cat hairs.

Some of you may see this as presenting a dilemma. Which or who comes first, cats or rhododendrons? I suspect most of you will plunk for the former and you will want to ingratiate yourself to your fat feline friend – by getting him, her or it that transcendently perfect gift, *Rhododendron roxieanum* var *oreonastes*.

Don't be tempted by the claims of shysters tout-ing catnip. This is like comparing slug's eggs to

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**“Wildflowers of the Coast” by John G. Fitch and illustrated by Bonnie Moro.**

One of our members, Bonnie Moro, has illustrated a new book, written by John Fitch. In the form of 70 poems, he describes particular flowering plants native to the Pacific Northwest.



Harvest Lily, *Brodiaea coronaria*, by Bonnie Moro

sturgeon or caviar. Go for the best; but be prepared for difficulties because *Rhododendron roxieanum* var *oreonastes* is not easy to find. You will have to be committed and resolute in being your cats' benefactor responsible for providing the greatest hallucinogenic rapturous paroxysms by acquiring – preferably by theft – *Rhododendron roxieanum* var *oreonastes*.

Cats truly pass this way but once. Dismiss that view that a cats' life is a vale of tears; make it a Garden of Eden. You have the answer.



## U. B. C. Botanical Garden

### FALL 2013 MAGNOLIA AVAILABILITY LIST

5 gal unless otherwise indicated ***M. amoena*** A rarely seen small tree with fragrant pink flowers; 20' to 35'; z(6)7

***M. cylindrica*** Flrs white candle-like; 20' , threatened in the wild, z5 1 gal

***M. macrophylla* ssp. *ashei*** choice small tree with huge leaves; white flrs.; 10'; z5 1 gal.

***M. sargentiana* var *robusta*** 'Blood Moon' superior form with flrs a deeper pink; z7, 50'

***M. sprengeri* var. *diva*** 'Claret Cup' Scented saucer-shaped rosy purple flrs; z7

***M. sprengeri* var. *diva*** 'Eric Savill' Dark cerise-pink flrs; z7

***M. sprengeri* *diva*** 'Hodgson's Memory'; flrs. pur.-pink; Alleyne Cook select; z7 1 gal.

***M. sieboldii*** 'Colossus' large flowered selection – white with pale red stamens; 25'; z4

***M. stellata*** 'Jane Platt' superior star magnolia selection , rich pink flrs., 10-15', z6

***M. zenii*** floriferous; frs. fragrant, white - purple base; 16' to 24'; rare in cultivation z5

***M. 'Caerhayes Belle'*** *M. sargentiana* x *sprengeri*) large bright pink flrs; to 40'; z7

***M. 'Caerhayes Surprise'*** (*campbellii* x *lilliflora* 'Nigra') Suitable for smaller gdns; z7 1 gal

***M. 'Cameo'*** (*soulangeana* x 'Black Tulip') outer tepal red/purple, inner white/rose; 16'; z5

***M. 'Cleopatra'***, flrs. at young age; deep amethyst red like 'Lanarth', conical, 16'; z5

***M. 'Daybreak'*** Flowers light rose-pink, fragrant, Small upright (fastigiata) tree. 20'

***M. x loebneri*** 'Donna' pure white star mag. With fragrant 6" flrs., 12-15'

***M. 'Genie'*** flrs. black red, tulip shaped ; columnar; striking for a small space; to 10'; z5

***M. 'Iufer'*** Small, conical, floriferous tree, large white flrs, red stamens; 20' in 30 yrs; z5

***M. 'Pristine'*** (*denudata* x *stellata*) pure white flrs., one of the best new intros, 25'; z5,

***M. 'Sunsprite'*** highly columnar to 10' in 10 yrs, 30' at maturity; 8" yellow flrs.; z4

***M. 'Sunspire'*** columnar, deep yellow flrs., 15' in 10 yrs, 20-25' x 6' wide at maturity; z4

Height will vary with cultivar but 5 gal. trees are typically +/- 5' and 1 gal. +/- 3'.

**Some items are very limited in quantity.**

Price: 1 gal.: \$45.00

5 gal.: \$65.00

Sales tax extra

Payment by cheque in advance on confirmation of order payable to 'The Shop in the Garden'.

Pick up at the Shop in the Garden, U.B.C. or in Nanaimo, in a few weeks time if there is enough interest from Vancouver Island Gardeners. For more info, email Charlie at [buckethill@gmail.com](mailto:buckethill@gmail.com).

## WINNERS FOR THE VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY, 2013

**The George Fraser Memorial Trophy for Best Vancouver Island hybrid:** Bill McMillan for Yak Exbury x Pachy

**Herman and Hella Vaartnou Plate for Best Fragrant Rhododendron Truss or Spray** (not an Azalea): April show the Marquardts for R. gorei; May show winner - Ann Allen for R. fragrantissimum

**Jean and Norman Todd Trophy for Best lepidote species in a container:** Moe and Johanna Massa for R. fastigiatum  
**Mary's Memorial Cup for Best rhododendron companion plant:** for April show, the Massas for Magnolia 'Yellow Bird' and Keiko Alkire won in May for Trillium

**The Jim Calder Memorial Trophy for best species truss or spray:** April show Ken Webb for R. primuliflorum and for May show Norma Senn for R. cephalanthum

**The Mary Henderson Memorial Trophy for best hybrid rhododendron** for April show: Ken Webb for Rubicon and for May show, Lois Blackmore for Cimmaron Sun

**The de Rothschild Challenge Trophy for Best in show:** April show: Ken Webb for R. primuliflorum and May show, Ken Webb for R. kiusianum

**The Gibson Memorial Trophy for high aggregate:** April show: the Webbs; for May show the Massas

**The Webb Trophy for People's Choice:** April show: John Hawkins for Babylon; and for May show, Ken Webb for kiusianum

**Angus and Mary Boyd Trophy for best entry by a novice for April:** Gareth Shearman for Embothrium coccineum and for May, Jacq Bradbury for R. quinquefolium

**The Alex McCarter Bowl for Best NW Hybrid,** Anne Allen for Anna Rose Whitney

**The Abkhazi Plate for service to the club,** Bill and Betty Gordon

## Photography Evening November 4

### 1. Prints

The hard copies will follow the same format as was used in the past shows namely a **black and white** section, and a **colour** section. All entries to be 5"x7" mounted on a black mat, no frame. Mounted pictures are to be entered the night of the show, November 4, 2013.

Subjects can be rhododendrons or garden scenes in colour or black and white.

### 2. Digital Entries

**To make it easy to enter photographs for our meeting, we ask that you email your digital photos to Calvin at [waterlily@shaw.ca](mailto:waterlily@shaw.ca). Calvin will prepare a PowerPoint file with all the entries.**

**On the subject line, please enter the category the photo is intended for and the name of rhododendron or plant or scene:**

1. Single Truss Rhododendron
2. Whole Plant Rhododendron
3. Foliage Rhododendron
4. Companion Plant
5. Garden Scene

Example for Subject line  
category 3, Sinogrande

Please enter only two photos per category. Deadline for digital photos is October 31, 2013.

2013	Event	Place	Fee
Sat, Oct 19 10:15-12:15	<u>Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden (RSBG)</u> Fall Foliage Festival Introduction to Flower Photography by Lesli Cohan <u>Register</u> <a href="https://rhodygarden.org/cms/events/9442/introduction-to-flower-photography/">https://rhodygarden.org/cms/events/9442/introduction-to-flower-photography/</a> or call 253-838-4646 x140	2525 S. 336 <sup>th</sup> St, Federal Way, WA	\$40 US
Mon, Oct 21 7:30 p	Propagation Meeting	TBD	
Wed, Oct 23 8:00-evening	Propagation Group Field Trip Register by emailing <b>Calvin</b> - <a href="mailto:waterlily@shaw.ca">waterlily@shaw.ca</a> OR <b>Ken</b> - <a href="mailto:kenwebb@live.ca">kenwebb@live.ca</a> Assemble at the Webb's house at 8 am to car pool/ organize the rides	14021 Rippington Rd Pitt Meadows, BC **may include another nursery or rhodo garden while on the mainland	

Mail to: **The Victoria Rhododendron Society**, P.O. Box 5562 Station B,  
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I agree to be on the circulated club membership list

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

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Circle one of the following: Regular Member \$35\*    Local: \$25    Associate \$10

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

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

\* subsidized by VRS