

VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2023

THE VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

Our purpose is to promote
and educate the public about
the genus
RHODODENDRON

We meet at the Couvelier
Center on the grounds of the
HVP Gardens
505 Quayle Street
Victoria B. C.
On the the first THURSDAY of
every month
September - May

Our website is
www.victoriarhodo.ca



“Autumn shows us
how beautiful it is to let
things go”



PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

As we drift into fall, we welcome more moderate temperatures and the promise of rain. The fall rains have triggered the flowering of hardy hederifolium cyclamen. Kafir lilies, now more appropriately called River lilies have short spikes of white, pink or red four petaled flowers are seen in various gardens as well. This species originates from South Africa and the name implies a high water need. The correct taxonomic name has been changed from Schizostylis to something new, due to the plant genome. Asters that we associate with fall are the sky blue daisy-like flowers from hardy perennial clumps noticed in many gardens. The aster plant group also includes the fall flowering chrysanthemum. The fall crocus have pale purple or rarely white flowered forms. They are colchicum autumnale and are sometimes known as 'naked ladies'. I like the luxuriant deep green leaves that emerge after flowering and persist throughout the winter. There are even fall flowering daffodils. I have only seen photos of them. Berries and leaves of various shrubs are displaying their fall colors.

Overall it appears that this year's summer was better for rhododendrons than last year's heat dome. Adequate summer watering and fertilizer when needed works wonders to help bud set. The cooler fall temperatures are appreciated by the rhododendrons. At the Norm Todd Propagation Center, the seedlings and cuttings are benefitting from a modified water schedule. Calvin has increased the feeding of fertilizer and they look the best they have ever been. The shade cloth over the seedlings and cuttings will soon have to be removed. At the Jim Barlup Legacy Garden, new irrigation controllers have been installed. The new extension of the garden, planned for this fall will be in need of volunteers to move the Barlup hybrids stored at the Norm Todd Propagating Center. The notice of help will be in the form of an e-mail notice. Just know that the volunteer help by the club members is truly appreciated. Our club would not function without all the volunteer efforts by club members. Your work efforts are truly appreciated.

It is time to renew memberships for the 2023-2024 year. One can do this at the meetings or by cash or cheque. Another options is to mail a cheque to Bill Gordon. His address is 4821 Townsend Drive, Victoria B.C. V8Z 5P2 We are continuing the subsidy for our members. Couples and individual full memberships fees are \$35. Local membership fees are \$25. Associate membership fees are \$10. The plant raffle will continue this year as well.

We are asking that full and local memberships members be on a list to bring snacks to the meeting. The order of bringing snacks will be based on last names and will be listed in the newsletter before the meeting. It will take an alphabetical format, with six members being asked to supply snacks for that meeting. It is important that if one cannot make the meeting to let Betty Gordon know in advance.

CELEBRATING WEST COAST RHODODENDRON HYBRIDIZERS

HALFDAN LEM

ADAPTED FROM GWEN BELL'S ARTICLE, QBARS V31

“Colorful “is an accurate description of Halfdan Lem’s personality and “expert “was indicative of his vast rhododendron knowledge. He was born in Norway in 1885, one of 12 children and was raised as a gentleman, with private tutors. His love of flowers came from his mother as she spent many hours in the garden, raising unusual and little-known plants. As an adult, he moved to Ketchikan, Alaska where he was a partner in three fish processing plants.

About 1925, a friend gave him a book about rhododendrons. In here were the adventures of the plant hunters, gorgeous flowers, interesting foliage and exotic places. He had been introduced to a challenge that followed him to his passing in 1969.

In 1934, he moved to Seattle where he joined the British Rhododendron Society and began correspondence with other hybridizers. By 1940, he had acquired enough blooming-sized rhododendrons to launch a substantial hybridizing program. Thus the rhododendron story begins....



CELEBRATING WEST COAST RHODODENDRON HYBRIDIZERS

BILL WHITNEY

ADAPTED FROM JARS V38N3

Bill Whitney started dabbling in rhododendrons as a hobby in 1930 on his 1.3 acre property in Washougal, WA. In 1955, he and his wife Faye purchased 6.8 acres in Brinnon, WA in order to expand his nursery. Over the next several years, 10,000 plants were moved to this location. He was in search of the Holy Grail of rhododendrons. He made on average 40 crosses each year, producing up to five consecutive generations of blooming plants. It took 10 years of infinite patience to produce Virginia Richards. Bill was born in 1894 and passed away in 1973.

His first major goal was to produce offspring that were superior to both parents. His hybridizing efforts included a wide spectrum of trials, constant study, and keen observation. For many years Bill was listed as one of the world's best hybridizers. In 1974, he was awarded the AR Gold Medal for his hybridizing efforts. Whitney Gardens continues today and is known for the wide variety of hybridized rhododendrons available. In mid-May, there is a blaze of color that is outstanding.



WHITNEY PURPLE



GEORGE'S DELIGHT



VIRGINIA RICHARDS



HURRICANE



ANNE'S DELIGHT



WHITNEY'S ORANGE

CELEBRATING WEST COAST RHODODENDRON HYBRIDIZERS

CECIL SMITH

ADAPTED FROM AN ARTICLE IN THE ARS JOURNAL

by Smith in, 1971

Cecil Smith's main effort in hybridizing was to create semi-dwarfs with good foliage and a sturdy plant habit. His reasoning behind this was that more small plants can be grown in a given space. His other theory in hybridizing was that there were very few sturdy elephant rhododendrons compared to the medium and large growing plants. His focus on sturdy plants was determined by several factors: the chances of breaking down in heavy snow were minimal and a sturdy plant will not bend over after 10 or 15 years and leave a hollow space in the middle.

Another goal on his hybridizing journey was to create leaves that would stay on the plant longer, noting as well, that a re-curved leaf with glossy leaves is especially attractive in rainy weather. Another thought in his hybridizing journey was to try to have plants with indumentum. His theory behind this was that for rhododendron aficionados, it is not just the flower that is attractive. He noted that the attractiveness of new growth on a plant with indumentum may be as great and last over a longer time than the truss when in bloom.

THE CECIL AND MOLLY SMITH GARDEN IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC





“Securing plant diversity for the well-being of people and the planet”

STATE OF THE WORLD'S TREES



Through the Global Tree Assessment, intensive research has been undertaken over the past five years to compile extinction risk information on the 58,4976 tree species worldwide. We now know that 30% of tree species are threatened with extinction, and at least 142 tree species are recorded as extinct. The main threats are forest clearance and other forms of habitat loss, direct exploitation for timber and other products and the spread of invasive pests and diseases. Climate change is also having a clearly measurable impact.

Tree diversity is unevenly distributed around the globe. The largest number of tree species is in Central and South America, followed by the other tropical regions of Southeast Asia and Africa. The highest proportion of threatened species is found in Tropical Africa, which includes Madagascar which is one of the countries with the highest level of threatened trees. Temperate zones of Europe, Asia and North America which have relatively low tree diversity also have the lowest proportion of tree species which are threatened by extinction.

THIS STORY BEGAN IN 2003 AND CONTINUES TO THIS DAY

Lois Blackmore

This story began some 20 years ago when a first-time and novice rhododendron aficionado attended the ARS 2003 Convention in Olympia WA. While the knowledgeable partner was on a bus tour to Whitney Gardens, this novice went to the plant sale and purchased 5 lovely seedlings because of their interesting names. Enchanted by 'Windsong', "Recital", "Loon's Call", 'Apollo's Touch" and "Palouse", they became part of our garden.



WINDSONG



RECITAL



LOON'S CALL



APOLLO'S TOUCH



PALOUSE

It is now 2011. Our garden contained 31 Barlup hybrids. As we knew of only one place to purchase these particular hybrids, we would visit Whitney Gardens on the way to the Seattle Northwest Flower and Garden Show held in February. After the 2011 ARS Convention and, thanks to Lloyd and Linda we went to visit Jim's garden after the convention.

Upon hearing of Barlup hybrids in Canada, Jim's interest was peaked. A visit to Canada was a must. He and his wife Judy visited us in the summer. That same year, Jim suffered a stroke. To aid with his recovery, I became his "talk and write to" person as conversations and writing were part of Jim's therapy, and this subject was of high interest to him. It turned out we were both learning at the same time. I had a crash course in rhododendron hybridizing and Jim was able to use his knowledge of rhododendrons as his deep understanding of hybridizing did not to affect this ability as other areas of his brain injury did.

In 2012, Jim donated 500 cuttings to a nursery in Langley. The following year, several members visited the nursery, only to be extremely disappointed as there was one flat that showed growth. The others had been destroyed.

In 2013, Ken and Madeleine were introduced to Jim. After meeting with the Webb's, several hundred seedling were donated to The Victoria Rhododendron Society. The following year, Tony and Carolyn became part of the seedling gifts from Jim. As one knows, both are excellent growers. The VicRS became a source for Barlup hybrids in Canada.

Calvin, who lives in the Township of Esquimalt, approached the Esquimalt Council to see if there was a possibility of establishing a rhododendron park within the Gorge Park. In 2019, the first planting of rhododendrons happened. Since that time, several other plantings have taken place and the Jim Barlup Legacy Garden was established. Please note that Jim and Judy were there to witness the first planting.

Mike Peterson, a close friend of the Barlup's wanted to donate a statute to honor his friends. The Statue is in place and the dedication ceremony will be coming in the months ahead. Working together

GOLDILOCKS AND THE THREE BEARS

IN THE RHODODENDRON WORLD

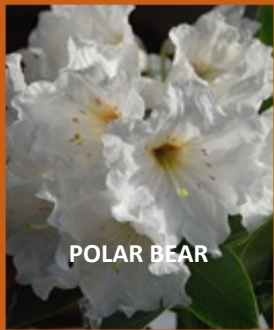
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GOLDILOCKS

A smaller looking hybrid with dark, fragrant small narrow foliage with abundant small yellow flowers.

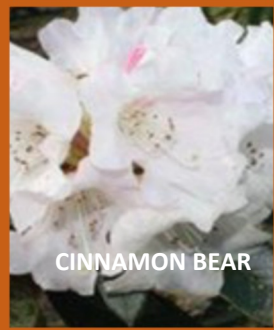
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POLAR BEAR

A late flowering, multi-stemmed rhododendron that will extend your flowering season into July or August. The flowers are fragrant, pure white with a green throat. One needs plenty of room for this rhododendron as it soon becomes a large tree.

M
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CINNAMON BEAR

A compact and slow growing rhododendron with fantastic leaves. It has heavy cinnamon-brown indumentum and the new growth is whitish in color. It has a roundish, well-branched habit, growing to 2 feet in 10 years. It is a mid-spring bloomer, with leaves that are retained for 3 or 4 years.

B
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TEDDY BEAR

A slow growing, mounded and extremely dense plant with deep green foliage and dense indumented leaves. The bell-shaped flowers are slightly pink and bloom for a short time mid-spring. It is a rounded plant that reaches about 3 feet in ten years.





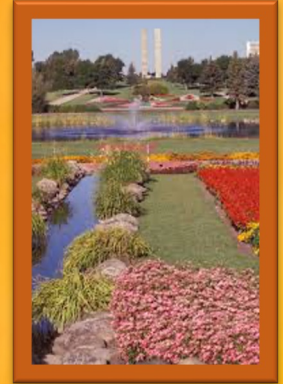
Nestled in the Turtle Mountains is a garden. It is a celebration of peace, a living monument to the ideas of friendship and cooperation among nations. There are acres of uninterrupted prairie, forests and radiant floral gardens defined by nature, not borders.

In 1928, Dr. Henry Moore of Ontario conceived the idea of a garden on an international border where people could share interests and celebrate friendships. One year later, The National Association of Gardeners approved the plan. The group decided that the site should be near the geographical center of North America. On July 14, 1932, 50,000 individuals travelled from all over the United States and Canada to witness the groundbreaking and dedication ceremony.

Manitoba donated 1451 acres and North Dakota purchased and donated 888 acres to garden along the international boundary line. By 1934 operations were well underway and the Civil Conservation Corp descended upon the area to perform. The physical labor of turning prairie and forestland into a garden to celebrate peace began.

Despite being started in the Great Depression followed by WWII, the garden continued to flourish and shine, reminding citizens that friendship between countries was not only possible – but could continue to grow.





In 1937 the first buildings constructed on the site were the barracks that housed the CCC workers as they worked to create the garden.



In 1964, the iconic floral clock came into being. It was donated by the Bulova Watch Company. It a duplicate of the original Bulova Floral Clock in Berne, Switzerland. The 18' diameter clock face includes more than 2000 annual flowers.



OUR OCTOBER SPEAKER



WHERE IS RHODO?

Come join Calvin and Jeannie as they explore the Rhine and Danube Rivers searching for urban gardens with rhodos, plus side trips to Lake Como, Italy and the famous Villa Carlotta Gardens.

Then hop 'down-under' to explore the National Rhododendron Gardens in the Dandenongs near Melbourne, Australia.



BARLUP HYBRIDS OF THE MONTH



Nancy Evans x Tia
Hybridized in 2000
Grown in 2005
Registered in 2008
Red bud
Opening to a broad light pink
Blending to a pale greenish yellow
Wavy edge lobes
Blooms Late April



Amber Touch x Rocky Point
Hybridized in 1996
Grown in 2001
Registered in 2008
Broad truss, wavy edged lobes
Inside pale greenish yellow
Outside deeper yellow
Dorsal lobes tinged strong pink



Hachmann's Charmant x Lem's Cameo
Hybridized in 1996
Grown in 2001
Registered in 2008
Deep red wavy edges
Strong purplish outside
White extending from base upwards
Blooms late May



THANK YOU NADINE (Our dedicated photographer)

ARS RHODODENDRONS OF 2023

NORTHWEST USA and CANADA



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Pale yellow flower with a deep red throat
Prominent red spotting and streaking
Leaves dull green that holds leaves two years
Truss of 15 flowers
Blooms early season
Grows three feet in 10 years



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Pale pink to pale purplish-mauve flower
Truss of one or two flowers
Blooms early to mid-season
Low growing, typically one foot in 10 years
Dense, low-growing plant habit
Native to China and India



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E A
R Z
G E
R A
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Flower is red with faint deep red dorsal spotting
Two inch flower and funnel shaped
Blooms early midseason
Leaves bright green and are tinged red
Spreading plant habit
Grows to 6 feet in 10 years



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Flower is white flushed strong pink
Yellow blotch on upper lobes with burnt orange spotting
Blooms mid-season and is fragrant
Leaves dark green and deciduous
Grows to 6 feet in 10 years
Received RHS Award of Merit in 1993

CALENDAR OF UP COMING EVENTS AND NOTES FROM THE BOARD

VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY MEETING
OCTOBER 7... "WHERE IS RHODO"... CALVIN PARSONS

AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY FALL CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 19-21 ... FLORENCE OREGON

AUSTRALIAN RHODOEDRON SOCIETY CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 13-15 ... TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA

NEW ZEALAND RHODODENDRON SOCIETY CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 24-27 ... TARANAKI 2023 NEW PLYMOUTH, NZ

ARS ANNUAL CONVENTION 2014, BELLINGHAM, WA
MAY 2-4, 2024

VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY MEETING
NOVEMBER 2... "BECOMING A RHODODENDRON GROWER FROM SEED, LLOYD
GILMORE"

DECEMBER 7...OUR ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

JANUARY 4...

FEBRUARY 4... JEFF DE JONG

MARCH 7... "GROWING CITRUS IN SOUTH COASTAL B..C." BOB AND VERA DUNCAN



SNACKS FOR THE OCTOBER MEETING

1. ARCHIE BROWN
2. THE ALLINS
3. CAROL DANCER
4. JEAN LAWRENCE
5. LINDA MILLER
6. RHONDA ROSE

IF YOU ARE NOT ATTENDING THIS MEETING,
PLEASE CALL BETTY GORDON AT
250-479-0210

EXPLORING THE SACRED LANDSCAPES OF BUDDHISM IN SIKKIM

ADAPTED FROM THE NEWSMILL
VOICE OF NORTHEAST ASIA, JUNE 28, 2023



Nestled in the bosom of the Eastern Himalayas, the Indian state of Sikkim blooms with the radiance of rhododendrons. This enchanting landscape is not only the natural habitat of these vibrant flowers but also the spiritual home of the Buddhist population. Each year, they participate in ritualistic practices among the rhododendrons, creating a sacred bond with nature that resonates with the essence of Buddhism.

Sikkim is often referred to as “The Land of Mystic Splendor”, an oasis of tranquility where tradition and nature come together in a profound and symbiotic relationship. The vibrant rhododendrons blanket the hills in a riot of color that is intrinsic to the culture and spirituality of the Sikkimese people. The flowers symbolize the interdependence of life, a core Buddhist concept. Rhododendrons bloom between late February through late June.

Rhododendrons were first recorded in 1776 by Captain Hardwick. However, it was a visit by Joseph Hooker to Sikkim between 1848 and 1850 that revealed the rhododendron wealth of Sikkim. The Rhododendron Sanctuary occupies 104 km in the Singlia Range in western Sikkim.

Buddhism is a religion in Sikkim. It advocates peace, compassion and coexistence. The regions monasteries are testaments to the seamless integration of nature and spirituality. They are more than just places of worship, but rather they are spiritual sanctuaries that invite devotees and travelers alike to immerse themselves in a spiritual journey amidst nature.

In their silent resilience, these flowers bear witness to the passage of time and the changing seasons, standing as a living testament to the teachings of Buddhism. They remind us of the transient nature of life and finding peace within the transience.



TATHAGATA TSAL

The Buddha Park of Ravangla, also known as Tathagata is situated near Rabong in South Sikkim district, Sikkim India. It was constructed between 2006 and 2013 and features a 130-foot high statue of the Buddha as its centerpiece.

Tathagata means someone who knows....an enlightened one: a finder of the truth: one who has attained. It is one who has the mental power to know and understand reality as it really is, understanding why and how the possible is possible, and why and how the impossible is impossible.

Tathagata understands cause and effect and understands how beings have different inclinations and how within the diversity of beings and how with that diversity, there are various types of behaviours, desires and emotions and how they interact and mix together.

Adapted from the Ten Powers of Tathagata



SAGA DAWA

Saga Dawa or Triple Blessed Festival is an auspicious month for the Sikkimese Buddhists with prayers being held in various temples throughout the month. On the full moon of the fourth month of the Tibetan calendar Buddha Purnima is celebrated.

It is believed that on this day Buddha was born. A colorful procession of monks playing musical instruments and devotees carrying holy texts, portraits and statues of Lord Buddha. Good deeds and prayers are said to multiply thousand-fold..



FIVE GARDENING TRENDS TO INSPIRE YOUR LANDSCAPE 2024

ADAPTED FROM GARDEN MEDIA

“HORTIFUTURISM”

- replacing cold and metallic hues with vibrant colors
- night gardens, with lighting, neon-colored plants and foliage with bright variation
- using orbs, sharp angles and swooping vines as decor



“BUGGING OUT”

- more planting for bees, butterflies and birds
- this theme continues in outdoor cushions, statuary and décor



“HANGING IN THERE”

- small space and container gardening is a continuing trend
- hanging gardens are growing in popularity as they maximize vertical space



“NATURE CALLS”

- a trend away from formal gardens continues
- straight lines are being replaced with a more chaotic approach



“COLOR OF THE YEAR

- vivid and punchy is cyber lime
- this color signifies the connection between nature and technology



THE SECRET WORLD OF RHODODENDRONS.. A PLANT MORE ANCIENT THAN THE HIMALAYAS

SEPTEMBER 2023 adapted from Richard Milne

PHYS  ORG



Rhododendrons may be deciduous or evergreen, anything from a tree to a creeping dwarf shrub, with leaves a centimeter to a foot long and flowers of white, yellow, orange, pink, red or purple. Modern DNA-based work confirms that all azaleas are in fact species of rhododendrons.

Rhododendron fossil pollen is easy to identify, as are rhododendron seeds, and some of these fossils are 60 million years old. By contrast, the Himalayas as we know them only began 50 million years ago, when India collided with Asia. So while around half the rhododendron species are endemic to the Himalayas, the genus could not have originated from there.

Over 60 million years ago rhododendrons spread around the northern hemisphere. From boreal forests and high mountains, to tropical rain forests, where many species perch on high branches as epiphytes (plants grown on the surface of another plant). They reached North America, Japan, parts of Europe, most of Asia and even Australia.

The mountain ranges and plunging valleys of the Himalayas created a dizzying diversity of rhododendrons as neighboring populations were isolated from each other. Rhododendron pollen has microscopic tentacles that make it sticky. Pollen shoots out from the stamens like strings from a party popper when triggered by the buzzing of an insect, and drapes itself across the body of the pollinator.





There are far more to humanity's relationship with rhododendrons other than horticultural beauty and the never-ending battle against *Rhododendron ponticum* in the wetter parts of Britain. Rhododendrons have been used to treat everything from colds and diarrhea through leprosy and STDs, to flagging sex drive and diseases of pigs. Few have been tested scientifically.

In Labrador, infusions of the local rhododendron are commonly drunk. People claim it has many health benefits, but the evidence is limited. Like so many medicinal plants, some rhododendrons are poisonous. The common yellow azalea contains toxins in their nectar that causes sickness. In Turkey, mad honey if consumed can cause hallucinations.



In China, there are many myths and legends. In one story, doomed lovers are turned into Dujan birds who fly around crying tears of blood that turn into plants. Dujan birds are like cuckoo-like birds which pollinate red rhododendrons.

In the Dongba religion of the Naxi people, who live in the Himalayan foothills of Yunnan province, believe that three huge rhododendrons guard the entrance to the world of the dead. They believe swords and armor made from the plants played key roles in the epic battles that shaped their world.

In the west, rhododendrons are also featured in stories. "Massed red rhododendrons" are repeatedly used to evoke the spirit of the title character in Daphne du Maurier's 1938 Gothic thriller *Rebecca*.



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