

# Indumentum

## Newsletter of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society

Volume 33, Number 10, June 2002



The  
Vancouver Rhododendron Society  
is a chapter of the  
American Rhododendron Society

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**Past President:** Joe Ronsley  
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**Program:** Joe Ronsley  
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**This Month's Meeting: Pot Luck at Buckethill, the home of  
Margaret Charlton and Charlie Sale**

**Sunday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> at 4:00 PM - See details on page 2**

### President's Message

I want to congratulate everyone who worked on behalf of the society for their efforts at the recent VRS Show and Sale. **Ron Knight and Karen Shuster** did an excellent job of organizing and putting the show together. Thanks in large part to the multitude of volunteers, the set-up and take-down went very smoothly.

There was a superb selection of trusses in all categories, and thanks to the expertise of the knowledgeable judges, a high standard was achieved. The sale was also a success, with a wide range of excellent rhododendrons available for the public. Our return to VanDusen as the venue for our show and sale helped attract many of the gardening public and resulted in a number of new members. Congratulations to **Carole Conlin** and her team for their efforts.

Our special thanks to **Joe Ronsley and Alleyne Cook** for taking the time to promote interest in rhododendrons that resulted in a very good article in the *Vancouver Sun* written by **Steve Whysall**.

Trophies will be awarded at our June meeting, which will be a pot luck dinner held at the garden of **Margaret Charlton and Charlie Sale** on Sunday, June 23 at 4 pm.. We hope to see you all there.

Our May general meeting was held in the Asian Garden at UBC. **Peter Wharton** gave us an inspiring walk through what must to him be a second home. While I have had the opportunity to visit the Asian Garden many times throughout the year, seeing this garden in the light rain that fell that evening put it in a whole new light. The colours throughout the gardens were spectacular. Peter is a truly gifted person and what he has achieved in the Asian Garden is an example of the growing achievements in gardens and plants here on the West Coast. Thank you, Peter, for an inspiring evening.

As we break for the summer, I hope that everyone will enjoy the respite from our normally sedate weather. With luck we will have a great summer and return in September renewed and invigorated. May I wish all of our members an excellent summer.

**Gerry Gibbens**

**Hey!** For up-to-date news and views, including pictures of the May Show, log on to the VRS website: <http://www.rhodo.citymax.com>

## June: Pot Luck Picnic

Our June meeting, the last of this activity year, will take place **June 23<sup>rd</sup> at 4:00 pm** at Buckethill, the home and garden of Margaret Charlton and Charlie Sale. The meeting, as is customary for June, will be comprised of an informal gathering and a pot luck picnic; if you haven't arranged yet to bring something, please contact **Vern Finley** (604.581.5100). If you haven't seen it already, and even if you have, you should know that Margaret and Charlie's garden is one of the most special ones in the Lower Mainland (and therefore in all of Canada!). Directions are a little complicated, so please pay close attention to them.

New members who wish to attend the pot luck please call Carole Conlin (604. 921.7260 or email: conlin@sfu.ca).

### Directions to BUCKETHILL

5414 Indian River Road  
North Vancouver (604.929.5706)

#### 1. Westbound on Hwy 1:

Follow Hwy 1 across the 2<sup>nd</sup> Narrows Bridge. Stay in the centre lane. (The highway becomes 2 lanes just before you exit.) Exit from Hwy 1 at the sign for Mt. Seymour Prov. Park. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> off-ramp after crossing the bridge. After exiting turn right at the traffic light on to the Mt. Seymour Parkway.

#### 2. Eastbound on Hwy 1:

Take the 1<sup>st</sup> exit at the bottom of “the cut”—the very long hill leading to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Narrows Bridge. Stay in the centre lane of the off-ramp, turning left at the traffic light. Proceed around the curve then turn right on to Mt. Seymour Parkway. Follow the Parkway until you reach (on your left) the Parkgate Shopping Mall.

Turn left just past the Mall at the sign for the Park (there is a traffic light at this turn) and then turn right at Indian River (just before the road curves).

Take the 2<sup>nd</sup> left at the sign for “Woodlands” and drive almost 6 km (4 miles) to Fire Lane 6 (The fire lanes are not in complete sequence—fire lanes 7 & 8 come before 1 through 6). You will know you are close when you come to a stop sign at the top of a steep hill. Turn left at Fire Lane 6.

At the white gate it may be necessary to open the gate. (Push the button on the left-hand side.) You will see the garden on your left as you proceed up the lane. Our driveway is the 1<sup>st</sup> on the left and requires a 3 point turn to proceed up it.

There is parking part way up the driveway and also at the top. There is also room for two cars beside the tie wall just inside the white gate.

## News & Notes

Co-editor **Douglas Justice** reports that the conference, “Rhodo ’02, The Horticulture and Science of Rhododendrons” that he recently attended was a huge success. More than 200 delegates from around the world (many pictured below) met at Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, Scotland, for the three-day meeting. Two other VRS members were in attendance —**Karen**

**Shuster**, and **Rob Talbot** (who now resides in England).

Highlights of the meeting included presentations by world rhododendron authorities **Kathy Kron**, **David Chamberlain**, and **James Cullen**, and fascinating talks by rhododendron explorers **Kenneth Cox**, **Steve Hootman** and **David Binney**. Also prominent on the program were a number of talks on vireyas. Douglas was interested to learn that these plants account for approximately a third of all known *Rhododendron* species. Co-editor **Karen Justice** also enjoyed Edinburgh, and sought out activities cultural, as well as those horticultural.





## Annual Indoor Plant Sale

September 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> 2002

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### Membership

I am pleased to announce and welcome 12 memberships / renewals to the VRS. Please add their names to your copy of the Membership Directory. Welcome new members:

Helen Bourgeois & Gregg Marr  
Jessica & Andy Chan  
Peter Chow  
Jacqueline & Tony Clayton  
Valerie & Tony Cox  
Judi & Bill Mainwaring  
Alan & Wenonah March  
Tish & Jamie Pike  
Jacki & John Ross  
Barbara Sherman & Douglas Mitchell

A sheet giving the address, telephone and e-mail for these members will be available at both the June 23rd pot-luck and the September general meeting for you to take and append to your Membership Directory.

*Please advise* Membership of telephone, e-mail and address changes. Contact:

Carole Conlin, VRS Membership Chair  
Telephone: 604.921.7260  
Email: conlin@sfu.ca

### 2002-03 Program

19 September: **Jeanine Smith**, Seattle gardener, on expedition to Sikkim, title TBA.

17 October: **Hideo Suzuki**, well-known authority on Japanese maples and azaleas, Kumagaya, Japan, 'Akagi Nature Park and its Collection of Three-Leaf Azaleas'.

21 November: **Steve Hootman**, Director, Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, & **Peter Wharton**, Curator, David C. Lam Asian Garden, UBC Botanical Garden, "The Expedition to the Dulong-Jiang, NW Yunnan, 2001."

16 January 2003: **AGM**, Elections and members' slides.

20 February 2003: **Robert Van Pelt**, recorder of large trees in the Pacific Northwest, title TBA.

20 March 2003: **David Gilliland**, owner of an estate and arboretum in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, "Brook Hall: the Demesne, its Gardens and its Arboretum."

17 April 2003: **Peter Cunningham**, Director, Ness Botanic Gardens, Liverpool, England, title TBA.

15 May 2003: walk in the Sino-Himalayan Garden, Van-Dusen Botanical Garden, guided by **Gerry Gibbens**.

19 June 2003: Pot Luck picnic, **Gordon and Vern Finley**



*Daphniphyllum macropodum* photo by Daniel Mosquin, UBC Botanical Garden & Centre for Plant Research

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### Subscription Rates

VRS + ARS Membership (US & Overseas)	\$50.00 \$US 28.00
VRS Membership (no ARS Quarterly Journal)	\$25.00
Associate Membership (member of another ARS Chapter in Canada)	\$10.00
Associate Membership (member of another ARS Chapter outside of Canada)	\$US 10.00

### Advertising Rates

	1 month	3 months	8 months
Business card	\$10.00	\$25.00	\$50.00
$\frac{1}{4}$ page	\$25.00	\$67.50	\$160.00
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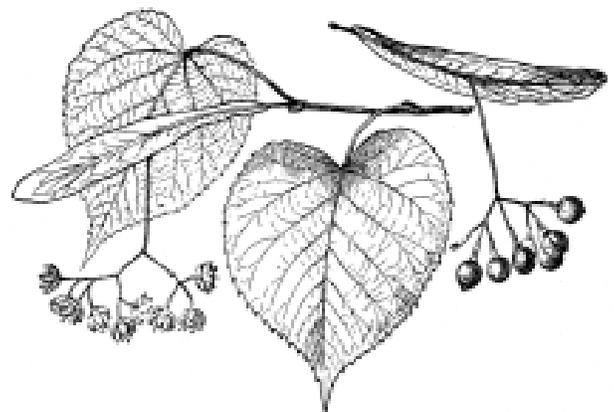
Please contact **Joanne Ronsley** for information on advertising in *Indumentum*  
jrjr@techwest.com Fax and Phone: 604.921.9444

### News & Notes *continued*

VRS Program Chair, Joe Ronsley, writes:

Rhododendron lovers of the VRS will be pleased to hear that the British National Trust Scottish garden Crae has been saved. The fund-raising target of £1,500,000 to save the garden was exceeded before the April deadline. The VRS had made a decision to contribute to this fund, but in the end, rightly or wrongly, did not do so because of questionable legality of the contribution.

The Chairman of the Nominating Committee, Joe Ronsley, is asking members for their suggestions for nominations to the VRS Executive. Members should contact him soon.



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Plants in flower: *Rhododendron fortunei*



Fortune's rhododendron is a delight for the senses (borrowing from this year's VanDusen Flower and Garden Show theme). This spring being cool, *Rhododendron fortunei* was in bloom much later and longer than usual. Not only are its flowers wonderfully fragrant and substantial, it is a beautiful plant, in or out of flower. I count among its attributes an arborescent nature, purplish young stems, rough bark and large, smooth leaves that emerge with ribbon-like crimson bud scales. Locally, garden plants under this name are usually from open-pollinated seed—and therefore not technically *R. fortunei*—but they are generally very good plants.

Robert Fortune introduced the species from the mountains west of Ning Po (Chekiang Province, central China) in 1855. Closely related to the more commonly grown, but less hardy, *R. decorum* (with which it is often confused). Cox points out that the flowers and leaves of *R. fortunei* generally emerge simultaneously, which he considers an unfortunate characteristic.

The illustration above by Walter Hood Fitch (1866) is reprinted from Curtis' Botanical Magazine.



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The following VRS member-nurseries, specializing in rhododendrons, offer VRS members preferred prices.

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### David Shantz

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*Rhododendron 'Cynthia'* at RBG Kew, May 2002

There are also other VRS member-growers who sell rhododendrons at preferred prices at our monthly meetings, and who would be pleased to respond to inquiries by telephone.

Trevor Badminton  
Lilli Anne Hemminger  
Gifford Robb

Harold Fearing  
Diane Kehoe  
Margaret Charlton



**er-i-ca-ceous** (ɛrɪˈkeɪs) **1.** of or relating to the Ericaceae, a family of plants with typically bell shaped flowers: includes heather, **rhododendron** & arbutus. **2.** often used in conjunction with **compulsion** to describe common affliction of rhododendron lovers. See also **ericaceous compulsion**.

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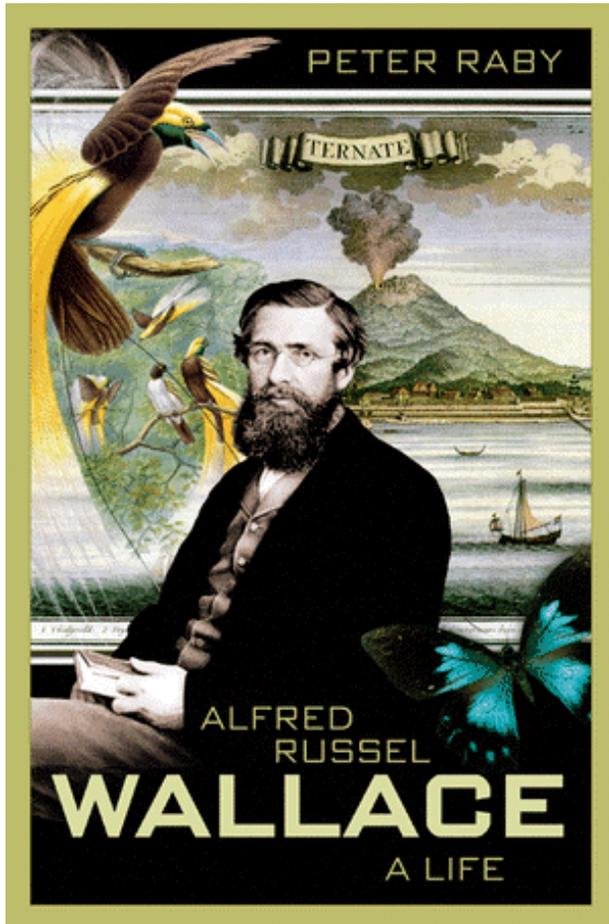
  
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## Alfred Russel Wallace as Gardener A Review by CLJ

This reviewer has just discovered in reading *Alfred Russel Wallace, A Life* by Peter Raby (Princeton University Press, 2001), that the great 19<sup>th</sup> Century naturalist was an avid alpine and rhododendron gardener. Wallace is best known in association with Charles Darwin for the joint development of a theory of evolution and origin of the world's plant, animal and human species by a process called natural selection. Wallace believed in a benign selection, whereas with Darwin it was survival of the fittest. Wallace spent the early years of his life as a surveyor and builder in England. In 1848, went off to the Amazon (three years) and the Indonesian Islands (eight years) as a professional scientific collector of plants, animals, birds, beetles, butterflies and fishes for museums and private clients back in England.



Upon his return to England in 1862, Wallace married Annie Mitten. He assembled and sold his beetle and butterfly collections, and wrote books and articles for scientific periodicals. He collected alpine plants on hikes, his honeymoon with Annie and on holidays in Wales, the Lake District and the Alps. Wallace's first garden, a four acre site on chalk and sand, was named the Dell. It was some twenty miles east of London in the village of Grays. (now suburban London near the Hertfordshire-Buckinghamshire border). "[William] Hooker sent him seeds, roots of perennials and shrubs" from Kew Gardens. Plants and cuttings travelled back and forth between the Dell and Treeps (Wallace's father-in-law's place in Sussex). Both are pictured in the book. Hypericums seem to have figured prominently in this garden, probably because they grow well on chalk. However, the Dell was a windy garden and too far from London for Wallace to get to evening scientific meetings and back by train in the evening.

The Wallaces found a new garden site at Rosehill in Dorking, Surrey, south of London. Gertrude Jekyll's Munstead Wood was only a few miles away. The auctioneers for the Dell, aiming for the "top of the market," advertised as:

excellent detached residence, unusually attractive pleasure grounds, capital walled kitchen gardens stocked with the finest wall and pyramid fruit trees, 'the whole presents a variety of charms which it is scarcely possible to describe, and can hardly be surpassed in England'.

Their garden at Rosehill, Nutwood Cottage, was on a half-acre of "lower greensand" with leaf mold surface (acid soil). "[I]n the small garden and greenhouse the Wallaces ... fit in more than a thousand species [varieties?]..." Some were almost certainly rhododendrons.

Joe Ronsley will be interested to know that the Irish poet William Attingham was a close neighbour to the Wallaces: Alfred, Annie, son Will and daughter Violet all at Nutwood Cottage at this time (1880s).

In 1886, Wallace went on a lecture tour in the US. One of the things he did between lectures across America was to collect wildflower plants. In the Sioux River Valley in Kansas he collected "*Trillium nivale*, *Aquilegia canadensis* [and] *Viola sagittata* — another consignment for Miss Jekyll." He collected in New England and California and all were shipped back to Miss Jekyll at Munstead Wood. This kindness to the great lady of the herbaceous border was repaid, when in 1889 Wallace purchased a new place called Corfe View near the Dorset shoreline. Peter Raby writes of the new place:

[T]here were some healthy specimens of eucalyptus, and no reports of skating for twenty years... Wallace was especially excited by the prospect of growing heaths and rhododendrons in the sandy, peaty soil although he learned by hard experience that this was not so kind to a great many other of his favourite plants [alpines?]... He and Annie ransacked the garden at Godalming (Nutwood Cottage was still let), so there were lots of treasures to be transplanted. Gertrude Jekyll sent hundreds of primroses, Thiselton-Dyer invited Wallace to send in a list of plants he wanted from Kew... Wallace's correspondents around the world were on the receiving end of a stream of requests: bulbs and tubers arrived. . . from Australia and Transvaal, orchids from Ridley at the Singapore Botanic Gardens. Wallace had four separate orchid houses. He battled against aphid in the greenhouse and caterpillars in the gooseberries.

*Continued next page*

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The Wallaces gardened there until 1901, when they sold Nutwood Cottage and found a site only four miles from Corfe View. It was part of an estate, “an old orchard of apple, pear and plum trees in a grassy hollow, with good views and only half a mile from the [railway] station... There was an acre of grass and two beautiful bits of wood with Spanish chestnuts and oaks and a fine fir tree.” The fir tree could well have been Douglas’s discovery, *Abies concolor*, or perhaps Menzies’ *Abies grandis*. Wallace wanted to build a wood bungalow in the style of a Swiss chalet to fit into the woodland setting, but the authorities insisted on red brick. Again Peter Raby describes the garden building that went on at what they named Old Orchard:

Plants were moved from Corfe View, a thousand of shrubs and trees were bought from a small nursery that was closing down, and presents arrived from all over the world, including a special consignment from Sir Thomas Hanbury’s garden in Northern Italy. He purchased a donkey and cart to shift clay from the site and bring in leaf mold and loam—but the donkey kicked and bit, so he had to make do with manual labour when the men could be spared from building work... Finally, and thankfully, he and Annie moved into the Old Orchard at Christmas 1902, just before his eightieth birthday.

They lived at Old Orchard until Wallace died in 1913 at age 92. Annie died a year later. Wallace was a prolific writer and correspondent. He wrote twenty-two books on a wide range of subjects. *Palm Trees of the Amazon and Their Uses* was his first in 1853, *The Revolt of Democracy*, his last in 1913. Wallace also published hundreds of articles in scientific journals. Strange as it seems, although he built four great gardens, Wallace never wrote a single work on any aspect of gardening, nor have I ever read anything written about any of his gardens. Charles Darwin as a gardener and rhododendron grower is well documented (see Duncan Porter’s “Darwin and Hooker: Azaleas and Rhododendrons” in *Journal of the ARS*, Vol. 52, Part 1, pp. 12-14, Part 2, pp. 101-104). *Alfred Russel Wallace, A Life* is a great read. It has sparked a desire by this reviewer to dig deeper into the Wallaces’ gardens to see if there are any remnants of benign or fittest plant survivors still in existence.

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