

THE VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY SEPTEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER

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
HCP Gardens
505 Quayle Street
Victoria B. C.
on the first THURSDAY of
every month
September - May

Our website is
www.victoriarhodo.ca



Happily we bask in the
warm September sun,
which illuminates all
creatures.

Henry David Thoreau





PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

As we slip into fall and the days get shorter we seem to be over our heat dome challenges. While watering our gardens, we notice that the weeds seem to be perfectly adapted to our changing climate. My wish is that the plants we love were as adaptable as the weeds.

At our home, the variously spotted petunias are showing more and more white due to the photoperiod. Some of the fall crocuses are flowering where excess water off our deck has dampened the soil. A few cyclamen hederifolium are putting up sporadic flowers and overall, our rhododendrons seem to have done well this growing season.

I have been working on an article explaining my way of growing rhododendrons from seed. It is contained in this month's newsletter. My excess seed will be offered to Island chapters and the remaining seed will go to the seed exchange. The article is called "Planning to Flowering Plants".

We offered the township of Esquimalt a donation to replace the irrigation controllers in the Jim Barlup Legacy Garden. This occurred as we noticed that some plants were showing signs of distress from the drought this summer. The "Paired Geese" bronze has had the base installed near the lower end of the garden.

There is a possibility that some of the meetings during the winter will be available in the ZOOM form. The reasons behind this thinking is that the new variant of COVID is already in B.C. Secondly, driving at night is or can be a challenge for some of our members. At our September meeting, there will be an opportunity for members to share ideas about the direction of the club, to ask questions about any topic, offer ideas for speakers or workshops and, generally give input to the board on any topic that may be of concern or any suggestion of ideas that can improve the direction of our club. Keep well, enjoy your garden and despite weather related challenges, remember that we do live in the best climate zone in Canada.

CHELSEA GARDEN SHOW 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

PHOTOS FROM HOUSE BEAUTIFUL

The Chelsea Garden Show, known as the world's most prestigious flower show displays outstanding gardens, the best of botanical design and cutting-edge ideas for amateur gardeners. Most gardens on display this year had an average of 3125 plants within its borders. Here are some of the highlights for your viewing.



PEOPLE'S CHOICE

A LIFE WORTH LIVING

PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD

These gardens inspire us in many ways. As winter approaches and the glory of our gardens begin to fade from their peak in spring and summer, these gardens provide food for thought as we approach the fall and winter. The array of gardens are meant to delight, inspire and educate the public. Some of the themes running through this years show were sustainability; being eco-friendly for our environment and, a focus of the public's well-being and accessibility.



HORATIO'S GARDEN

BEST SHOW GARDEN AWARD

This show garden is a place of sanctuary and hope with stone cairns set amid light planting. This is the first garden designed with the requirements of people with disability needs. It embraces the mission of the Horatio Garden Charity. Their purpose is to create beautiful, accessible gardens for those with spinal injuries.



SAMARITANS' LISTENING GARDEN

A SILVER-GILT AWARD SHOW GARDEN

This show garden was inspired by the stories of people who found the courage to reach out to Samaritans in their darkest hours. The garden designer is a volunteer at the Samaritans who has lost friends to suicide.



THE RHS AND EASTERN EYE GARDEN

NOT JUDGED

These beautiful colors were inspired by the designer's Indian heritage. The bright posts have sentences in braille and the plant materials promote sustainability with peat-free planting and reclaimed materials, promoting community and inclusivity.



MENTAL HEALTH BALANCE GARDEN

SILVER MEDAL

This community garden celebrates the relationship between nature and mental health. The wealth of wildflowers, grasses and hardy shrubs provides for wildlife.



BOODLES BRITISH CRAFT GARDEN

A SANCTUARY GARDEN SILVER-GILT AWARD

This garden is a celebration of British craftsmanship inspired by a Pre-Raphaelite depiction of woodlands. The arbor mimics the woodland surroundings by using intricate leafy tiles with a branchlike framework.



THE CHOOSE LOVE GARDEN

A SANCTUARY GARDEN INSPIRED BY REFUGEE MIGRATION

The concept of desire and the resilience of displaced people are represented by the linear drift of plants, and the rock represents rest and stillness in their journey.

RHODODENDRON CROSSES FROM PLANNING TO FLOWERING

LLOYD GILMORE

I have only one rhododendron species seedling bloom from seed to flower in all my time hybridizing and that took 30 months. The species *R. yeufengense* is a precocious pale pink flowering species with rounded leaves and a low growth rate. One seedling out of five from the ARS seed exchange bloomed 3.5 years after sowing, with the others blooming the following year. It holds exciting possibilities for smaller and different plants as a parent.

Rhododendron species can take up to 20 years to bloom, while most hybrids plants bloom within 4 to 5 years. As well, they bloom faster in pots rather than in the ground. It is to be noted that the second year flower is a better qualifier of its potential. Growth habit, leaf structure, cultural stress, root strength, ease of propagation and size are also traits of second year growth. We must remember that most gardeners are not connoisseurs, so in growing plants from seed, the plant must be a good "doer" or first time growers will be easily turned off .



(SOOKE CLOUDS X R. NERIFLORUM)

My crosses are researched over three generations as I am looking for dominant traits. Seedlings may lean genetically more towards one parent than the other. Community pots may show seedlings with differing growth rates, leaf structure and habits. "Unseen traits" are plant hardiness, fertilizer tolerance, sun and drought tolerance. As a hybridizer, I am indifferent to some plants dying. It is survival of the fittest. Nature will weed out unfit plants over the seasons.

Hybridizer labeling is most important. This starts with recording the cross in a book and labeling each cross somehow. I use flagging tape with the cross recorded and tying it to the plant at the base. This way I have two records to refer to as needed. As I use only one pollen on each stigma, I remove all other stigmas, petals and anthers as I do not want any cross pollination to occur. Plants that are used for pollination are given extra fertilizer and water during the summer. Seeds should swell throughout the summer and fall and go from light green to yellow. At this point, weekly checking needs to occur. When the truss seed turns medium brown, the seed head and flagging tape should be picked and stored in a brown bag until the seed capsule starts to split.

I use pliers and a small flour sifter to separate seeds from the chaff. These are then stored in a tall open glass, along with the label to prevent mold from forming. Using a HB pencil, I write the cross parents on the label. Very special crosses get an extra yellow label. I generally start sowing seed in late December or early January. Just know that one can order seeds from the ARS Seed Exchange in mid-January.



{{PARTY ORANGE X PARKSVILLE SUNSET} X SOOKE SEAFOAM}

Rhododendrons are dicots, meaning they have two embryonic leaves. The leaves appear about three weeks after germination. By this time, the plants have a fighting chance against Fungus Gnats. If germination is good, I separate any seedlings with differing radicle colors and plant them separately along with the right label. Sometimes excess seedlings are discarded as I may want to try other crosses. Sometimes good-looking seed does not germinate or germinates and dies. This all has to do with plant physiology and not culture.

After about 4 months my seedlings are planted outside. They are not shaded from the sun. I try to plant after the last frost and during cloudy and rainy weather. I use coarser mix at the pot base, finer mix towards the top. The mix I use is sand, perlite, organic matter, peat moss and a touch of dolomite. It is important that it drains well. One must not disturb the root systems.

I try to re-pot in early spring before growth starts. Usually I have 2 or 3 pots with the same crosses, and I re-pot according to size. All must be healthy or they are discarded. My aim is to have leaves touch each other after the coming summer growth to maximize winter photosynthesis and reduce weeds. My community pots have between 2 and 20 plants per pot depending on the cross and the age of the seedlings. After this stage they are re-potted into one-gallon pots. From seed germination to flowering takes 4 to 5 re-pottings. Seeds languish if potted in too large a pot.



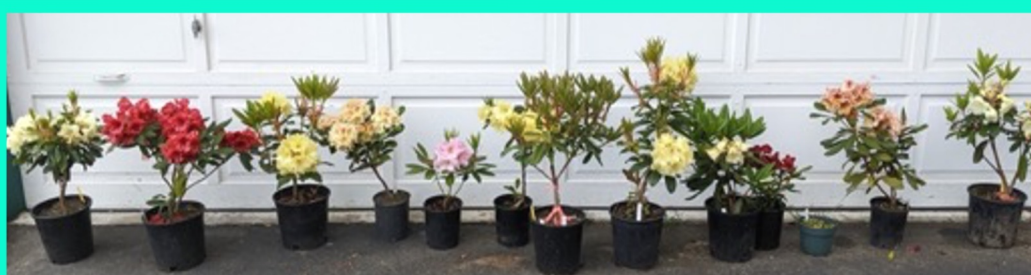
Culling occurs throughout the year, bad leaves, poor health and sometimes being underwhelmed by the plant makes it a good compost candidate. However, sometimes you hit the jackpot and, this wonderful plant drives you onward. Sometimes there is a plant that is OK in your eyes, but if someone else loves it, give it to them. If you choose to get seedlings from me, it is more important to me that you try to grow them on than never try. Even if you fail the first time, I have more seeds. Do you have a bucket? Are you curious?

I started growing seeds in a kids play pool a few years ago as it saves water. Even larger one gallon pots with about one inch of water seem to benefit during the summer heat in the play pools. Later in the fall, the plants were planted in the ground.



This is a brief history of my hybridizing career. I have always had an interest in plants, starting at an early age. My mother was an avid gardener. I have many happy memories of being in the garden and watching my mother do all kinds of gardening tasks. She was an inspiration concerning gardens and her interest in plants inspires me to this day.

SOME OF MY CROSSES



FIRST BLOOM AT 55 MONTHS



BERMUDA PLACE



CHAMPAGNE LACE X

**(CHAMPAGNE LACE X
[BUTTER BRICKLE X MARIE STARKS])**



TAGGED LABELS ON ONE PLANT



BETTER SOIL....BETTER PLANTS

Adapted from gardeners.com
07/06/2023

Fall is the most important time for improving your soil. Three ingredients added in the fall to improve the soil include: finished compost, raw organic matter and organic nutrients.

COMPOST... Homemade or purchased compost adds necessary nutrients that make the soil richer. While the temperatures are still warm, the nutrients in the compost will stimulate microbes and other beneficial organisms, and will provide renewed energy when spring arrives. Putting on 2 to 3 inches of compost will be enough to enrich the soil for the coming spring season.

RAW ORGANIC MATTER... Consider adding some raw organic matter to your soil. It is important to remember if raw materials are used, one must add nitrogen to help with the composting. If using grass clippings as raw material, add some nitrogen-rich manure or sprinkle on some granular organic fertilizer. Shredded leaves are another choice. It is best if they are put through a shredder to help with the breaking-down process.

ORGANIC SOIL SUPPLEMENTS... Most organic fertilizers release their nutrients over many months. Applying them in the fall helps ensure they will be available for the plants in the spring. Supplements can include kelp meal, greensand, rock phosphate and bone meal. One can mix these materials with the compost or other raw matter. Again, adding an all-purpose fertilizer to add to the process of breaking down the raw materials is necessary.

Improving your soil makes a huge difference in its ability to retain water, support healthy plant growth and it also helps your plants to fend off diseases, pests and other stresses.





Our dedicated volunteers continue to enhance the garden at the Gorge Park with some spring cleanup!



THANK YOU!



Gord Pirie
Calvin Parsons
Mike Minkler
Jack McNeil
Carolyn Marquardt
Lyle Ferrie
Frank Buffam
Ian Back
Jacq Bradbury

BARLUP RHODODENDRONS OF THE MONTH



JUDY'S CHOICE

Hachmann's Charmant x Tia
Hybridized in 2002
Registered in 2013
Ball truss, with 5 wavy-edged lobes
Purplish pink in bud
White lobes with a deep yellowish flare
at base changing to a red flare
Leaves a moderate olive green
Mid season bloom
5' x 5' in 10 years



JUDY JUDY JUDY

Peach Charm x Pirouette
Hybridized in 1992
Registered in 2013
Ball truss with 5 wavy-edged lobes
Strong pink in bud
Opening to a pale purplish pink
fading to white
Dense shrub
Olive green leaves
3' x 5' in 6 years



BRIDAL DREAMS

Glenna x Dexter's Champagne
Hybridized in 1991
Registered in 2004
Ball truss with 5 wavy-edged lobes
Pale purplish pink in bud
Opening to white with a moderate red
dorsal flare, changing to a yellow-green
Mid April bloom
2' x 4' in 6 years

APARTMENT GARDENS

Adapted from Gardening Know How

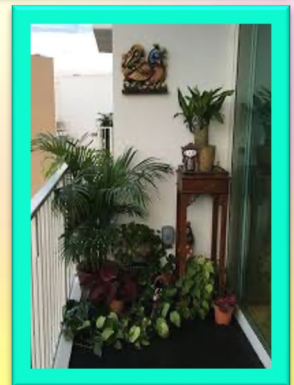
As more people are living in apartments and condominiums, large garden plots are becoming a thing of the past. For those of us who have a large garden and may be moving to a condo or apartment sometime, here are a few ideas to consider or to think about when planning.

Living in an apartment does not mean living without plants. Gardening on a small scale can be enjoyable and fulfilling. One can focus on a particular plant or species as the focus, and add smaller plants to create interest and design.

Outdoor container gardens are much easier to maintain with self-watering containers as they have reservoirs that hold enough water to keep the soil moist without constant attention. With self-watering containers, one does not have to arrange one's life around a watering schedule.

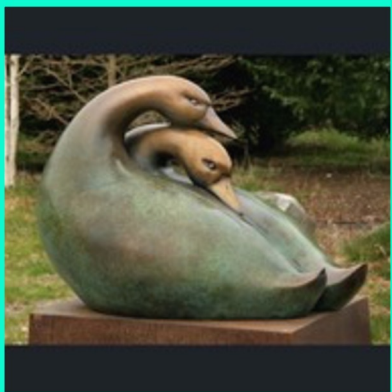
Choosing appropriate plants is the number one thing on the list to consider. Knowing the amount of sunlight necessary for optimum growth is a first step. Sun exposure will determine which plant will survive and grow. Eight hours per day of sun is considered full sun. Four to six hour is considered partial shade. Sun that is less than four hours is considered shade.

Bushy plants like rhododendrons soften the appearance of the patio. With adding smaller plants to complete the design, one can create a mini garden in a small area. Placing smaller plants in clusters raises the humidity in the surrounding area which results in healthier plants. It is an opportunity to combine annuals with perennials and shrubs to create color for much of the year.



UPDATE ON THE BARLUP LEGACY GARDEN

The paired geese bronze statue arrived safe and sound with many thanks to Glenna Trout who was able to deliver the statue to Calvin with just a little fuss at the border. Many thanks goes to Frank, who did due diligence to make certain all the T's were crossed and the I's were dotted, as he had done the research, and Glenna had printed copies for the border agents. Despite all his work, the first border agent questioned the paperwork, only to find that indeed, Frank's due diligence was spot on! Calvin delivered the statue to the Township, and recently, we met with the staff to discuss placement and installation. The statue will be placed on a cement square and bolted to an exposed concrete column. Much to our delight, the parks staff have prepared the site for the fall planting and covered the area with mulch to prevent weeds from growing.



EXPERT ADVICE ON CHOOSING AND GROWING RHODODENDRONS AND AZALEAS

ADAPTED FROM JANET BLIGH GARDEN DESIGNS



R. williamsianum



DAVID MILLAIS



R. cinnabarinum

Millais Nursery was established in 1970 by David Millais whose father JG Millais was a great botanist and plant hunter. When David was asked about the appeal of rhododendrons and azaleas, he replied that there were not many evergreen plants that had such a wonderful display of colors, ranging from white, through pink to red, with mauves and purples and, yellows and oranges thrown in for good measure.

Secondly he noted that the flowers vary in shape and size from the floriferous dwarfs, through dainty bell shapes of R. williamsianum and R. cinnabarinum types to the huge trusses of some of the tall growing hybrids and species.

When asked about their limited flower season, he replied that rhododendrons have a long flowering season lasting up to four weeks when planted in shade. There are other rhododendrons that can extend the season. Early varieties like R. dauricum, R. barbatum and Christmas Cheer add color early in the year. To extend color after spring, varieties like R. decorum, R. luteum, Dopey and Polar Bear extend into summer.



R. DAURICUM



R. BARBATUM



DOPEY



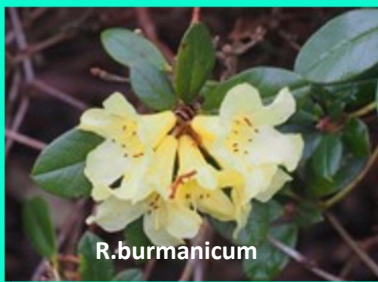
POLAR BEAR

EXPERT ADVICE (CONTINUED)

Rhododendrons grow well in pots as they are tough and low growing. They will grow in a sunny position, but are best in light shade where the blooms will last longer. If they grow too large for their container, it is best to replot them in the fall.

If drought or really wet weather occurs, be aware that rhododendrons do not like wet conditions. Their roots are fine and surface rooting and do not do well competing with tall thirsty trees. In periods of summer conditions, giving plants a proper deep soak once a week is better than a light sprinkle everyday. It is best to plant rhododendrons high in the ground to give better aeration and drainage to the roots.

Scented rhododendrons are particularly appealing, especially when planted near doorways, pathways and seating areas. Most popular is *R. luteum*, the common yellow deciduous azalea and the tall growing Loderi cultivars such as Loderi King George. Other scented rhododendrons include *R. johnstoneanum* and *Fragrantissimum*



R. burmanicum

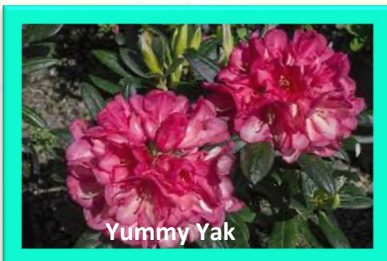


Fragrantissimum

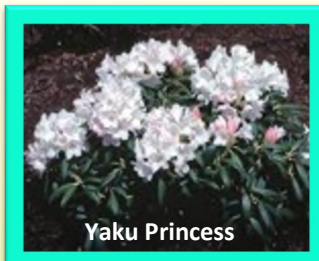


R. johnstoneanum

The best rhododendrons and azaleas to grow in pots include evergreen azaleas and *R. yakushmanum*. *R. yakushmanum* varieties make naturally shaped dome plants, growing to about 1 meter in height and width in 10 years. It is important to remember if one clips to shape a "Yak" there is a danger that you will spoil the flowering season the following year. However, azaleas can be clipped into shape after flowering and will still form flowers the following season.



Yummy Yak



Yaku Princess



Yaku Prince

USING RHODODENDRONS IN POTS



Whether on a balcony or positioned within a garden, placing a rhododendron in a pot catches the eye of the viewer. It calls attention to that particular plant. As well, a novice viewer realizes that rhododendrons can do well on pots





Global Conservation Consortium

Rhododendron

ADAPTED FROM THE GCC, MAY 2023, Michael Pirie

Mortality is not unusual in botanic gardens. It is an inevitable consequence of attempting to grow a great many different plants, often of wild origin and from across the world. Each species or even individual plant is unique in its ability to thrive given different soils, temperatures, rainfall and seasonal variability. With the accelerating loss of biodiversity worldwide, we must recognize that some of our collections are too important to leave to chance. *(Barlup Legacy Garden)

It is important to note that Botanic gardens are working together and spreading both the burden and risk of looking after these treasures. At the Bergen University Gardens (Norway), we have ideal conditions to contribute internationally to conservation of species. Rhododendrons are not the only threatened species, we are also collecting threatened species of conifers. Through our work, we hope that our visiting public will be inspired to become aware of this crisis and will support promotion of biological diversity.



Foto: Terhi Pousi, UIB

Truede arter - Threatened species:



Rhododendron kotschyi

Synonym: *Rh. myrtifolium*. Liten busk som hører hjemme på den sørlige Balkanhalvøya og i Sør- og Øst-Karpatene, begrenset til sterkt fragmenterte bestander over mindre enn 500 km² i høyereliggende strøk. Hovedtruslene er beiting, endringer i arealbruk og klimaendringer.

Sterkt truet (EN - Endangered)

Restricted to fragmented populations at higher elevations in the southern Balkan Peninsula and S and E Carpathians.





Global
Conservation
Consortium

Rhododendron

The Global Conservation Consortium for Rhododendron brings together the world's Rhododendron experts, conservationists and botanic garden communities to ensure that no wild species of rhododendron becomes extinct.

Rhododendron is the most diverse genus in the heath and heather family comprising over 1100 species. It is found growing wild across the Northern hemisphere and as far south as northern Australia, and grows in the mountains of southwest China, the Himalaya and southeast Asia where it forms an important part of montane ecosystems.



DIVERSITY

Rhododendron species underpin livelihoods in regions where they protect watersheds and stabilize steep mountain slopes in areas where some of the most significant river systems in Asia begin. Their two centers of diversity are in the east Himalaya and mountains of southwest China and southeast Asia. They display an astonishing array of ecological and morphological diversity, thriving in the subtropical forests of southeast Asia, to the high alpine habitats of the Himalaya, and the temperate forests of North America.



Global
Conservation
Consortium

Rhododendron

OPERATIONAL REGIONS

North America and Greenland

There are around 30 rhododendron taxa in North America and Greenland. Most are widespread and not currently threatened, although several southeastern US azalea species are. The most threatened is *R. chapmanii*, while *R. flammeum* is assessed as Vulnerable.

Europe, Western Asia and Caucasus

There are about 20 taxa of Rhododendron in Europe, Western Asia and the Caucasus. *R. Kotschi* (previously known as *R. myrtifolium*) is currently classified as Endangered, as is *R. ponticum* subsp. *Baeticum*.

Southeast Asia and China

The center for diversity of temperate rhododendron species is the Eastern Himalaya and Southwestern China. Approximately 374 rhododendron species are threatened. At least 20 are Critically Endangered, with one only known as a single mature plant. (*R. liboense*) *R. macabeanum* and *R. wattii* are being actively conserved by the Botanical Society of India.

Southeast Asia

This region is the center of diversity for Vireyas with 398 described taxa and a further undescribed diversity that will likely be facing severe conservation threats. 190 Species are considered to be of conservation concern and 12 are considered Critically Endangered. Recent surveys have failed to find *R. retrorsipilum* and *R. loezringii* leading to the possibility that they have become extinct. Critically Endangered are *R. monkoboense* and *R. tuhanense*. These are a current priority for the Foundation Franklinia.

Northeast Asia

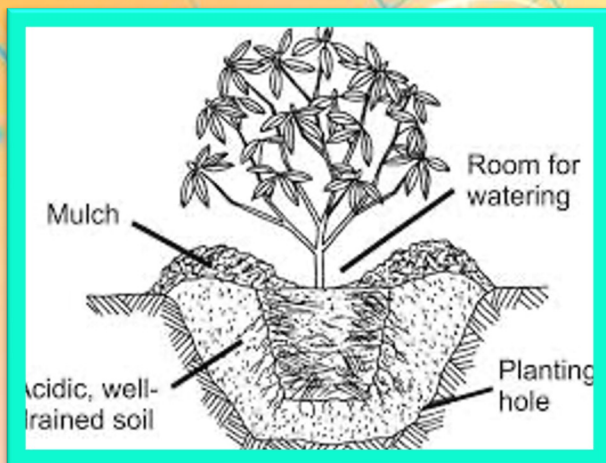
There are approximately 150 Rhododendron taxa occurring in Northeast Asia. Approximately 24 are considered of conservation concern. 4 taxa are considered Critically Endangered. All are endemic to Japan



Adapted from the GCC, 05/23

RHODODENDRONS IN THE FALL/WINTER

ADAPTED FROM THE EUREKA CHAPTER OF THE ARS/ THIS IS MYGARDEN



October is fall planting time in the Pacific Northwest. Fall planting will result in a better root system developing over the winter. Use humus-rich acidic soil and a fall fertilizer of 2-10-10. Round the mulch up to direct water into the plant. Planting in the fall allows the plant to receive the benefits of chilling in the winter as a certain amount of chill assists the plant in developing flower buds. The top of the root ball should be at ground level.

More than anything, rhododendrons suffer from lack of moisture over the winter months. The winter winds whip branches and foliage and dries them out quickly. As the ground freezes over, it makes it hard for moisture to reach the roots.

One of the best ways to combat winds and freezing weather is to make certain the plant receives plenty of hydration in the fall. Water regularly in the fall until the ground freezes over, especially if the rains are inconsistent. A good soaking once a week is more than enough to provide the necessary water to the roots. Not only does it help to hydrate the roots, but it allows the plant to take in nutrients more easily.

When watering, place the hose at the root zone of the plant near the soil. Avoid spraying the leaves or using a sprinkler. Not only is much of the water lost through evaporation when spraying, but the wet leaves make it easier for disease to develop in the cool fall temperatures.





“DECISIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND DESSERTS”

Our first meeting of the year will be quite informal and will provide an opportunity for members to bring forth new ideas, suggestions and any other topics of interest that the board can consider for the coming year. The idea behind this meeting is to get input from our members as to what their needs are as we move forward. Any topic is up for discussion.

Anything “RHODODENDRON” is on the menu. Ideas include plant information, updates on projects, suggestions for speakers and the newsletter, or any other topic of interest, as we want to make this a vibrant, interesting and member-driven club. Engagement of our members in club organization and directions is what we are always aiming towards. We can only do that with members interest at heart.

Hopefully, the weather man will cooperate. Bring your ‘hand held” dessert, place it on the community table, and as the meeting is about to begin, get your tea or coffee and your dessert AND get ready for an interesting meeting.





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