

**VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY
JUNE 2026 NEWSLETTER**

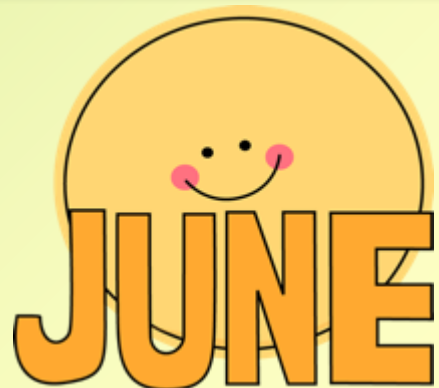
**VICTORIA RHODODENDRON
SOCIETY**

**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 Road
Victoria B.C.**

**Meetings are held on the first
THURSDAY
of each month
SEPTEMBER – MAY**

**MEETINGS BEGIN AT 7:30
PM.**





Victoria Rhododendron Society



June is a funny month. It always makes me think of the end of the school year, just as September makes me think of the start of the school year. I'd been out of school for almost six years now and I am tied to those old rhythms still. Seasonality is regular, predictable variations that occur at specific, recurring intervals within a one-year period. These fluctuations are typically driven by weather conditions, holidays or cultural behaviors. (Yes, that's the opinion of AI.) They are both practical and poetic; "to everything turn, turn, turn", yada yada yada.

Our rhododendron society is driven by seasons too. Our next event is our annual picnic, subject to the whims of June. Will it be a scramble for shade or shelter from rain? Who knows? It signals the end of the flowering season for rhodos, but a robust and varied garden, even on a balcony like mine, will continue to delight and exhaust all Summer long. And from this picnic we will all bring home a new plant or two, requiring a shoehorn as well as a spade....And we will be full of BBQ'd salmon, a myriad of salads and sweets and fond memories.

Just like in school, I will leave my books behind for a couple of months, even my gardening books and just enjoy the greenery under the blue sky. And by the time September comes I will be ready to learn something new again. If I don't remember to say it at the picnic.

Have a wonderful summer!



VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY PICNIC

SUNDAY, JUNE 28, 2026

THE GARDEN AT MARJORIE AND STEPHEN'S HOME

5435 ALDERLY

12 NOON – 3 PM.

BRING YOUR OWN

FOOD CONTRIBUTION...BEVERAGE...CHAIR...

RAFFLE ITEM...DISHES...CUTLERY...SUNNY WEATHER



OUR MENU

BBQ FRESH PACIFIC SOCKEYE SALMON CUTLETS

FRESH FRUIT PUNCH

**MEMBERS WHOSE LAST NAMES BEGIN WITH A – M
BRING A SAVORY**

**MEMBERS WHOSE LAST NAMES BEGIN WITH N-Z
BRING A SWEET**

REMEMBER

A CHAIR, DISHES, CUTLERY, RAFFLE ITEMS

THIS IS WHO WE ARE

The story of our club this year is not written on the petals of 'Command Performance' or on the subtle hues of 'Loderi King George' .

it is written in the tireless spirit of our members who volunteer time and effort in making this particular garden club a welcoming place to be whether in a meeting or at a volunteer event throughout the year

Some work every Wednesday, making the rhododendron garden at the HCP perfect in every sense of the word

Some look after the propagation beds at our polyhouse

Some arrive early at every meeting to set up the room for others and work just as hard getting the room as it was before we arrived

Some bring "goodies" for snacks with our coffee and tea

Some get tea and coffee ready at every meeting with a smile for everyone

Some bring plants for every meeting for a fantastic raffle

Some take part in the many jobs associated with a successful show and sale

Some keep our books, money issues and library available so others know how our money is handled and can access reading material

Some open their gardens for conventions and visitors from within our club

Some take cuttings of our unusual inventory of special rhododendrons to donate for growing on with profits for our club

Some get interesting speakers and plan events for learning

Some produce, edit and send out the newsletter

Some tell us the information about our raffle plants

Some manage the website and membership

Some sell raffle tickets

Some help at the Barlup Legacy Garden when needed

Some seize opportunities to take photos of our meetings and special events

To our members: you are the root system of this club. While the flowers get the photos , it is your dedication that provides the strength for us to reach toward the sun

THE IMPORTANCE OF RHODODENDRON CLUBS IN TODAY'S SOCIETY

Rhododendron clubs are a valuable community asset because they combine horticultural education, environmental stewardship and social connection. They serve as specialized gardening hubs that beautify public spaces and foster local engagement.

Clubs often take on the responsibility for maintaining public spaces, parks and gardens. Through planting of rhododendrons in public places and public parks, they enhance the community and create vibrant blooming gardens that improve the visual appeal of communities

Local clubs provide crucial knowledge on which plants thrive in specific local climates and soils, often helping residents choose and grow healthy plants and avoid wasting money. They provide plants through local sales. Some have active propagation groups for plants that are not available in commercial nurseries

Community engagement in such clubs bring together people from all walks of life with a common interest, offering strong sense of community and social networking. Annual events like shows and sales provide affordable, well-adapted plants for local gardeners.

Rhododendron clubs are often involved in environmental stewardship and conservation. By planting a wide variety of rhododendrons species and hybrids, they contribute to the biodiversity of local ecosystems. Some offer bursaries and scholarships to local horticultural programs, and work with local parks in providing care for and donating to rhododendron gardens. As organized and voluntary non-profit organizations, they have turned a specialized passion into a public benefit, enhancing the quality of life, sustainability and aesthetic beauty of their neighbourhoods.



Cherry Cheesecake



Henry's Red



Gomer Waterer



Royston Reverie



Golden Ruby



Rainbow

JUNE AND RHODODENDRONS IN VICTORIA

June is a fantastic time for rhododendrons in the Victoria area as many late varieties are coming into their own just as the earlier ones fade. From early June and throughout the month, here are some varieties for you to add to your garden.



Polarnacht



R. auriculatum



Melrose Flash



Capistrano



Command Performance



Many Moons

ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH THE RHODODENDRON RESEARCH NETWORK?

The Rhododendron Research Network is a collaborative working group that enhances participation, value and dissemination of scientific discoveries in Rhododendrons. Founded in 2017 and partnered with the ARS, its aim is advancing scientific knowledge of the genus Rhododendron.

It connects researchers and horticulturists across fields like ecology, physiology and genetics to foster collaboration, promote study systems and share data such as phenology, plant life cycles, budding, flowering and how these events are influenced by seasonal and climate change.

There are currently 60 members of this group representing 10 countries including: Tibet, China, Canada, USA, Germany, Armenia, India, Japan, Finland and UK.

Species rhododendrons from the HCP will be part of of an upcoming study.



ANNOUNCING TWO JIM HYBRIDS WORTH NOTING



(Silver Plum x Violet Magic)



(Windsong x April Morn)

**(This is an interesting cross of two of Jim's better-known hybrids:
Windsong and April Morn.**

**Picture #1 shows the plant coming into bloom and showing many
characteristics of April Morn. As the truss matures, it becomes much more
like Windsong.)**



**INSIDE OUTSIDE
GETTING READY FOR THE
BIG DAY**



TEAM WORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK





THE DAY OF THE SHOW AND SALE



Photos by Calvin Parsons



THE VICTORIA RHODODENDRON SOCIETY HAS FEATURED MEMBER GARDEN TOURS SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1979

In doing some research, the earliest history available is from May of 2007. Gardens listed for visits included:

1. The McMillan Garden...April 19...6-8pm.
2. The Morrison Garden...April 25...6-8pm
3. The Peet Garden...May 5...1-3pm
4. The Trelawny Garden...May 5...2-4pm
5. The Dancer Garden...May 6...2-4pm
6. The Lynn Garden...May 6...2-4pm.
7. The Johnson Garden...May 12...12-2pm.



WHAT DOES OPENING ONE'S GARDEN ACCOMPLISH *for a rhododendron society*

Using AI as a base, the following information seems reasonable:

1. Allows others to gain ideas for their own gardens
2. Strengthens community building by sharing a more personal experience
3. Allows others to see how available garden space can be used to advantage
4. It deepens understanding of others within the shared community
5. It creates conservation awareness seeing effective planting, spacing and shade structures
6. It is about the sharing of knowledge
7. Preserves botanical knowledge
8. Allows others to gain real-world layout ideas
9. Sees how companion plants are used effectively
10. Hosts receive recognition for their hard work from knowledgeable peers
11. Strengthens social bonds between club members

A STORY OF AN OPEN RHODODENDRON GARDEN

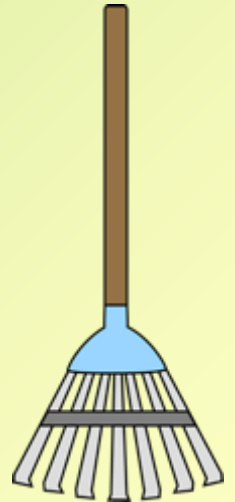


For months the garden owners had poured their hearts, sweat and many weekends into this special occasion of opening their garden for others to see. They had raked away the remnants of the past winter, fed the soil and waited patiently for the swelling buds to burst into full color. They watched the weather everyday, praying that a late frost would not steal the show.

On the day of the open garden, they began to wonder if after all the hard work, would anyone actually come to see their efforts. The first visitors arrived exactly at the advertised open hour.

For the visitors, this garden tour was not just a walk in a park, it was a pilgrimage. These were fellow “rhododendron lovers” – these were people who understood the specific joy of a perfect acidic soil, the knowledge of what makes a “perfect rhododendron garden” and the “heart and soul” that went into placing each plant at that location. These were people who understood the patience required to watch a plant grow from a one-gallon container into a a mature plant. They understood the planning and patience waiting for each plant to grow. They understood that what they were seeing was a garden of planning, patience and persistence. The hosts began to realize that their garden had become a classroom without walls.

As the visitors were leaving “thank yous” were abundant. The worry and fret about opening one’s garden disappeared. The hard work of trying to make a “perfect rhododendron garden” seemingly was non-existent. AND...visitors and owners went to bed happy that night having seen what love, patience, sharing and hard work could accomplish in a single day,



AT HEATHER DICKMAN'S OPEN GARDEN



Photos by Nadine Minkler



OPEN GARDEN AT SEAN AND BRENDA'S SEASIDE PROPERTY

Photos by Brenda Macdonald

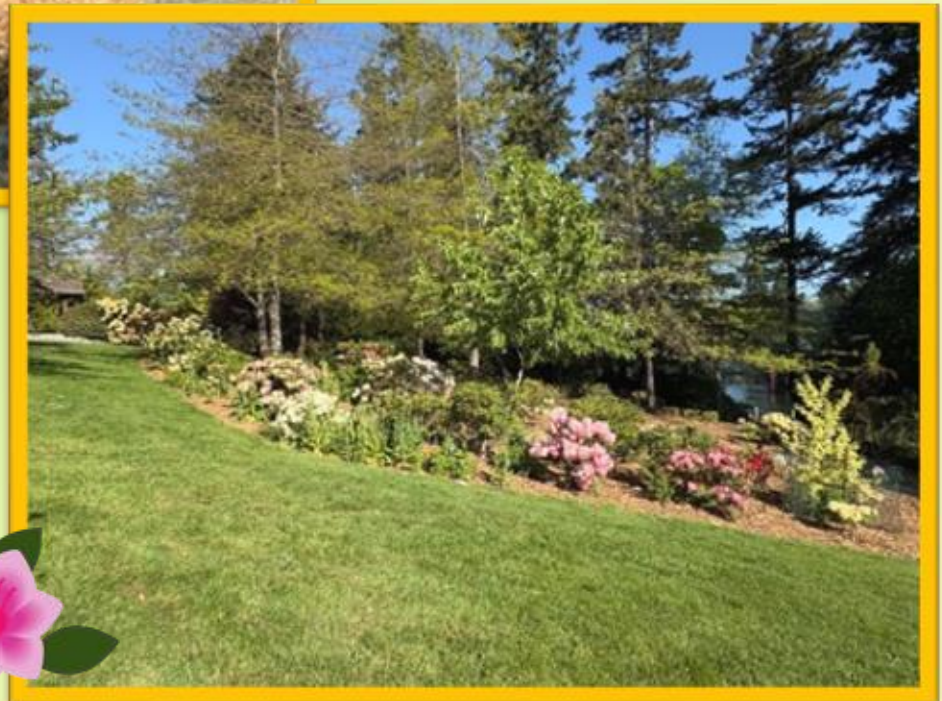


OPEN GARDEN AT THE MICHAEL TRIPP AND MINDY RICHTER PROPERTY

Photos by Calvin Parsons



TIME FOR A VISIT TO THE JIM BARLUP LEGACY GARDEN





A QUICK PEEK AT THE RHODODENDRON GARDEN AT THE HCP

Photos by Nadine Minkler

OPEN GARDEN AT THE SURINDER KUMAR
RESIDENCE ON TRIANGLE MOUNTAIN,
COLWOOD SIDE



VIEWS OF THE KUMAR JR. GARDEN ON TRIANGLE MOUNTAIN



PHOTOS BY NADINE MINKLER

OPEN GARDEN AT THE BLACKMORE'S TRIANGLE MOUNTAIN PROPERTY, LANGFORD SIDE



**OPEN GARDEN AT CALVIN AND JEANNIE'S ON
THE GORGE WATERWAY**



PHOTOS ...THANKS TO NADINE MINKLER

**AN OPEN GARDEN AT
BURNS AND KAREN MORRISON'S
PROPERTY**



THANK YOU NADINE MINKLER FOR THESE PHOTOS OF THE MORRISON GARDEN

MAY YOUR GARDEN REST DEEPLY AFTER A
SPECTACULAR SEASON OF VIBRANT
RHODODENDRON BLOOMS

REFLECTIONS



VIBRANT COLORS: You brought stunning, bold hues to life
HEALTHY GROWTH: Your careful watering and acidic soil maintenance paid off
PERFECT TIMING: Your garden timed the seasonal transitions with perfection

PREPARATION FOR NEXT YEAR



REST: Let the winter naturally recharge the root system
ANTICIPATION: trust that the buds will reward you again come spring
PROTECTIONS: apply a fresh layer of mulch
ANTICIPATION: trust that the hidden buds will reward you next spring

CONGRATULATIONS ON NUTURING SUCH A
BEAUTIFUL AND THRIVING GARDEN



JUNE 6 & 7, 2026

10 am - 4 pm

Rain or Shine!

10 Private Gardens
4 Special Destinations
9 In-Garden Artisans; 4 In-Studio Artisans
Sooke Philharmonic Orchestra & Chorus Members Performing Live In-Garden

Purchase Tickets at:

Sooke Region Museum
2070 Phillips Road

Pharmasave
6716 West Coast Road

East Sooke General Store
5611 East Sooke Road

Eventbrite:



Information:

[sookesecretgardentour.ca:](http://sookesecretgardentour.ca)



[Sookephil.ca:](http://Sookephil.ca)



SECOND WEEK OF MAY AT THE HCP



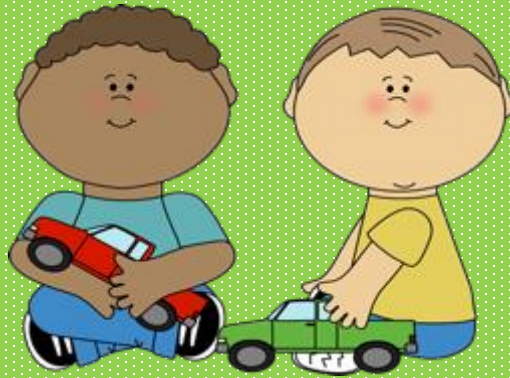
Brian is doing some weeding



Ian is doing inventory on species for the Phenology project



Plant sales preparation



**KEEPING ON TRUCKING AT THE HCP
LAST WEEK OF MAY**



PHOTO ...DAN SYROID

WE DONATE \$500 TO CARE FOR THE
RHODODENDRON GARDEN AND THE
POLYHOUSE



THE WEDNESDAY GROUP WORKS AT BOTH PLACES

Photos by Nadine Minkler



A CRASH COURSE....WHAT IS A VIREYA RHODODENDRON AND WHERE ARE THEY FOUND?

A vireya is a specialized group of tropical, scale-bearing rhododendrons comprising roughly 300 unique species. Unlike temperate rhododendrons, vireyas generally grow as epiphytes on trees or lithophytes on rocks in humid, montane cloud forests. They are anatomically unique for having leaf scales and seeds with long tails on each end. Because they lack blue pigments, their vibrant, trumpet-shaped flowers bloom exclusively in shades of red, orange, yellow, pink and white. About one third of all rhododendron species are tropical rhododendrons.

They do not look like any other rhododendron:

- . they bloom twice a year
- . they have waxy flowers
- . they are found in tropical areas where there is no frost
- . some grow on trees if there is not enough light, these are called epiphytes
- . these rely on a regular daily rain shower to maintain viable root systems
- . others are found in grasslands, growing on mossy rock surfaces, . these are called lithophytes

Section Vireya has about 319 species:

- . found almost entirely in the mountains of Java, Sumatra, Borneo, the Philippine Islands and New Guinea
- . there is a single representative in Queensland, Australia
- . there is a string of groups growing in the mountains of Malaysia and Thailand, including Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Maluku, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Island



RHODODENDRONS AND APPALACHIAN FOLKLORE... THE HEALING CURSE

The legend of the Appalachian healing curse dates back to early Scots-Irish settlers who brought European fairy folklore to the isolation of the Blue Ridge Mountains. They believed the thick, tangled rhododendron thickets – locally called “HELLS” due to how easily travelers became trapped in them – were guarded by watchful forest spirits.

The mechanism of the curse operated on the principle of sympathetic magic, the belief that an injury inflicted on a living plant would mirror itself within the human body

THE MECHANISM OF THE CURSE

The transgression: snapping a branch or tearing open a bud during the sacred June blooming season

The affliction: a sudden blinding migraine that targeted the exact side of the head corresponding to the broken side of the branch

The remedy: the offender had to return to the specific damaged shrub, wrap the broken stem in clean cloth, and pack it with rich mountain soil to speed its recovery
Only when the plant stopped weeping sap would the human headache break

THE REAL-WORLD ROOT OF THE MYTH

While treated as a supernatural curse, the folklore served a vital, practical purpose in rural Appalachian life. It was a cultural defense mechanism designed to protect children and travelers from deadly poisoning.

The real danger: all parts of the rhododendron plant contain grayanotoxins

The toxicity: snapping branches releases sticky, toxic sap that easily transfers from hands to eyes or mouth

The symptoms: ingesting even trace amounts causes “mad honey disease” or direct poisoning, resulting in severe headaches, dizziness, blurred vision and a dangerous drop in blood pressure

By framing the physical sickness of grayanotoxin exposure as a spiritual curse, the Appalachian elders successfully used fear to keep children from touching the toxic plants, creating a lasting piece of mountain mythology that blended ecology with the supernatural.

THERE YOU GO... DID YOU KNOW? THIS ABOUT RHODODENDRONS?

The sticky, aromatic resin on young *R. viscosum* leaves acts like a natural defense system, trapping pests before they eat the plant



The spots on the upper petal of a rhododendron flower act as ultraviolet runway lights, guiding bumble bees directly to the nectar



Rhododendrons are notoriously poor at absorbing nutrients on their own. They use native ericoid mycorrhizal fungi that act as an extended root system



Leaf fossils show that prehistoric rhododendrons covered the Pacific Northwest millions of years before there were cedar and Douglas fir forests

Island rhododendrons have learned to use thermometry (physics and engineering) to protect themselves from cold, harsh winds, by curling into a roll



Bumble bees use sonication (buzz pollination) using their flight muscles to force the flower to release pollen

JUNE

As the June sun warms our gardens, it is signaling a shift for our iconic rhododendron gardens. As the vibrant spring flowers begin to fade, become dry and seed pods begin to develop, a new window of plant care opens.

EARLY JUNE: SNAP OFF FADED FLOWER TRUSSES

MID-JUNE: PRUNE LEGGY BRANCHES

LATE JUNE: APPLY MULCH AND DEEP WATER

**CLIMATE CHANGE IS SHIFTING GREATER VICTORIA'S
LEGENDARY MODERATE MARITIME CLIMATE TOWARD A
REGIME OF LONGER, DRIER SUMMERS AND
UNSETTLING WINTER WEATHER.**

**DELIVER MOISTURE DIRECTLY TO THE ROOT ZONES
APPLY HEAVY, ORGANIC MULCH**

**PRUNE IMMEDIATELY POST-BLOOM
PRUNING AFTER JULY MAY REMOVE THE NEWLY
FORMING BUDS FOR NEXT SPRING**

ADVANTAGES OF GROWING RHODODENDRONS IN CONTAINERS



Growing rhododendrons in containers offers complete soil PH control, structural and spatial efficiency, making it an ideal method for gardeners with poor native soil or limited space. Because these shrubs possess naturally shallow, fibrous root systems, they adapt remarkably well to the confined environment of a pot

The key to good plant health is soil that is slightly acidic, and compost that is lime-free. As root rot is a major threat, containers mixed with peat, grit or fine bark ensure water drains away rapidly, keeping the roots perfectly moist but never soggy.

The mobility of containers allows one to maximize aesthetic value. Display them prominently during peak spring bloom, while the rest of the year they provide a sense of structure.

Pots let one react to harsh weather. Move delicate varieties away from scorching afternoon sun, intense winds or extreme winter freeze to prevent bud damage or leaf burn.

Container planting allows apartment dwellers, renters or those with small courtyards to grow beautiful dwarf varieties without needing a traditional garden bed.

Watering and fertilizing a containerized plant takes less time and product. Nutrients and water go directly to the root ball instead of washing away the surrounding earth