



# The Victoria Rhododendron Society Newsletter

4821 Townsend Drive, Victoria, BC V8Z 5P2

April 2019  
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Thirty-Ninth Year of Publication  
<http://victoriarhodo.ca>

**General Meeting**  
**starts at 7:30**  
**MONDAY, April 1, 2019**  
**Susan & Garth Wedemire, Visiting Wales**  
 Couvelier Pavilion at the HCP Gardens  
 505 Quayle Road, VICTORIA, B. C.

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## REFRESHMENTS

by

Rhonda Rose	Norma Senn
Frances & Dan Syroid	Norm Thomas
Katherine & Robert Thompson	Michael Tripp

**PLEASE EMAIL Betty Gordon at**  
[bbgordon@shaw.ca](mailto:bbgordon@shaw.ca)

or phone 250.479.0210 if you are coming with your wrapped goodies or snacks. Coffee and tea are supplied. Assistance in setting out the food, milk, sugar and napkins, and helping Betty with the cleanup is really appreciated.



**BRING YOUR OWN MUG**

# Upcoming Events

2019	Event	Place
Apr 1 7:30	General Meeting - The Couvelier Pavilion Susan and Garth Wedemire - Visiting Wales	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Apr 12-13	Rhododendron Species Foundation & Botanical Garden has its Spring Sale on April 12-13th. The 2019 Spring Catalogue is available on their website, <a href="https://rhodygarden.org">https://rhodygarden.org</a> , with information on plant ordering.	
Apr 14 10-2:00	VicRS Plant Sale	<a href="#">5008 Old W. Saanich Rd</a>
Apr 15 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
May 6 7:30	General Meeting - The Couvelier Pavilion FLOWER SHOW	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
May 12 10-2:00	VicRS Plant Sale	<a href="#">4640 Cordova Bay Rd</a>
May 16-19	<a href="#">ARS Annual Convention</a> Register by April 10th, after which a waiting list applies.	Malvern, Pennsylvania
May 20 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Jun 17 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Jun 23 Noon	Sunday VRS Summer BBQ Picnic at Lois and Roy Blackmores'	<a href="#">758 Walfred Road</a>
Sept 2 7:30	General Meeting - The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Sept 16 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA
Sept 27-29	<a href="#">ARS Fall Conference</a>	Parksville, BC
Oct 7 7:30	General Meeting - The Couvelier Pavilion	Gardens at HCP 505 Quayle Road
Oct 21 7:30	Propagation Group Meeting Call Ken Webb 250-744-1745	TBA

# Editor's Notes



by Theresa McMillan

## "Circle of Learning", VRS meeting, March 4

On the evening of March 4, members of the VRS gathered round in the Mel Couvelier Pavilion for a circle of learning about rhododendrons.

Because of this year's extended cold snap, in early March very few of our rhododendrons are in bloom. In fact, even those in protected areas have just buds with some colour showing.

However, we know it won't be that long before we will be surrounded by our favorite flowers and fragrances. Until then, we can learn.

Budded potted rhododendrons fresh from the nurseries can be a problem. It is better to trim and space the roots so that they are not too crowded. Use bud pruning to re-shape your plant. It is also good to remove many of the flower buds initially so that more of the plant's energy goes into growing more roots, leaves and a bigger trunk.

To plant new rhododendrons, choose your sun/shade areas well. Big leaved rhodos do better in part shade; their leaves in

particular are more showy and less weevil damaged. If many flowers are your goal, choose hybrids and plant in lots of sunlight.

What kind of soils should we plant our rhodos in? Heavy clay soils with poor drainage are always a problem; they will kill rhodos. A solution used in the HCP rhododendron garden with its poor soil is to plant close to the surface of the soil. Dig drainage troughs down the slope, fill the trough depression with well-draining soil, then place the plant and surround the root ball with a superior soil mix or even well rotted forest tree mulch. To finish it all off, cover with more mulch but keep the trunk area clear.

Rhodes in pots needs special soils. Many growers prefer coconut husk- based coir, which unlike peat moss, does not break down or rot. It stays light textured.

Lastly, be sure to water correctly.

Good care will make you love your plants anew, in spite of unseasonable springs.



by Brenda Macdonald

## Notes from the Board, March 11, 2019

This is the time of year that the Victoria Rhododendron Society makes its annual donations. Part of our mandate as a club is to educate and inform the public about the nature and worth of the Rhododendron family in all its many forms. The Board therefore agreed to continue its \$500 donation to a student at the University of Victoria (administered by the University). In addition, we voted to make a \$500 donation to the Horticultural Centre of the Pacific, which is specifically earmarked for use by our volunteers in the rhododendron garden there.

A committee of the Board took on and has completed a complete review and overhaul of the constitution and bylaws of the Victoria Rhododendron Society. Changes in the BC Provincial Government Societies Act required all societies to update their Constitution and Bylaws to meet the latest requirements. A committee of the Board has completed the updates and the newly amended Constitution and Bylaws was adopted and registered. New copies of the Constitution and Bylaws will soon be printed and available to members.

The ARS Fall Conference of September 2019 is fast approaching. In the spirit of solidarity and support the Board has voted to make a donation of \$500 to the Conference Committee to help ensure that the conference will be a success.

We now have 61 members enrolled for the 2019 year and reminders have been sent out to those whose renewals have not yet been received. If you have renewed but not yet received your 2019 Membership card, you can pick it up from Carrie George at the Raffle/Membership table at the next meeting.

Lois Blackmore and Calvin Parsons have been working hard to arrange a permanent and public home for many of the Barlup hybrid stock plants which have been so generously donated to us. These plants have been stationed at the Marquardts' while negotiations took place with various municipal governments about a suitable venue. It was important that they be placed in a garden where they could be enjoyed by the general public, and where we could be ensured of ongoing care and maintenance. After some false starts it appears that the Township of Esquimalt has a suitable site, and they are very excited about developing a new rhododendron garden as part of their parks system. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Lois and Calvin for taking this project on, and to the Marquardts for so generously housing the plants until their new home is ready. It is likely that a work party will be organized on April 27<sup>th</sup> to facilitate their transport and planting. Details will be announced at the April general meeting.

There have been a number of setbacks and disappointments with regard to the development of a "propagation" area for our use at the Horticultural Centre of the Pacific relating to the need for HCP parking area expansion and the District of Saanich regulations about riparian conservation. However it appears that this proposal is now back on track, slated for development in a different area of the HCP gardens. While designated the Norm Todd Propagation Area, it will be, certainly at first, more of a "growing on" area, where young plants generated by the Propagation Group and others can be allowed to mature to a merchandisable size. These plants can then be sold at our annual plant sale(s) – one of our primary fund-raising activities.



**Ole Jonny Larsen Dinner at Fonbo's Restaurant**



# Next VicRS Project

by Ken Webb

Thanks to everyone who helped with Ole Jonny and Kari when they were here last week. We gave them two days of wonderful tours including many gardens and other features of Victoria. They were so impressed that they are going to bring their Norwegian Rhodo Society back in 2021.

We had a wonderful Chinese Food dinner at Fonbo's where everyone got a chance to get to know them better. Thirtyish or so people. That is really what the ARS is all about, a group of people from around the whole world who are friends with each other. I'm sure if any of you go to Norway, you could find a place to stay with them because of our relationship that we developed here.

Vancouver Island and Victoria are quickly becoming the most influential Chapters of the ARS and we are also one of the favorite areas in the world. As such, we have another group coming over from Denmark on the Easter weekend. This time it will be 16 people travelling in two vans. We are going to need a little more help on this one.

One of the main problems is that it is over the Easter Weekend. The Garden Tours are all already planned, but we are asking for some help in the following areas. On Easter Sunday, the 21th, we will need two Bus Tour Captains to guide them out to Sean & Brenda Rafferty's, Hannah Massa's and Roy & Lois Blackmores' gardens. We will also need some help to provide lunch at Hannah's Garden. Maybe a big pot of soup and some sandwiches, but still open to discussion.

As a born and bred West Coast Victorian, somehow I'm following in my father's footsteps and inadvertently, I have invited them all for a West Coast Dinner at our house. I am envisioning oysters and Dungeness Crabs for an appy, Rotisserie Roast Beef and maybe salmon for dinner and who knows what yet, for dessert.

Of course, we will need a little help to get this all done and entertain our guests at the same time. We will need a few people to help with the cooking and serving and the wine. Any volunteers will of course, be able to bring their spouses and enjoy the festivities, food and wine. This is all to happen on the Sunday evening, Easter Sunday.

The night before, Saturday, the 20<sup>th</sup>, we will have another Chinese Food Dinner at Fonbo's Restaurant for anyone who wants to meet these people. Everyone is invited to this meet and greet evening. Fonbo's can prepare more food than we can all eat and it will cost about \$16 plus tip. Good service, good food and good people. It will be a lot of fun. Just ask anyone who came last week to meet Jonny and Kari. This is a very good opportunity to meet and make friends with other Rhododendron Lovers from Denmark.

Please contact me at [ken@mkwebb.ca](mailto:ken@mkwebb.ca) or 250-883-5746

Thanks,

Ken Webb



## ROOT WEEVIL CONTROL ON RHODODENDRONS

by Lois Blackmore

Root weevils are one of the most serious pests of rhododendrons and azaleas in the Pacific Northwest. In potted nursery stock, weevils tend to feed on the roots of the plants; when rhodos are planted in the ground, the adults attack the leaves, causing mild to severe notching of new leaves...much to the disgust of rhododendron lovers.

The black vine beetle appears to be the most common pest in Victoria. It is about 9 mm. long (2/5 inch), black or brownish black with small flecks of yellow or white. The larvae are legless white grubs and the pupas are white, very soft and about the size of an adult. They are found in weedy fields and woodlands and especially in salal or huckleberry thickets. Weevils can spread from these sources or when a new and infected plant is placed in your garden. These pests have been a continuing curse for rhododendron lovers.

While I was gathering information on the history of weevils and rhododendrons, in the 1948 ARS Quarterly there was an article written by J.G. Bacher of England, recommending "one full tablespoon of arsenate of lead to one gallon of water" and "even a stronger solution would do no harm".

Other chemicals used from 1948 through the 1990's include aldrin, dieldrin, heptachlor, and chlordane. After these chemical solutions were banned because of their toxicity, two other chemical pesticides were introduced. Familiar names included Diazinon and Malathion. In 2005, Diazinon was banned because of the toxicity to humans. Malathion is also now banned as a possible carcinogen. Currently no insecticides are registered for general control of weevils.

Rhododendron lovers never give up on growing the 'perfect' plant. The most current weevil management can be found usually within our homes. It is a mixture of Lysol and water. This combination of 2/3 cup of Lysol to a green watering can of water was firstly printed in the Nanaimo Rhododendron Society newsletter. Starting in February, douse the leaves, stems and ground around the plant every two weeks. Do each plant. This will eradicate the larva.

Other methods of weevil control include nematodes. Nematodes are best used when the temperature is above 53<sup>0</sup>F (11.67<sup>0</sup>C) and after the soil has been saturated with water. These cannot be introduced when sunlight is present, as the UV rays will kill the nematodes. Another method is putting sticky tape around the branches, although it is suggested that if this method is used that burlap be first applied around the branch to prevent damage to the branch.

Thanks to:

- Nanaimo Rhododendron Society
- ARS Quarterly 1948
- WSU Extension Bulletin 0970

# Did you ever wonder...How the American Rhododendron Society got started?

by Lois Blackmore



The American Rhododendron Society was formed during WW2 because of the isolation of the United States from plant societies in Great Britain. American East coast and West coast rhododendron lovers came together to form the American Rhododendron Society in 1945. A special 75-year celebration convention will be held in Vancouver, WA in 2020 to observe the forming of this society.



## **THE BUCK STOPS HERE...RIDGING YOUR GARDEN OF DEER ON A DIME**

by Lois Blackmore

1. Rotten Egg Spray - 3 each of eggs, crushed garlic cloves, 3 cups of water, 3 tbsp. of milk, cayenne pepper. Blend. Strain. Leave to brew for several days. Spray on plants and around the yard. Rinse sprayer after each use.
2. Red Hot Chili Pepper Spray - 4 habanero peppers, 1/4 c. water, 2 tbsp. olive oil, 3 tbsp. milk. Blend peppers in enough water to liquefy. Strain the mixture through a coffee filter. Mix in oil and milk. Add to a spray bottle and dilute to get a 1:10 solution. 1 part mixture to 10 parts water. Wear gloves.
3. Cayenne Pepper Spray - 4 eggs, 1tbsp. cayenne, 1tsp. black pepper, 3 drops liquid dish soap, 5 cloves crushed garlic. Fill gallon jug with water and add mixture. Leave to brew for several days. Spray on and around plants.

# Announcements



## **VICTORIA DAHLIA SOCIETY'S TUBER & PLANT SALE**

**Includes rare and exclusive varieties**

**ONE DAY ONLY - April 13th, 2019**

**9:30am -2 pm  
(while supplies last)**

**Knox Presbyterian Church  
2964 Richmond Road**

[vdspublicity@gmail.com](mailto:vdspublicity@gmail.com)

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

# Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden

The 2019 Spring Catalog is [here](#)

For ordering instructions and more information, visit [here](#)



Rhododendron huanum

## Upcoming Events



### 2019 RSBG Spring Plant Sale

April 12, 2019 - April 13, 2019  
*Friday - Saturday see event details*



### 2019 Rhododendron Species Symposium April 26 & 27

### Rhododendron Species Symposium 2019

April 26, 2019 - April 27, 2019  
*Friday - Saturday 9:00 am*



### Mother's Day Weekend 2019

May 11, 2019 - May 12, 2019  
*Saturday - Sunday 10:00 am - 4:00 pm*

THE VANCOUVER ISLAND  
ROCK AND ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY  
✻  
ANNUAL SPRING FLOWER SHOW



*Fritillaria michailovskyi*

FRIDAY, APRIL 5 - 1 PM TO 8 PM  
SATURDAY, APRIL 6 - 9 AM TO 3 PM  
PUBLIC SALE OF MEMBER DONATED PLANTS-  
11 AM SATURDAY

Come to see rock and alpine, succulent, woodland and  
wetland plants. There will be plant and seed sales,  
door prizes, a silent auction, tea and more!

CADBORO BAY UNITED CHURCH  
2625 ARBUTUS ROAD, VICTORIA  
ADMISSION BY DONATION

Visit our website at [www.virags.com](http://www.virags.com)  
Or find us on facebook at vancouver island rock and alpine garden society

# Denman Island Home and Garden Tour June 15-16, 2019

**T**ickets are now on sale for this enchanting Tour, deemed by the Globe & Mail as "one of Canada's top six horticultural events." Every two years this idyllic island throws open its garden gates, inviting the public for a rare up-close look at the creativity, skill and passion Denman residents pour into their properties.

The Denman Conservancy has declared 2019 to be The Year of the Wetland, and many of our extraordinary properties offer natural and man-made water features, creating complex, lively ecosystems. The famous Des Kennedy Garden is a major attraction again this year, and other highlights include an organic vineyard (with tasting room), a home built from creatively recycled components, a modern homestead and market garden, a couple of oceanfront west-coast architectural delights, and an island-style chocolate factory. Bloom lovers will not be disappointed, either - roses, lilies, and a whole host of other blossoms will be found in abundance.

This weekend event provides an unforgettable experience for lovers of gardens, homes and rural charm. Many people return year after year, and are never disappointed. Join them! Come for a day trip or book into a cozy B&B and stay for the weekend.

Early bird tickets are \$18, purchase online at <http://www.denman-conservancy.org/home-and-garden-tour/>. You can also find us (and Like us) on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/DenmanIslandHomeAndGardenTour](http://www.facebook.com/DenmanIslandHomeAndGardenTour). Please help us spread the word about this great event.

Katarina Meglic  
Media Coordinator  
Denman Island Home & Garden Tour  
778-557-7429

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

[Find us on Facebook!](#)



## Lapageria, Chilean Bellflower #8: The Ladies Agree

by Joe Harvey

The 'Ladies' of course refer to Marie Joseph Rose Tascher de la Pagerie (Josephine Bonaparte) for whom *Lapageria rosea* was named, and Jeanne Baret, assistant and mistress of naturalist Philbert Commerson, who accompanied him disguised as a manservant on Captain de Bougainville's expedition of exploration to circumnavigate the globe, financed by the French government. A small creeping shrub with bell-shaped pink flowers from South America was named *Philesia* for Jeanne, from Greek *pilin* – to love.

*Philesia* is more widely distributed than rainforest specialist *Lapageria* extending from the Valdivian rainforest to the Straits of Magellan where it creeps in shady humus-rich soils much like our native blueberries. Being pretty frost-hardy, it is easy to grow in coastal British Columbia but it does not like drought or, in my case competition from oak roots. Best in a large pot with no lime, lots of humus and plenty of Perlite.

In the reign of Queen Victoria of England there was money to be made in the nursery trade from both the hoi polloi and the moneyed gentry. The upper classes competed by growing rarities and competed for newly introduced species. Several nurseries serviced these demands, prominent being Messrs. Veitch on their extensive property on the floodplain of the River Thames at Chelsea.

An orchid collector, William Lobb, brought back living material of *Philesia* in 1847 and it was cultivated along with the already lucrative *Lapageria* at the Veitch nursery.

When the *Philesia* flowered, it was noticed that the flowers bore a resemblance to those of the *Lapageria*, and pollen from the *Philesia* was put on the stigma of a *Lapageria*. Seeds formed, germinated and the hybrid first flowered in 1872. This was reported in detail on the pages of the widely read *Gardener's Chronicle*. The hybrid was given the hybrid name *x Philageria*.

One point that keeps coming up is that nowadays the female (seed) parent of a hybrid is always put first in any made-up name – the old 'ladies first' courtesy. That was not done here. But there is no doubt that the *Lapageria* contributed the seed. I can assure readers that there was no confusion, no dark plot; the reason appears to be euphony: it just sounded better that way round.

The hybrid proved to be vegetatively vigorous, growing tall but a bit missing in the twining department – clumsy you could say. It was propagated presumably either by layering or from cuttings and distributed at some profit.



Lapageria, Chilean Bellflower  
Courtesy of <https://www.flickr.com/photos/biodivlibrary/8411687596>

(Continued on page 16)

(Continued from page 15)

In the mid 20th century, the botanic garden at UCAL Berkeley undertook a trial of the many cultivars of Lapageria that had been discovered in Chile and threw in x Philageria to see how it compared.

The Berkeley trial had one outstanding conclusion: x Philageria was a load of garbage. It grew well, made a lot of leaves, was reluctant to flower but when it did, the flowers were inferior to those of Lapageria.

My opinion is that what coastal British Columbia need is x Philageria. Am I some sort of raving contrarian? Always my ambition!

My reasoning goes thus: imagine that you live in Berkeley - lovely mild climate. Lapageria grows like a weed so long as you keep it on the north side of the house and water it. There is no reason why you would want to grow anything with smaller flowers and a tendency to flop over. The Berkeley conclusion is sensible – for Berkeley.

Look at me in Victoria, BC. I planted a healthy Lapageria plant outdoors on a shady wall in 2010. It struggled and finally flowered in 2018, some eight flowers after eight years and the plant still looks like garbage. What I need is something with more vigour; this got me thinking, maybe x Philageria is just what we need here in British Columbia.

Problem, no one seems to have one. Not nurseries, not botanic gardens. Maybe it exists somewhere but meanwhile the push is on to re-synthesise the hybrid. That will be the subject of the next article.

## VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY BOARD

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