

VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY SEPTEMBER 2025 NEWSETTER

OUR PURPOSE IS TO
PROMOTE AND
EDUCATE
THE PUBLIC
ABOUT
THE GENUS
RHODODENDRON

We meet on the grounds of the
HCP Gardens
505 Quayle Road
The first Thursday of each month
September – May
Starting at 7:30 pm.

Activities include:
knowledgeable speakers
garden visits
annual picnic
Christmas dinner



ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP IS \$50



WHO
NEEDS
THE
HIMALAYAS?

WHEN
YOU
HAVE
SCOTLAND?



OUR FIRST SPEAKER OF THE YEAR
AND OUR FAVOURITE WELSHMAN

...OUR VERY OWN...
SEAN RAFFERTY



Hello Rhodophiles!

As an unofficial test subject for the Patio Container Rhododendron Garden we collaborated on at VP, I am looking forward to Tamara Dinter. I have been gardening on my balcony for over 20 years and to say it has been trial and error in equal measures is about accurate. Reducing the weight of pots by switching from ceramic to plastic meant losing insulation value. Buying big bags of separate soil ingredients to mix my own saved money but meant a lot of half used stuff to store

Facing northeast means less hot but also less light. I Google plant information a lot to pass the time on breaks at work but it is a common complaint that on-line advice on gardening will fill your head with information you later realize is not aimed at your part of the world because the writer is in Northern Scotland or the Himalayas (a playful poke at the September talk by Sean Rafferty, which I cannot attend, but which I know will be very interesting).

Dinter Nursery is a family owned and operated business that has been serving the Cowichan valley for over fifty years. If you haven't been there yet you are missing out. It is huge and has an amazing selection. I am hoping that Ms. Dinter will talk about the differences in soil in container gardening versus garden beds.

I am looking forward to seeing you all again this Fall. Thanks to those who volunteered at the HCP Arts and Music in the garden event at our VicRS information table. I hope you have had a wonderful summer.

SEPTEMBER FUN FACTS

The word September comes from the old Roman word, “septem”, which means 7

The Romans believed that September was looked after by the god of fire

Out of all months of the year, September is spelled with the most letters

The September “Harvest Moon” is the fullest moon of the year

There are more pop and classic songs with September titles than any other month

One Zodiac sign in September is Virgo (August 23-September 22)

The other Zodiac sign is Libra (September 23-October 22)

The birthstone for September is the sapphire which is said to reduce inflammation, treat fever, and act as a lucky charm for the person wearing it.

September marks the transition from summer to autumn

The Autumnal Equinox arrives on September 22 or 23 and is marked by day and night having equal hours

The first Monday in September is known as Labor Day

September 21 is the International day of Peace



FOR YOUR INFORMATION U.S. RIGHT TO KNOW

review

Pursuing truth and transparency for public health

Aspartame-the artificial sweetener found in everything from Diet Coke and sugar-free chewing gum to children's medications - may raise the risk of the most common type of stroke by causing inflammation and disrupting blood vessel health and blood flow, according to new research.

This study is the first to combine advanced computer modeling techniques to examine how aspartame interacts with processes in the body that can lead to a stroke or affect its severity

"Given that aspartame is one of the most pervasive artificial sweetener used in the global food industry, its cumulative effects from long-term, low-dose exposure may indirectly affect cerebrovascular [brain blood vessel] health through metabolic interference."

Ischemic stroke accounts for about 87% of all strokes in the US and is a leading cause of death globally



In Canada, aspartame is permitted as a food additive and has been since 1981.

ADDING COLOR TO YOU GARDEN FOR NEXT SPRING WITH ANENOMES

If you were too busy with your rhododendrons in the spring and you managed to purchase some anemone bulbs on sale, it is not too late to plant them for some spring color for 2026.

For best results soak the corms in a bowl of water for three hours before planting.

Plant in groups of 10-15 bulbs for a more natural look.

They look good when planted at the front of borders or rock gardens.

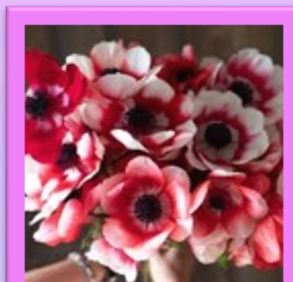
These bulbs require frequent watering until they come into flower.

The flowers are long lasting.

After flowering the leaves should be allowed to die down.

The leaves will gather sunlight and provide nourishment for next year's show.

Provide a winter mulch of evergreen boughs after the ground freezes.



Rhododendron hybrids: disease resistant breeding and improved root rot tolerance for nurseries

Adapted from Nursery Management
August 2025

Rhododendrons have been a mainstay in gardens and landscapes for centuries across the globe, with thousands of commercially available varieties on the market. They have also been the subject of decades of research at Northeast Ohio's Holden Forests and Gardens, one of the nations largest arborea and botanical gardens.

Holden Forests and gardens has a deep connection to rhododendrons, having curated a collection of plants since 1940. The Holden Arboretum is also home to the David G. Leach Research Station, named for the horticulturist and internationally renowned breeder of hybridized rhododendrons. The station houses hundreds of rhododendrons developed in its breeding program.

"Rhododendrons are one of the most important plants in the history of humans," says Juliana Medeiros, Ph.D., lead scientist of the plant ecophysiology lab.

In places where rhododendrons occur naturally, communities have developed ways to make use of all parts of the plant in medicine and woodworking. Culturally, the flowers holds symbolic significance, sometimes appearing in folklore.

Some varieties are the first plants to bloom in the spring, becoming an important food source for pollinators. Medeiros adds that a good reason to grow them in the garden is simply that they are interesting and beautiful



Multispectral imaging is also utilized in the lab, a technique that can quantify plant pigments. Medeiros says there is evidence that rhododendron pigments play a role in their climate tolerance, something that is covered in three currently unpublished papers by the team.

“These types of tools are sorely needed if we want to understand variation in physiology, and breeders need to know about variation in traits to see which ones would be best for breeding.”

Ryan says one of the best ways to find adaptive traits is to simply grow a lot of different plants.

“We are constantly acquiring new rhododendrons to evaluate. We have a good sense of environment in Ohio and how well-adapted rhododendrons grow here. If we have new plants, which could be wild occurring species, named horticultural selections, and they grow well here, that is a clue that something about the plants makes it adapted to this climate”.



Project goals

Beauty has been the goal of many rhododendron breeding programs, including some work by Leach. “The breeding program at the Leach Research Station started with David Leach trying to get diversity, colors and forms of rhododendrons that can’t grow in a USDA Zone 5 climate. He was successful in doing that – we have basically every color of bloom except blue and green that exist in a garden plant that can survive the cold of our climate. Connor Ryan, the rhododendron collections manager says “But I think David Leach missed out on other adaptive traits.

Ongoing research projects at the Leach Research Station aim to understand the adaptive characteristics that help rhododendrons survive and thrive in a changing climate using cutting-edge technologies like high-throughput spectral imaging.

With an infrared camera, lab staff can estimate how much water leaves use when they open their stomata to gain access to carbon dioxide. This process takes a fraction of a second and can be automated through the use of a robotic arm. Hundreds or even thousands of samples can be collected and photos can be saved and analyzed later.

Normally, using classical plant physiology techniques, estimating how much water leaves use would take 20 minutes and would have to occur in real time, meaning researchers are limited in how many plants they can evaluate per day.

“



The quest for root rot resistance

This investigative work can take inspiration from many sources. Stephen Krebs, Ph.D., took inspiration from professors at the Ohio State University who began screening for *Phytophthora* in the 1970's. A veterinarian in southern Louisiana who was successfully growing rhododendrons, Krebs and other researchers had a hunch that the plants' success in the south was due to a resistance to root rot.

By repeatedly exposing the vet's plants and our hybrids to the root rot pathogen, as well as growing them in more adverse conditions and comparing them to commercial standard rhododendrons, it shows that the trait is of value.

The result of Holden Forests and Gardens breeding program and work by Krebs are the recently released rhododendron hybrids that demonstrate the balance between beauty and resilience.





Arboretum Foundation

Hidden Treasure of the Arboretum *Rhododendron calophytum*



Native to forests in central and eastern China, beautiful-face rhododendron (*Rhododendron calophytum*) is one of the earliest blooming rhododendrons in the Arboretum collection, usually flowering in late February and March. Striking when in bloom, the small tree also commands attention because of its large, up to one foot long! – narrow, glossy, pale-green evergreen leaves.

Grayish-brown, peeling bark provides additional allure, as do the large, purple-red vegetative buds that sit atop the foliage during the colder winter months, waiting to burst open in spring.

Despite its ornamental appeal, *Rhododendron calophytum* remains an uncommon plant in gardens today, perhaps because it does need some elbow room to look its best. Flower color varies from white to pink. The individual, bell-shaped flowers are two and a half inches wide and relatively shallow and they feature a large, dark crimson blotch within. The stigma on each flower is very prominent and varies in color from pure yellow to yellow with pink “candy stripes”.

PEACH JAM



Adapted from the Old Farmer's Almanac

INGREDIENTS

10 to 15 large peaches (to make 5 cups of puree)

6 cups sugar

Juice and rid of 1 lemon

½ tsp. cloves (optional)

½ tsp. allspice (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

Remove pits and imperfect parts of peaches

In large saucepan, simmer peaches with enough water to keep from burning

Add sugar, lemon juice, and rind, and spices

Cook slowly on medium heat until thickened, stirring to prevent sticking or scorching

Test you jam, dip a metal spoon on its side so the liquid runs off

The jam is done when it forms two drops that flow together

Heat jars in boiling water

Remove jam from heat

Ladle into jars with ¼ inch space at top

Screw the metal lids on tightly

After 10 minutes, remove jars and place on a rack

VISIT OUR GARDENS



Students in VIU's Horticultural program have the pleasure of working for and studying some of the most beautiful gardens on Vancouver Island. Each year, students install a landscape project designed by the previous year's class. A variety of landscapes have been constructed at the Nanaimo campus, Milner Gardens and Woodland and at the G.R Paine Horticultural Center. These gardens are used for program plant identification and landscape maintenance courses.

Adeline Hawken Memorial Garden

Funded by Laverne Hawken as a memorial to his late wife, Adeline, this beautiful and educational garden contains a rose garden, fruit trees, a garden for plant identification and plants for propagation labs. A feature of this rural garden is a 7' high attractive and effective fence around it to keep out deer.

The Habitat Garden

This habitat garden is a demonstration garden and was funded in partnership with the Central Vancouver Botanical Garden Society. The central theme of this garden is to work with natural systems to increase wildlife habitat in an urban setting.

The Oyama Garden

Funded by the Okayama Women's college in Japan. This garden incorporates both Japanese and western garden styles. It is a harmonious blend of local and oriental materials including West coast rock and cedar complementing granite lanterns and traditional, twine-tied bamboo grid fencing. Sword and maiden hair fern, Oregon grape and Kinnikinick grow alongside Japanese maples, Stewartia and Katsura Trees, including an Austrian pine, pruned for many years in the Japanese style.

The Garden Lounge at the G. R. Paine Horticultural Training Center

In 2007, the VIU horticulture students in HORT131T, designed a garden that would be universally accessible and provide students and faculty with an outdoor lounge. It acts as a hub or common gathering area and will accommodate 35 people for gathering and celebrations.



Views of the Adeline Hawken Memorial Garden Created by Trades and Applied Technology



Views of the Habitat Garden created by Trades and Applied Technology



View of the Oyama Garden.



View of the Student Lounge at VIU

Milner Gardens and Woodland

Milner Gardens and Woodland is undergoing a five year strategic plan, including work with local Indigenous partners on an interpretive walk and capital upgrades. The Greig Rhododendron Species Garden, a unique collection of over 230 rhododendron species, is a highlight of the gardens and has received national recognition. The garden is also focused on community engagement and long-term sustainability.





PLANT PERENNIALS AND GRASSES TO SUPPORT BIRDS ALL YEAR

Adapted from Horticulture

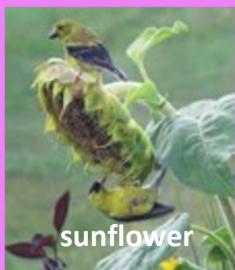
As fall arrives, many will hang bird feeders for those who are passing through on their way south. One can support birds in another way by planting seed-producing local native plants and grasses in our garden spaces.

Trees and shrubs are an important part of a bird-friendly garden because of the nuts and berries they produce, the insects they attract and the nesting sites they provide.

Flowering perennials and annuals are just as crucial. However, herbaceous plants with ample seed can offer birds a natural food source from summer into fall and winter. Their seed is particularly attractive to birds with small bills, such as chickadees, and those with hard, conical bills, like finches and juncos.



Joe Pye weed



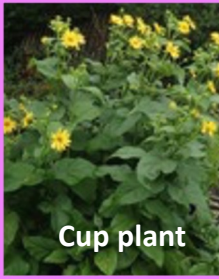
sunflower



aster



coneflower



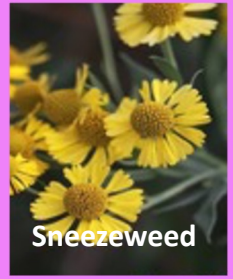
Cup plant



Showy
goldenrod



Cutleaf
Coneflower



Sneezeweed

GRASSES



Northern sea Oats



Orchard Grass



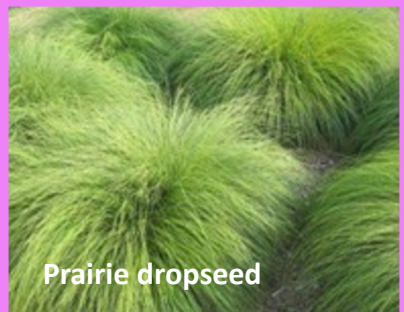
Sweet Grasses



Heavy metal panicum



Sideoats Gama



Prairie dropseed

VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY PICNIC JULY 2025

A joyful gathering in celebration of
rhododendrons was enjoyed by all on June
22 at the home and garden of
Stephen and Marjorie Brice

The rhododendron gods cooperated.
The day was warm and cloudy

Here are some photos for those who could
not make this special occasion





BBQ salmon

Raffle

Both happen to be yum yum

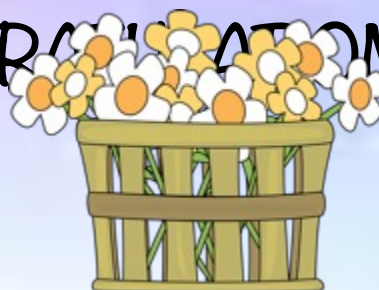


John Vergood
Receiving the Abkhazi Plate
for 2025



The award of the Abkhazi Plate recognizes one of our members who has made a significant contribution to our Society. The recipient is chosen by the Society president and the previous year's winner

CONGRATULATIONS JOHN



RAFFLE



Thanks to everyone who donated to our raffle













Thank you, Nadine, for taking so many photos over the past many years. They represent the activities and events of our club and are recorded for the newsletter and for the website.













