

# Indumentum

## Newsletter of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society

Volume 34, Number 2, October 2002



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

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**This Month's Meeting: October 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm**  
**Hideo Suzuki: "Akagi Nature Park"**

**Education Feature: Todd Major and Garth Wedemire:**  
**"Propagation from seed and cuttings"**

### President's Message

One of our endeavours this year has been to develop better education sessions for our members. To this end, Louis Peterson has organized this month's education program around propagation of rhododendrons.

**Todd Major** and **Garth Wedemire** will be presenting two sessions each on propagation by seed and propagation by cuttings. Each session will last one-half hour. Those members who are interested will have the chance to see both subjects. The Education portion this month will commence at 7:00 pm, with the second sessions beginning at 7:30. We hope that everyone will take advantage of this opportunity.

**Ron Knight** has worked hard organizing next year's Show and Sale. We hope the move to Park and Tilford will make it easier for our members to participate, and the change of venue may provide us with the opportunity of reaching a wider audience.

On October 19<sup>th</sup>, **Darts Hill Garden** will be open to the public. This wonderful garden is the result of the efforts of **Francesca** and **Ed Darts**. Surrey Parks and Recreation have contributed greatly to the development of this garden as a centrepiece of horticulture in the municipality of Surrey. Please take the opportunity to visit Darts Hill and enjoy the superb collection of unique and interesting plants. The garden will be open from 11:00 am till 4:00 pm on October 19<sup>th</sup>, and is located at 168<sup>th</sup> Street and 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Surrey; parking is off of 16<sup>th</sup>.

Please welcome our speaker, **Hideo Suzuki**, who will be introducing us to Akagi Nature Park. Mr. Suzuki has been our guest before and his talks are always fascinating. I look forward to this most interesting presentation.

**Gerry Gibbens**

For up-to-date news and views, log on to the **VRS website**:  
<http://www.rhodo.citymax.com>. The website has been updated with a new membership form, new links and instructions on how to make a rhododendron screen saver.

## October Program

**Hideo Suzuki**, an internationally known authority on Japanese rhododendrons and maples, will be our speaker the evening of October 17<sup>th</sup>. Hideo is an Associate Member of the VRS (he is one of ours!), an Honorary Life Member of the Seattle Rhododendron Society, and a recipient of the Gold Medal of the American Rhododendron Society. He has received the Veitch Memorial Gold Medal from the Royal Horticultural Society. He is the Immediate Past President of the Japanese Rhododendron Society and, having recently resigned from the Executive of the Japan Branch of the Royal Horticultural Society, is now in the honoured position of Advisor to that society, a position specially created for him. The Japanese branch is the only RHS chapter outside Britain. Hideo is, in fact, a co-founder of RHSJ, which is also the largest horticultural society in Japan.

Hideo has been much sought after as a speaker. Not only did he speak at our own ARS national convention in Vancouver in 1997, but he has spoken in Seattle twice, in addition to the Rhododendron Species Foundation, in Portland, and in Washington, DC. As well as Vancouver, he has spoken in Toronto, to the Rhododendron Society of Canada, at an international rhododendron conference in Wallongong, Australia, and at the annual convention of the Australian Rhododendron Society in Melbourne. In May 2003, he has been invited to speak at a conference in Bergen, Norway.

Hideo wrote a foreword to Vertrees' book *Japanese Maples*, a standard authoritative work on the subject, and contributed photographs for Cox's famous *The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species*, especially of some of the azaleas which will comprise part of his lecture here. He is one of the principal writers in two recent important rhododendron publications in Japan, *Rhododendrons and Azaleas*, published in 1996, and *Rhododendrons*, published in 2001. Most importantly (!), he has written an article for the VRS newsletter, *Indumentum*, on 'My Favorite "Yashio" Azaleas', an article reprinted with enthusiasm in the ARS *Journal* and elsewhere.

The Akagi Nature Park, a 300-acre conservation area at an elevation of 2300 feet on the west side of Mount Akagi, about 100 miles north of Tokyo, has also been an important concern for Hideo. He has been an advisor to it to since its inception. Part of the purpose of the park was to open up nature to residents of the Tokyo area, particularly children, who thought the beetles they bought in department stores as playthings originated there. It is like urban children here being taken to the farm to see where their food comes from. Native rhododendrons, Hideo says, are the primary planting at Akagi, and are planted on a scale larger than anywhere else in Japan. Joanne and I were privileged to be taken by him on a tour of this park several years ago. It was Hideo, too, who introduced us to the beautiful Japanese three-leaf azaleas.

The VRS was honoured by Hideo's short talk 'My Unforgettable Encounter with a Rhododendron' at our September meeting when he visited Vancouver a couple of years ago, and we now welcome him for a full lecture this October. Hideo Suzuki will speak on the '**Akagi Nature Park and its Collection of Three-Leaf Azaleas**'.

Joe Ronsley



Hideo Suzuki at Akagi, July 2001. Photo by Chip Muller.

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Joe Ronsley writes that our March speaker, **David Gilliland** is married to the novelist **Jennifer Johnston**.

“The following two passages are from a novel by Jennifer Johnston entitled *The Invisible Worm* (the title taken from a poem by William Blake). Jennifer Johnston is the wife of David Gilliland, from Londonderry, Northern Ireland, who will be our VRS speaker in March. She may or may not be able to accompany him on his visit here, but in case she does, I thought VRS members might like to know in advance that she is ‘recognized to be one of Ireland’s finest writers’, the author of about a dozen very fine short novels, one of which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and another the winner of the Whitbread Award for Fiction. Her novels are not as readily available in bookstores in Canada as they are in Ireland and the UK, but can be ordered. And it should be understood that *The Invisible Worm*, shortlisted for the *Sunday Express* Book of the Year in 1991, while it includes references to rhododendrons, is not about them. Far from it.”

The rhododendrons are flowering now along that path, under the tall trees, red, pink, huge white cabbage blooms, crimson, scarlet, flame.

Brilliant forerunners of summer.

Campylocarpum, Falconeri, Augustinii, Cornish Cross. Mother knew them all. Cinnebarinum roylei. Every name, every plant, like people she knew them, their habits, their foibles.

... A weeping willow with a crooked trunk leaned away from the summerhouse, its whippy branches now bursting into leaf, and she could see the huge white flowers of a Falconeri growing up through the tangle above the roof.

‘Cabbages,’ Mother had said.

‘I think they’re lovely.’

‘It just depends whether you like cabbages or not.’

‘I like cabbages,’ she said aloud then, looking up at the flowers, glad that they had survived, glad that she had remembered them and had heard at the moment of seeing the first cabbagelike flower, that stab of her mother’s voice.

## BAM!

‘Tis the season of tomatoes...!

### FRESH TOMATO SAUCE with THYME

-Well suited to cheese ravioli or other light pasta dishes

2 tsp. olive oil  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup finely chopped onion  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
 $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp. crushed red pepper flakes  
5 ripe medium tomatoes, seeded and chopped (6 cups)  
2 tsp. chopped fresh thyme  
salt, pepper

In Dutch oven, heat oil over medium heat. Add onion and cook, stirring often until softened, 1-2 minutes.

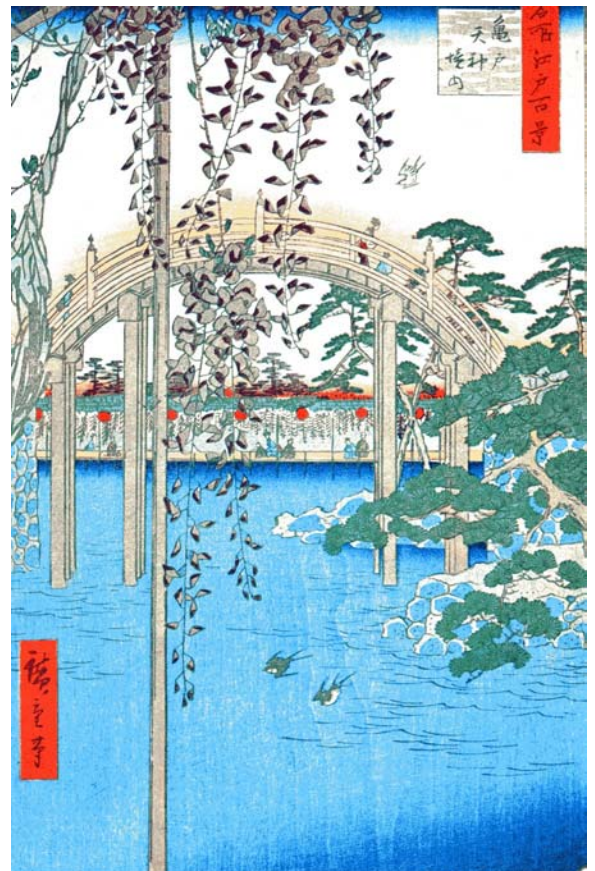
Add garlic and crushed red pepper; cook, stirring, for 30 seconds.

Add tomatoes and thyme.

Increase heat to medium-high and bring to a simmer. Reduce heat the medium-low and simmer, uncovered, until tomatoes are saucy (but not too cheeky!) and have thickened slightly, 20-25 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Stir in salt and pepper to taste.

Sauce can be made ahead. Cover and refrigerate for up to 2 days or freeze for up to 3 months.





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◆ For the Refreshment Table, donations of cookies, cakes, cheese, and other snacks are greatly appreciated.



## Rhododendrons: Buying and Selling - Part 1

People who are new to growing rhododendrons (and other plants) are sometimes unsure of the standards to which commercial growers and VRS sellers conform. For example, new VRS members have asked the questions of the following sort: How long after potting up before a plant is ready to be sold? Is labelling information accurate and consistent between different growers? Are pests and diseases a concern when purchasing rhododendrons? To answer these questions, VRS vice president **Ron Knight** asked a variety of growers to explain their practices. Here is a summary of their comments:

Q: What standards should buyers expect concerning the amount of root in a pot?

- Look at the size of the plant to judge how much root is in the pot.
- People should be told if a plant has just been repotted.
- Newly repotted plants should not be sold.
- Sale plants should have a rootball which fills the pot.



- The main concern is root-bound plants.
- People should not plant 4" potted rhodos into the garden, but rather, should repot them into 1 gallon pots for a season to allow more roots to grow.
- Growers repot plants when they are root bound so buyers should expect to pay for the next size up anytime after the repotting has occurred.
- Growers should tell buyers how much a plant has been fertilized and when.

Q: What standards should buyers expect concerning species?

- Conscientious growers will see a species flower before selling.
- Species must be labelled to show the seed source and pollination method.
- Correct naming is the key issue.
- Growers should be willing to refund or replace a plant that has been mislabelled.

Q: Are there any other quality issues you'd like to comment on?

- Growers should assure their plants are healthy and disease free, especially from fungus diseases.
- Buyers should be willing to accept a few weevil bites so that growers do not have to use pesticides such as acephate (Orthene).
- Growers should stop selling rhodos by the size of pot, but rather by the size and rareness of the plant. (It's like selling works of art by the kilogram.)

Next month we'll print more questions and comments from buyers.

### HOW TO PLANT



1. Preparing the site. 2. Testing the depth of planting. 3. Spreading out the roots. 4. The correctly planted bush. See page 69.



## Millais Miscellany I by CLJ

**Sonja Nelson**, the Editor of the ARS Journal, has long wanted to do articles on the beautiful art work, paintings and photographs contained in the two elephant folio volumes: *Rhododendrons and the Various Hybrids* (1917), and *Rhododendrons and the Various Hybrids, Second Series* (1924), by **John Guille Millais**. As I have a copy of each, I have provided her with pictures and details. The first of these Millais retrospectives will appear in the Fall 2002 ARS Journal.

Despite the fact the copyright on the art and text has long expired, Sonja, thorough and professional editor that she is, remembered there was a Millais still in England. She wrote to ask if it is was all right to republish the art work

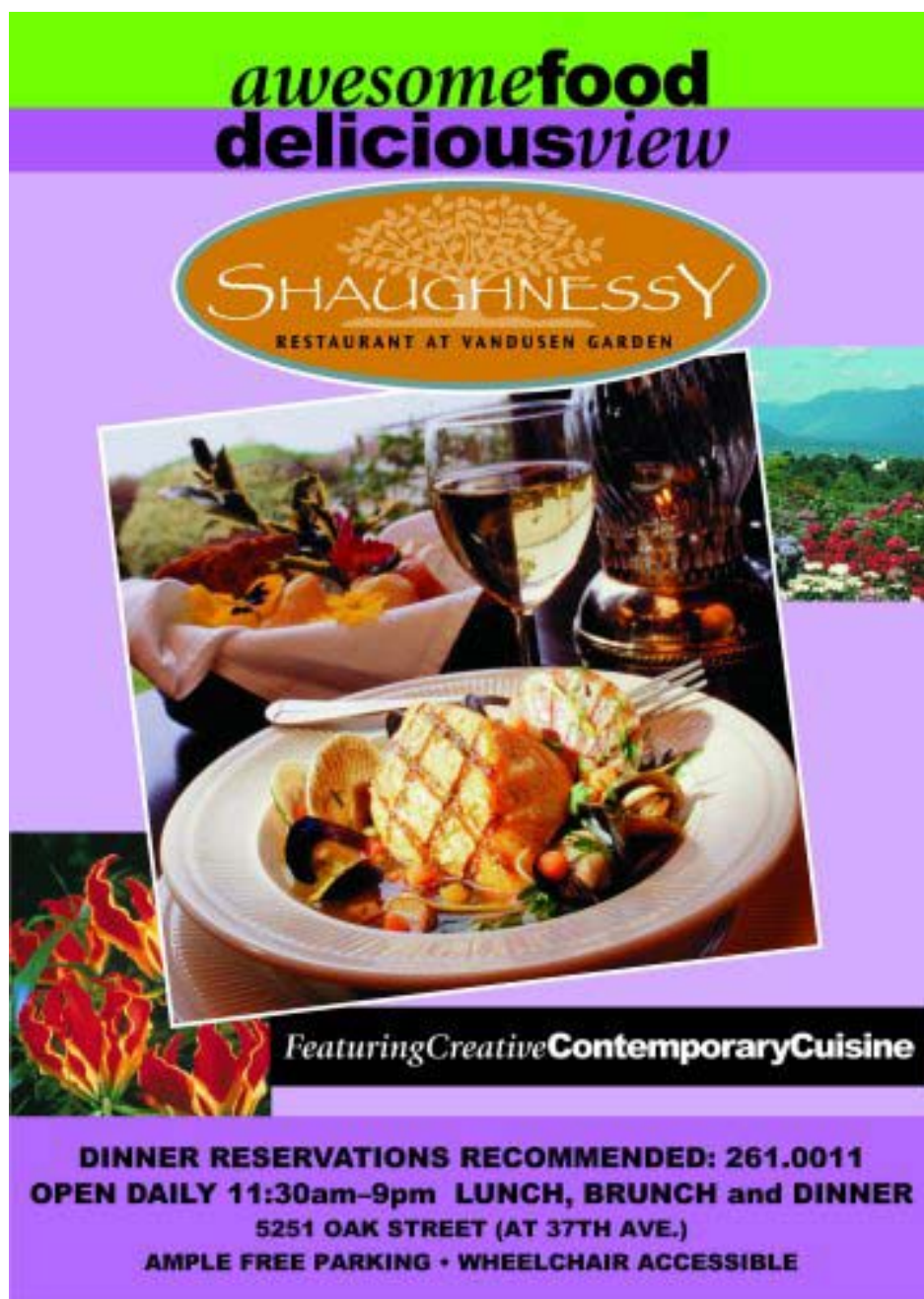
and quote from the text. The Millais she contacted is David, nephew of J.G. Millais, the son of brother Ted Millais. **David Millais** owns a nursery in Farnham in Surrey, England. Sonja made contact and I started an email correspondence with David, some of which I'd like to share with VRS members. In the books there were several black and white collotypes of the J.G. Millais garden, Compton's Brow, which was in Horsham, near Leonardslee.

**CLJ:** Does the garden still exist? One of the black and white pictures I have sent to Sonja is of R.. 'Loder's White' at Compton's Brow. There is a young lass standing beside it in Victorian garb with the most fabulous head of hair (red?) Who is she? Every time I see the picture, I am reminded of the girls in your grandfather John Everett Millais' Pre-Raphaelite painting *Spring* (aka *Apple Blossoms*) or *Blind Girl*. Sonja and I started out to write about the coloured paintings and watercolours—then I noticed some of the black and whites, which are superbly done— so suggested we show one or two in the journal.

**DM:** My father guesses that the girl in the photo would have been JGM's elder daughter, Rosamund (who had a rhodo named after her). We have always seen the family likeness too! My father's passion for rhododendrons was started by his Aunt Fann (JGM's wife). After she died, Compton's Brow was sold by their children, and was bought by a developer who destroyed the garden. A few smaller notable plants were saved, some brought here by my father (Ted Millais) with a trailer, and some to the Valley Gardens at Windsor Great Park, where now there is a wonderful R.. *calophytum* about 15-20 feet tall. My father remembers huge magnolias being bulldozed out of the way to fit houses in. The Town Planning Officers were furious and expressed their regret that they permitted development, but the garden was just on the edge of Horsham. This was all early 1950s and before stricter controls came in.

**CLJ:** There is a great black and white photo (collotype) of R. *calophytum* in full bloom at Compton's Brow (after page 95)

*Continued next page.*



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*From previous page.*

in the Second Series, and a coloured truss of it pictured with *R. xenosporum*. Stevenson says the latter is a rogue and probably a form of *R. detonsum*, with Cox saying maybe a natural hybrid of *R. adenogynum*. I am wondering if the one pictured is the one that got hauled off to Windsor Great Park?

**DM:** The one at Windsor flowers better than the one in the book. It has a fuller and more rounded truss, so could well be a different one, but who knows. JGM gave it to Mrs Stephenson at Tower Court, and then like many others, it was given to Windsor when she moved out.

**CLJ:** My son Douglas did a year there in 1990-91 under John Bond. It was the same year I did a study for the Chief Minister in Sikkim on readying things for small group ecotourism. We returned home in May via the UK and visited him, but as with my visits in '74 and '96, it was always too late to see it in bloom. It grows and flowers well here. The pride and joy in my small garden, however, is 'Sir Charles Lemon'. I planted it in 1960 and it is now an 18-20 foot tree.

**DM:** We still sell that one. Now being done over here as a microprop.

**CLJ:** I know it's nit-picking, but *R. 'Rosamund Millais'* (*R. 'George Hardy' × R. 'Doncaster'*) is spelled Rosamond Millais in the Winifred Walker coloured plate of 3 trusses (*R. 'Hugh Wormald'*, *R. 'Mrs Lindsay Smith'* and *R. 'Rosamund Millais'*) and also listed as Rosamond Millais under the heading "M. Koster and Sons New Rhododendrons" on page 59 of the Second Series. My contention is that somewhere along the line, the rhododendron named for Rosamond Millais got changed to Rosamund Millais. Am I possibly right? It would be a necessary touch to in-



Rhododendrons in the David C. Lam Asian Garden, UBC Botanical Garden. Photo by June West

clude with the write-up and captioning of the Rosamond Millais-Compton's Brow-Loders White photo, when it gets published in the ARS Journal. Do you sell *R. 'Rosamund Millais'* or the white *R. 'Mrs J.G. Millais'* at your nursery? Rosamund is listed with purple spots here, while in the Second Series, they are listed as burnt-umber; the latter much nicer, I think.

**DM:** I had never spotted that one before! In all our family records, she was obviously Rosamond, so it looks like somebody got the registration wrong. (The International Rhododendron Register of 1958 shows her as Rosamund). We do not have stock of Rosamond Millais, and I don't know of any. We do grow Mrs J.G. Millais, and it is still popular in Europe, especially for breeding with its yellow blotch. Hans Hachmann has used it extensively.

Best wishes, David.

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## September Education Feature

### Companion Trees for Rhododendrons, by Douglas Justice

The following is a list of recommended trees for planting with rhododendrons. I observe four basic rules when considering such trees:

1. The tree has to have the same general soil requirements as rhodies; i.e., acid, well-drained soil with reasonable summer moisture availability.
2. The tree must not have overly aggressive roots, so that it outcompetes rhododendrons for moisture or nutrients.
3. The tree has to either fit in with (i.e., grow slowly enough that it doesn't crowd out the rhododendrons it is planted among), or;
4. The tree has to have a narrow crown or widely spaced branches in a spreading crown so that it does not overshadow the rhododendrons.

The list below is not exhaustive (I only brought to the meeting what I could collect in an hour and what I could talk about in the same amount of time) and many of the plants may not be widely available. There are a few themes: most Asian maples are ideal companions, as are stewartias, some of the broadleaved *Sorbus* species (particularly, the Himalayan whitebeams) and styrax. Numbers in parentheses following plant names are Agriculture Canada/USDA Hardiness Zones.

*Acer caudatifolium* (8)

*Acer circinatum* (5)

*Acer davidii* (6)

*Acer japonicum* 'Aconitifolium' (5)

*Acer palmatum* (5)

*Acer shirasawanum* 'Aureum' (6)

*Cornus controversa* (5)

*Davidia involucrata* (6)

*Disanthus cercidifolius* (8)

*Lindera citriodora* (8)

*Magnolia sieboldii* (7)

*Sorbus thibetica* 'John Mitchell' (8)

*Sorbus pseudovilmorinii* (6?)

*Stewartia monodelpha* (6)

*Styrax japonicus* (5)



**er·i·ca·ceous** (ĕr'ĭ'ke[es] **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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