

# Indumentum

## Newsletter of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society

Volume 35, Number 9, June 2004



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

### 2004 Executive

President: Ron Knight

Vice President: Louis Peterson

Past President: Gerry Gibbens

Treasurer: Barbara Sherman

Secretary: Bill Spohn

Membership: Carole Conlin

Newsletter: Douglas & Karen Justice

Program: Joe Ronsley

Directors:

Lothar Mischke (3 years)

Bill Herbst (2 years)

Todd Major (1 year)

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Education: Louis Peterson

Advertising: Tony Clayton

Publicity: Gail Lehman

Library: Jasbir Gill

Refreshments: Mary Dorsey

**This Month's Meeting: Sunday, June 13, 3:00 pm**

**Pot Luck Picnic at the home of Ron Feicht and**

**Derek Hoffman, 6080 Eagleridge Drive, West Vancouver**

### Plants in Bloom – The Cornus Controversies

One of the outstanding trees we saw on our recent walkabout of the Ted and Mary Greig Garden (TMGG) with Alleyne Cook, was *Cornus controversa* (photo below and page 5), native to China and Japan. There are two of these “giant dogwoods,” one in the center of the Pitch & Putt links and one in the lower northeast portion of the garden that Alleyne planted about forty years ago. Among the forty-five or so species of *Cornus*, many of which are fine trees, shrubs and groundcovers, *C. controversa* is reputed to be the tallest, reaching 60 ft. Of course, we have the native Pacific dogwood—our provincial flower—*Cornus nuttallii*, as well as our own locally-produced improvement, *C. 'Eddie's White Wonder'* (*C. nuttallii* × *C. florida*), with larger bracts, hybrid vigour and richer fall colour. In the wild, particularly in the Pacific Northwest, *C. nuttallii* has been measured at over 100 ft.

The formality and gracious stature—a “habit of flat-tiered branching to an elegant pagoda-like extreme, with spaced decks of horizontal foliage” according to Grant & Grant—distinguish *controversa* from the irregularity and picturesqueness of the native *nuttallii* and the more pendantly branched ‘Eddie’s White Wonder’. The large bracts of those dogwoods are absent on *controversa*, but are made up for by masses of tiny four-petal, four-stamen flowers arranged in large, flat umbels. These inflorescences mass to completely cover the branch, as if it was dusted with snow. Most published photographs of *controversa* show it in full flower before the leaves emerge; however, they are much more attractive when the flowers (patches of cream turning to pure white) and new leaves appear together on the tops of the branches.



*Cornus controversa*  
Photo: UBC Botanical Garden

*continued on page 5*

- Sept 16 **Todd Major**, Parks Planner, City of Port Coquitlam; former Director, Park & Tilford Gardens, **'Designing your Garden for Dynamic Canopy Structure'**.
- Oct 21 **Jim Cadwaladr**, Director, Milner Garden, title TBA.
- Nov 18 **Steve Hootman**, Director, Rhododendron Species Foundation, **'Exploring for Plants in Northeast India'**.
- Jan 20 **AGM, Elections, Members' Slides.**
- Feb 17 **Garth Wedemire**, plant expedition to Nepal, title TBA.
- Mar 17 **Hank Helm**, founder, Western North American Rhododendron Species Project **'Western North American Rhododendron Species'**.
- Apr 21 **John Sales**, Chief Gardens Advisor to the British National Trust (retired), **'Woodland Gardens'**.
- May 19 **Walk in the David C. Lam Asian Garden, UBC.**
- June 12 **Pot luck supper, Joe and Joanne Ronsley's house, Lions Bay.**



*Rhododendron 'Bernice Baker'*  
photo by Ken Gibson

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## President's Message

The warm, dry weather in May has caused great confusion in my rhodo patch at Pender Harbour. None of the inmates seems to be able to follow the script concerning bloom timing. As the photo at right (taken on May 16<sup>th</sup>) shows, 'Loderi King George' (white), which opened in April, is almost finished, although in previous years it would have just started to bloom in May. 'English Roseum' (pink, right corner), 'Blue Boy' (purple), and 'Buttermint' (yellow) have been in full bloom for a week, whereas they have usually opened nearer to the end of May. I'm sure that by mid-June even the Royston *auriculatum* crosses will be finished and there will be no one blooming in July. Still, it's been a great rhodo season.

Thank you to everyone who assisted with our annual Sale and Show. A list of volunteers is shown on page 4 and this group will be honoured in a slide presentation at our September VRS meeting. In addition, at that meeting we will be presenting trophies to the winners in 12 categories of our show.

The UBC facilities for our Sale and Show were excellent. We had more room than in past years to accommodate our truss displays, grower sales area, cashiers, and membership table. Thanks to **Douglas Justice** for making all the arrangements with the university.

Unfortunately, UBC is now a long way from the growth areas of Greater Vancouver. As a result, the number of customers was down from last year and sales revenue was about \$4000 less than in 2003. Still, the club's profit was approximately \$2300. Many thanks to **Barb Sherman** for handling all the financial details and organizing our cashier area, and to **Bill Herbst** for coordinating our growers.



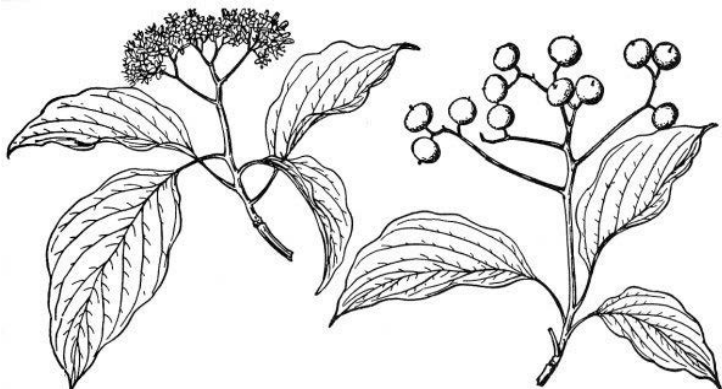
The trusses in our show room looked magnificent, both in the competitive and non-competitive divisions, as did **Roger Low's** bonsai display. Executive members **Bill Spohn** and **Gerry Gibbens**, as the organizers of this year's show, were able to award almost twice as many trophies as compared to 2003.

Behind the scenes, **Barb Sherman** purchased and prepared wonderful trays of food, which were much appreciated by all of our volunteers. **Louis Peterson** and **Lothar Mischke** coordinated a very efficient set-up and clean-up crew. In fact, on both the Saturday and Sunday, all volunteers were able to leave UBC well before 5:00. **Carole Conlin** set up a most attractive membership and raffle area under one of our new canopies, signed up 4 new members, and brought in \$386 in raffle money. **Joe Ronsley** led a group of VRS experts who were available throughout the weekend to answer visitors' questions about rhododendrons. Thanks also to **Todd Major** and **Gail Lehman**, who handled all of our Sale and Show publicity.

In preparation for our 2005 Sale and Show, the executive will be considering new locations in busier areas of Greater Vancouver. They will also be discussing how we might simplify and improve our truss show and judging system and how we can increase profits. If you have suggestions, please contact our Vice-President, **Louis Peterson**.

Finally, I hope you have a very enjoyable summer. I'll look forward to seeing you at our pot luck supper at the home of Ron Feicht and Derrick Hoffman at 3:00 on Sunday June 13<sup>th</sup>.

*Ron Knight*



*Cornus alternifolia*

from the Manual of the Trees of North America,  
by Charles Sprague Sargent,  
illustrations by Charles Edward Faxon and Mary W. Gill

## 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
¼ page	\$25.00	\$67.50	\$160.00
½ page	\$40.00	\$108.00	\$256.00
full page	\$70.00	\$189.00	\$448.00

## THANK YOU TO THE VRS MEMBERS WHO VOLUNTEERED AT OUR SALE AND SHOW

### Membership Table:

Tony & Jacquie Clayton  
Mary Davison  
Norah Hall  
Joanne Ronsley  
Tish Pike  
Lies Ganske  
Carole Conlin

### Judges:

Martie Irwin  
Alleyne Cook  
Bill Herbst  
Clive Justice  
Garth Wedemire  
Vern Finley

### Show Organization:

Bill Spohn  
Vern Finley  
Karen Shuster  
John Priestman  
Kathleen Share

### Judges' Assistants

Carla Knight  
John Priestman  
Kathleen Share  
Sean Rafferty  
D'Arcy Bartlett

### Food Purchase and Preparation:

Barb Sherman  
Carla Knight  
Mary Dorsey  
Roger Low  
Diane Kehoe  
John Priestman  
Vern Finley

### Walking Advisors:

Frank Dorsey  
Gerry Gibbens  
Bill Herbst  
Douglas Justice  
Todd Major  
Glen Patterson

Joe Ronsley  
Bill Spohn

### Cashiers:

Chris Chow  
Margaret Coe  
Iain Forsyth  
Marilyn Hooper  
Shirley & Fred Irvine  
Norm Moysa  
Gerry Nicolodi  
Katherine Ruffen  
Suzanne Spohn  
Elaine Stevens  
Barb Sherman

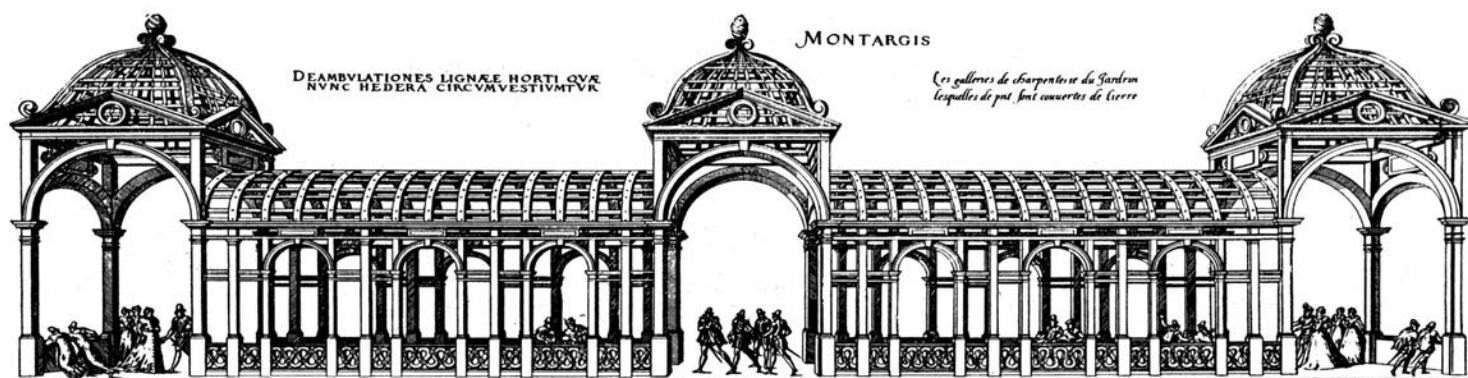
### Growers:

Les Clay  
Andy Chan  
Sue Klapwijk  
Gordon & Vern Finley  
Harold Fearing  
Lilli-Ann & Ed  
Hemmingner

Diane Kehoe  
Trevor Badminton  
Giff & Jeanie Robb  
David Shantz

### Set-up and Clean-up

Jack Toovey  
Doug French  
Tony Cox  
Pam Whitehead  
Jennifer McKee  
Meg Brown  
Sean Rafferty  
Vern Finley  
Todd Major  
David Leith  
Sergio & Geraldine  
Nicolodi  
Ian Forsyth  
Lothar & Cindy Mischke  
Karen Shuster  
Louis Peterson  
Ron Knight

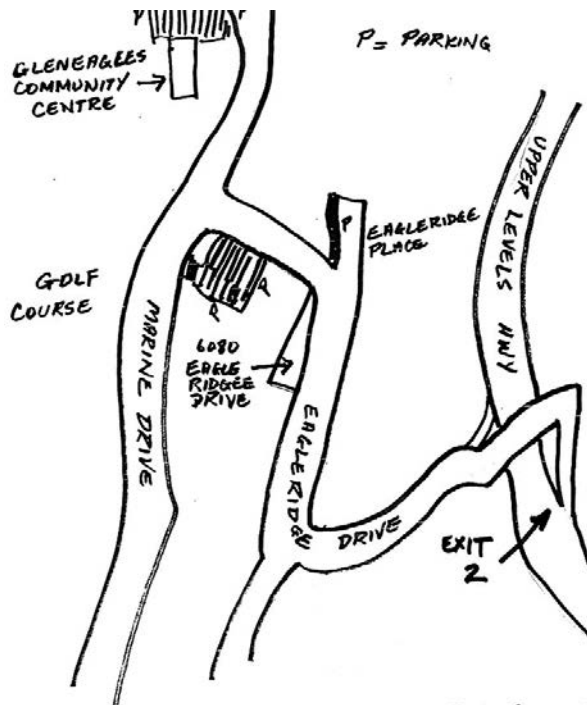




## Potluck Picnic and Tour, June 13, 3:00

**Ron Feicht & Derrick Hoffman Garden**  
**6080 Eagleridge Drive, West Vancouver**

**Please bring deck chairs - Drop off before parking**



*Cornus controversa*  
Photo: UBC Botanical Garden

### Cornus Controversies, from page 1

There are several no-bract *Cornus* used ornamentally besides *C. controversa*: *Cornus alternifolia* is a small American tree and *C. macrophylla* is a medium-height shrubby Asian tree. Shrubs include the native *C. stolonifera*, with yellow, red or purple stems; European *alba*, with red stems and yellow- and white-variegated foliage forms; and Asian *C. bretschneiderii*, with downy stems.

But bract vs. no-bract is not where the botanical confusion lies. It is with the leaves, which are arranged oppositely on the branches in all the dogwoods, except for *C. alternifolia* and *C. controversa*. The former, the taxonomists did get right in name, but the latter they left open to further discussion. We who garden, grow, specify and admire trees should not be concerned, however. There is no confusion or controversy about the giant dogwood, for here in our coastal gardens and mild cloudy climate it does well, and contributes and enriches both diversity and beauty over two of our long liveable seasons: cool spring and warm autumn.

**Clive Justice**

### Bibliography:

Bailey L.H., *Hortus Third*, MacMillan, New York, 1976.

Grant, John A., and Carol L., *Trees and Shrubs for Coastal British Columbia Gardens*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Vancouver Toronto, 1990.

Johnson, Hugh *The International Book of Trees*, Simon and Shuster, New York, 1973.

Poor, Janet, ed., *Plants that Merit Attention, Trees*, Vol I, Timber Press, Portland, 1984.

Sargent, Charles Sprague, *The Manual of Trees of North America*, Dover Publications, New York, 1949.

Sudworth, George B., *Forest Trees of the Pacific Slope*, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 1908.

### News and Notes

VRS member **Mary Comber Miles** will have an exhibit of her paintings, entitled 'Plants of the Southern Hemisphere', at the Tofino Botanical Garden, running throughout the summer. It is an educational exhibit and might be of interest to VRS members who find themselves in Tofino.

She will also have an exhibit of her paintings at the Harrison Gallery, 2932 Granville Street, Vancouver. The opening of this exhibit will be Thursday, June 10<sup>th</sup>, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. All VRS members are welcome.

**Alleyne Cook**, whose tour of the Ted and Mary Greig Rhododendron Collection at the May meeting was, by all accounts, a great success, made note of a large *Rhododendron auriculatum* there. He points out that the plant once had a crop of 850 trusses, or more than 8000 individual flowers. His estimate of about 200 seeds per capsule (doing the math, as it were) yields about 1,600,000 seeds. Alleyne estimates all of two seedlings resulted from this bounty.

**Joe Ronsley** is Chairman of the Nominating Committee, and will be happy to receive suggestions for members of the Executive Committee from VRS members over the summer.

### Members' Questions

*A VRS member asks "What is the effect of using shredded paper as a mulch or soil conditioner? Will it increase or decrease the pH of the soil? Is it a good idea to use it on rhodos or azaleas?"*

Answer: There should be little or no pH change from using shredded paper as a mulch or amendment; however, some non-vegetable-based inks (such as those used in glossy magazines) may not break down adequately. Otherwise, there shouldn't be any problem using shredded paper for rhododendrons and azaleas. Having said that, I think shredded leaves are probably superior, both for use as a mulch or a soil conditioner.

*"Some of my potted azaleas have developed an iron deficiency. I treated them with sulphur, ammonium sulphate and iron sulphate. Some showed a slight recovery following treatment, but then the plants died from root rot."*



*Embotrium coccineum*  
photo by Todd Major

Answer: Iron deficiency is common in azaleas, but its symptoms are sometimes confused with magnesium deficiency or a lack of nitrogen. All of these problems are common in potted plants, especially when using soil-less media, such as commercial "planter mix." Iron deficiency is usually seen as interveinal chlorosis in the newest leaves. A symptom of magnesium deficiency is interveinal chlorosis in the oldest leaves (magnesium is a mobile element and can be translocated to the growing tips from established tissues). Nitrogen deficiency is typically exhibited by an overall yellowing of leaves, with a reduction in growth rate and leaf size. Like magnesium, nitrogen is a mobile element, so its absence is usually seen in the oldest leaves first. More often than not, it is usually inadequate nitrogen that is causing the symptoms.

For such problems, repotting into good soil (e.g., equal parts garden soil, chopped leaves and peat moss) is the best solution, not the application of fertilizers. Attempts to correct an imbalance with more fertilizer often worsens the situation (all of the fertilizers you used are excellent at acidifying the soil), and there's a good chance that excess fertilizer is the cause of your root damage, as well.

**Douglas Justice**

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