

Indumentum

Newsletter of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society

February Meeting:

Thursday, February 17, 7:30 p.m., Floral Hall at VanDusen Botanical Garden

Program:

Jim and Margaret Cadwaladr

A Social History Of The Milner Garden And Woodland

Plant Sales:

Margaret Charlton



Vancouver Chapter

2005 Executive

President: Louis Peterson

Vice President: Lothar Mischke

Past President: Ron Knight

Treasurer: Barbara Sherman

Secretary: Bill Spohn

Membership: Carole Conlin

Newsletter: Todd & Shannon Major

Program: Louis Peterson & Carole Conlin

Directors:

Gerard Picher - 3 years

John Priestman - 2 years

Bill Herbst - 1 year

Education: Louis Peterson

Advertising: Tony Clayton

Publicity: Gail Lehman

Library: Jasbir Gill

Refreshments: Jacquie Clayton

Mary Dorsey

A Social History Of The Milner Garden And Woodland

Our speakers for February are a husband-and-wife team, Jim and Margaret Cadwaladr. Jim has been the Executive Director of the Veronica Milner Garden and Woodland in Qualicum Beach on Vancouver Island since 1996, Margaret is the author of *In Veronica's Garden*, published in 2002, 'a social history' of the garden. The garden itself has been described as 'a stunningly beautiful garden nestled into the Canadian West Coast Douglas-fir forest', a description probably not at all inaccurate.

But aside from Jim and Margaret, mention of the garden evokes an obvious third person, though one who will not be with us this February, the creator of this beautiful garden herself, Veronica Milner. Close friends of mine, who were also close friends of Veronica, refer to her mostly with praise and affection. Alas, they are almost the only ones I have heard who do. Spoken of as a 'larger than life personality' on the cover flap of Margaret's book, the 'creative force behind the garden', it is pointed out, 'was related to Winston Churchill and Diana, Princess of Wales'. Prince Charles and the late Diana came for lunch. Indeed, when Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip visited this part of Canada they stayed in Veronica's house (Veronica had to move out, however, to make way for her guests). Continued on page 2

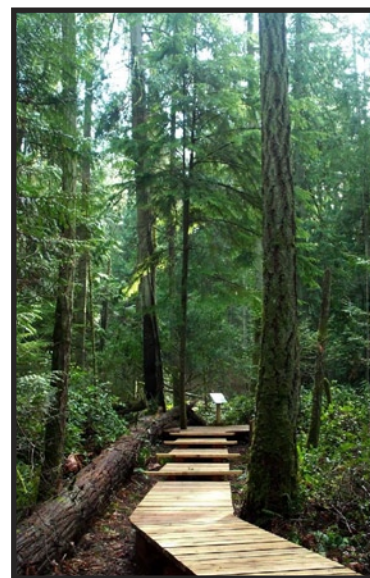


Photo of East Creek valley (above),
By Adrian Dorst, at www.wildernesscommittee.org

Milner Gardens continued

Born into English aristocracy herself, Veronica never forgot her lofty origins. Nor did she evidently allow others to forget them. Taxi drivers, it is said, were not pleased when she considered the honour of driving her to be enough compensation for them. On occasion she assumed the title 'Lady', though she was officially entitled only to 'Madame', a title whose ambiguity did not please her. She was not appreciated by members of the International Dendrology Society on tours because of her self-importance and lack of consideration for others, and her family in England found her impossible, especially in later years. Socially she was extremely selective in choosing the people with whom she would associate, the selection usually being determined on the basis of bloodline rather than personal qualities. Exceptions were made occasionally for people knowledgeable about plants, people to whom she could be most gracious. Ted and Mary Grieg supplied her with rhododendrons as new varieties arrived from England, probably never charging her for them, but the time came when she sent them on a paid vacation to Hawaii. Newly married as a young woman, Veronica moved to Glin Castle in Ireland, and, upon being widowed after an unhappy marriage, married a wealthy Canadian businessman to whom the house and property at Qualicum Beach belonged.



Whatever might be said of Veronica herself, she did turn part of her second husband's property into an extraordinarily beautiful garden, preserving the rest of the woodland in its natural state, and by willing it to Malaspina College in 1996, before she died in 1998, she preserved it for the future, for all to enjoy.

Continued on page 3

Milner Garden continued

Veronica is certainly the central figure in the social history of the garden, and it is on this aspect that Margaret will speak. The garden, having slipped somewhat in the later years of Veronica's life, has



been renovated and improved extensively over the last few years under Jim Cadwaladr's direction, and this will be the focus of Jim's part. The garden itself contains several special collections, especially of woody plants, but most especially of rhododendrons. Aside from the attraction of the beautiful house and gardens, the Milner Garden provides an effective

horticultural, educational and research base. The Cadwaladr team should be particularly informative and entertaining, in their VRS lecture the evening of February 17th, 'A Social History of the Milner Garden and Woodland'.

Joe Ronsley

Garden Tours 2005

For some time now it has been brought to my attention that the Garden Tour programme should perhaps be turned into a fund raising venue. The VRS although stable from a financial point of view, might at some point wish to increase its contribution to the community in the form of grants and funding aimed at preserving our horticultural heritage. As the costs of running the VRS gradually increase over the years, some thought must be given to maintaining our revenue sources, keeping in mind the VRS mission. The current Garden Tour programme is quite a congenial affair, informal and a great way for members to share their gardens. Turning the venue into a fund raiser will of course require a much different approach, from an organizational point of view. I encourage members to become part of the discussion and help develop a thriving garden tour programme. If you have any comments, views or opinions on the issue please contact me. If you would like to participate in the Garden Tour programme this year, either by offering your garden or nursery for the tour or as a volunteer, your contribution would be greatly appreciated.

Lothar Mischke



*The entrance to the Concession Garden,
Courtesy of Milner Gardens*



*The Nursery Lath House,
Courtesy of Milner Gardens.*



*Milner Gardens view of Georgia Strait
Visit their site at www.milnergardens.org*

President's Notes, February 2005



As your new President, elected at the January 20, 2005 meeting, and despite a serious lack of knowledge about the Rhododendron focus of our Society, I will work to maintain the high standards of the VRS that have been established by previous holders of the Office. I am most fortunate and grateful for offers of support from current and retiring members of the Executive.

Ron Knight, our past President, cultivated a number of initiatives that came to fruition, and in several ways set the stage for future thinking. His tutelage will be most valuable to me, and I am lucky he is "only an e-mail away". Joe Ronsley has put the all-important Speaker component of our monthly meetings on a sound footing for some time ahead, and has kindly offered to continue his networking skills (in the background) to ensure a smooth transition into the new programs.

I'm sure that Todd and Shannon Major will bring a new interest to the *Indumentum* and continue the level of excellence that Douglas and Karen Justice have achieved for our newsletter. We owe a great deal to our Webmaster, Bill Spohn, for the time and effort that he has already devoted to the creation of our well-structured VRS website. I will rely on his expertise for the maintenance of the superb quality of this facility.

I am most grateful to Barbara Sherman and Carole Conlin, our skilled Treasurer and Membership Chair respectively, for agreeing to remain in their offices for a further term on the executive. Their skills, knowledge and previous experience are vital components that are essential to the future well-being of our Society.

I am also most grateful to Jackie Clayton and Mary Dorsey, as organizers of refreshments at our meetings, and certainly hope that they will be able to continue. We all need to do our bit from time to time to bring "goodies" to the table.

The Growers that bring saleable plants to our meetings are invaluable to the VRS. I hope they will continue to do so, and if necessary let the executive know of difficulties that need to be ironed out. Let's support them too!

The Annual VRS Show and Sale is an important fund-raising and public educational event (a requirement of our Constitution). Planning of "a new look" has been underway for some time, under the knowledgeable and thoughtful guidance of Bill Herbst and Douglas Justice. The 2005 event will take place on Saturday, April 23rd, at the Port Coquitlam Recreation Centre. Watch for details elsewhere.

Details of events for the year will be published in the *Indumenta*, but in the meantime please note:

1. Lothar Mischke is developing a Garden Tour program.
2. The BC Home and Garden Show is underway during February at BC Place go to www.wcities.com.
3. The Registration Forms for the ARS Convention in Victoria on April 27 – May 1 2005, are now available see the ARS Journal. For more information visit www.rhododendron.org or the VRS website at www.rhodocitymax.com.
4. Support the Mini-Show planned for our March meeting.
5. Support the Loonie Table and the Ways & Means Committee.
6. Support the Raffle Table.
7. Note that Firefly Books has taken over Whitecap Books, but is likely to provide us with the same 50% discounts, see their catalogue at www.fireflybooks.com

Fellow VRS Members, this is your Society! I am sure that I speak for all of your Executive when I say that we wish to get to know all of you, to hear suggestions and discuss your ideas. Member contributions add vitality to our events and programming, and keep our Society educational, entertaining, lively, valuable and socially useful for everyone. Drop us a line, or catch us at our meetings!

Louis. K. Peterson.



NEWS AND NOTES

2005 Show and Sale Changes



This year's show and sale will be marked with several changes from previous years. In review of past show and sales, several issues were noted that the executive felt could be improved upon. Most notably, this year's show and sale will take place on Saturday only as it was felt that the income earned on the Sunday was not worth the time involved for both the growers and volunteers.

We are also trying something different with the venue this year. This year we will be holding the event at the Port Coquitlam Recreation Complex. With the amount of new development in the Tri-Cities, we wanted to take advantage of the enthusiastic new gardeners in the area.

There will also be changes to the show classification system. The categories are being streamlined for ease of use by both the show officials and members who wish to enter their trusses. More details on these changes are discussed on page 6.

Another change to the program is that the judging will commence at 10:00 am, the same time as the sale opens to the public. We wanted to give the public the opportunity to listen to some of our astute judges during the judging process and we hope that this may serve as an educational experience. By starting the judging at 10:00, we alleviate the pressure on the judges to finish by public opening time and hopefully make for a more relaxed judging session. This also allows more time for members to set up their trusses on the Saturday morning instead of only on the Friday evening.

The show and sale will take place on Saturday, April 23rd at the Poco Recreation Complex at the corner of Kingsway and Wilson Avenue, Port Coquitlam and will be open to the public from 10:00 am to 4:00 p.m.

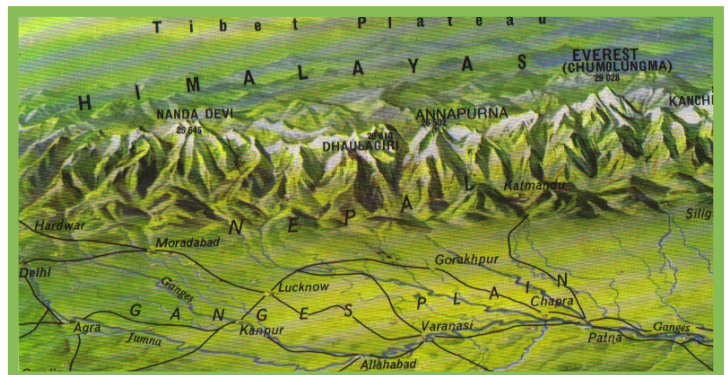
Bill Herbst

Volunteers Needed

If you attended the meeting on the 20th of January at the Floral Hall at VanDusen Botanical Garden consider yourself fortunate indeed. After getting the official business of electing the new executive board out of the way and adopting the annual budget, members were treated to a slide show featuring both local BC gardens and wonderful gardens as far away as China and Scotland. Of special educational interest was Alleyne Cook's slides showing the digging up and moving of a substantial rhododendron collection on Vancouver Island including some older plants of considerable size.

After this visual feast, our new president, Louis Peterson, along with other members of the executive, made announcements concerning this year's Show and Sale at the Port Coquitlam Recreation Centre on April 23rd. Several changes will be made at the Show this year. The most important change in effect this year, will be the Show and Sale opening for one day only, which brings me to the point of this article. As the Show and Sale is our major fundraiser at this time, to maintain the high standards for which it is known, it is vitally important to double the effort into making this year's event a success. Please consider volunteering your time for this great cause and make your membership truly worthwhile.

Lothar Mischke



New Show Classification System

By Bill Herbst and Douglas Justice

The proposed new classification:

- 3 categories for **Species**:
 - A. Azalea and miscellaneous,
 - B. Elepidote
 - C. Lepidote
- 4 categories for **Hybrids**:
 - A. Azalea
 - B. Elepidote
 - C. Lepidote
 - D. Blotch
- 6 categories for **Potted plants**:
 - A. Azalea,
 - B. Elepidote,
 - C. Lepidote,
 - D. Greenhouse,
 - E. Bonsai,
 - F. Foliage

The simplification results from flexible categories within each of these major divisions. For example, there are 24 subsections in *Rhododendron* subgenus *Hymenanthus* section *Ponticum* (i.e., elepidote rhodies). At any given show, some subsections will be represented and some will not, depending on weather, area, grower expertise, etc. Where there are more than 5 taxa in a subsection to be exhibited, that subsection will be represented by a separate category, whereas, if fewer than 5 taxa are represented, those trusses will be exhibited in the general Elepidote category. Subsection cards will be made up with the names of included taxa on the reverse. We estimate that no more than approximately a dozen each elepidote and lepidote subsections will be needed to be represented at any show.

Similarly, in category A. Azalea and Miscellaneous, where more than 5 taxa of a particular subgenus or section are exhibited, the appropriate rank of those taxa will be identified. For example, if there are two sprays of *Rhododendron schlippenbachii* (Subgenus Pentanthera, Section Sciadorhodion) and three of *R. occidentale* (Subgenus Pentanthera, Section Pentanthera), the category would be: A. Azalea and Miscellaneous: *Rhododendron* Section *Pentanthera*. However, if there were only two sprays of *R. schlippenbachii* and one of *R. occidentale* exhibited (and no other Section *Pentanthera* exhibits, they would be placed in the general Azalea and Miscellaneous (i.e., no section identified). To keep it simple, it is probably sensible to use categories representing only Section and higher ranks for azaleas.

Continued

Hybrid categories are more self-evident. In each of the 4 main categories, red, pink, white, purple, yellow and orange exhibits will be arranged and judged separately. In the Blotch category, colour refers to the background colour.

The alphabetical list of cultivated rhododendrons in the RHS *Rhododendron Handbook* (1998) will serve as the guide to classification. The advantage of this system is that it is based upon a single, universally accepted biologically-based classification system. As long as plants are correctly identified, they will be easily located on the show bench, using the handbook. Unidentified plants can be exhibited (not judged) in the general categories.

Our Library

Check us out! We not only have many books on Rhododendrons and Azaleas but a wide range of books covering other categories such as Alpines, Bonsai, Rhododendron Companion Plants, Propagation, Trees & Shrubs, Succulents, and more! Talk to Jasbir Gill, our Librarian and she will help you find the right book for your needs.



Where's the Library Book?

New incentive this year, VRS members who have overdue library books automatically qualify for volunteer status at the annual Sale and Show, come join the fun, soon you'll have no choice.

Mini Truss Show for February

We are hoping to start noncompetitive truss shows for the general meetings in February and March. All members who grow some of the earlier flowering species are welcome to bring in a few trusses for the general meetings. Please bring your own vase or container and label your truss so they can be displayed for everyone to enjoy.

Louis Peterson

NEWS AND NOTES

Membership

Welcome back returning members for 2005! Enjoy the benefits of membership with your 2005 'blue' membership card. Contact me if haven't received your card. A warm welcome to Guests & New members. Guests are always welcome at our meetings to enjoy our special events and speakers. Membership in the VRS has many advantages, including discounts at local nurseries, special plant sales at meetings and education through informal conversation with knowledgeable members on rhododendrons, azaleas and companion plants. We hope you will join us soon.

If you would like to learn more about us, please visit us at www.rhodo.citymax.com or visit our parent organization the American Rhododendron Society (ARS) website at www.rhododendron.org

If you require any membership information please contact me, Carole Conlin, VRS Membership Chair, PO Box 91, Lions Bay, BC V0N 2E0
Telephone : 604-921-7260
Email: conlin@sfu.ca

Carole Conlin

History of the VRS Truss Classification System

The existing VRS truss classification system originated from the ramblings of a mad English botanist who reportedly lived in a cave deep in the heart of Asia. No fossil record exists of this botanist and it is assumed the classification system was delivered to England for approval by the Crown around the 16th century. Long time members of the VRS will remember the stories told to them as children of how the classification system was sent across the Atlantic with Christopher Columbus so it could be used by the Rhododendron enthusiasts of the day.

In an effort to streamline the setup and judging process for the annual VRS Show, Douglas Justice and Bill Herbst have developed a new simplified classification system that will be implemented this year. As with all changes, some transitional growing pains are expected. The system may seem too simple to some observers however, the new system is easier to implement, understand and suits the needs of our Show. All suggestions to improve the proposed system are appreciated and can be e-mailed to the *Indumentum* Editors.



Gainsborough's The Forest, Painted in 1748

VRS Membership rates are:

ARS/VRS membership - \$50 Canadian; includes 4 ARS journals a year and member voting privileges at the ARS.
VRS membership - \$25 Canadian; does not include ARS journals (which can be borrowed from the VRS library).
Associate membership - \$10 Cdn or US dollars, must be member of another Chapter.





Besides a healthy plant, what else should I look for when purchasing a rhododendron? At least ninety percent of the people who buy rhododendrons from me make their purchasing decisions solely on the basis of truss colour.

A few of the more savvy gardeners come armed with Greer's Guidebook and ask for rhododendrons that have very high flower ratings. Hardly anyone (except veteran VRS members) seems to consider foliage to be a major consideration.

But think about it, once the blooms fade, rhododendrons become foliage plants for the next eleven months of the year. Therefore, why not try to purchase rhododendrons that have two things going for them: beautiful flowers and something special about their foliage? My photos to the right show examples of rhododendrons with leaves that add interest to the garden either because of their unusual new growth such as R. Golfer (photo below right) or the indumentum of R. Sir Charles Lemon (photo above right) and R. Ginny Gee (photo below).

Ron Knight



HELP **GROW** THE **INDUMENTUM**

Members with questions about the Indumentum or suggestions to improve our newsletter, can contact Todd or Shannon Major, Indumentum Editors, at stmajor@shaw.ca. We welcome all comments, questions and submitted articles. Please submit in Microsoft Word, do not lock in any protection or formatting, this makes editing more difficult if not impossible in some cases. We are sensitive to the copyrights of other writers, editors and photographers, therefore, we make every effort to use material with the permission of the originating author or photographer. The single greatest obstacle we face as Editors, is the lack of original or non-copyrighted material to use in the newsletter. We are endeavouring to create and collect this material, but it will take awhile. Members can help us to overcome this obstacle by submitting their own original and non-copyrighted photographs, graphics and line drawings so we may use them to improve the presentation of the newsletter. If you wish to submit a photograph, graphic or line drawing, the larger the file size, the better the resolution on screen and in print. Small picture and graphic files do not reproduce well. We hope members will enjoy and help grow the Indumentum to the fullest potential.

Todd and Shannon Major



Companions: *fellowship, qualified to be agreeable in company.*

Welcome to a monthly feature in the Indumentum called "Companions". I hope this feature will burst with submitted articles from all of our membership sharing their knowledge and insight describing favourite plants that are deemed suitable companions for rhododendrons.

The Tree of Life **By Todd Major**

Thousands of years ago, long before King Solomon built his Temple from the Cedars of Lebanon, the Aboriginal people who lived in our water soaked temperate rain forests here in Pacific North America, used tall majestic Cedars as a building block of their society and spiritual center of their culture. The Cedar tree was so important to the Aboriginal people they called Cedar the "tree of life". Scientists call it *Thuja plicata*,



the Nuu-chah-nulth call it Humis, the Haida name is Tsu and it is commonly known as the Western Red Cedar, Pacific Red Cedar and old timers call it the Shinglewood tree. Regardless of the name, Cedars are quiet giants standing for thousands of years providing shelter to animals and insects while spirituality to people.



Giants in the Mist

Over the millennia, west coast people have used the wood of western Red Cedar to build their societies as we still do today. Canoes were carved from Cedars by selecting the ideal specimen from the lush forest, falling the tree and hollowing it out to create water transportation and at the same time creating an art form.

Archaeologists have found evidence that Cedar canoes had been carved as large as fifty feet in length and six feet in width. Aboriginal use of the Cedar tree was expansive from baskets, clothing, dishes, arrows and spears to fish clubs, masks, paddles, cradles and even coffins.

Use of the Cedar tree was not limited to utilitarian needs. Aboriginals have created sculptures of myth, reverence and true artistic beauty in their totem poles. Some totem poles have stood as quiet sentinels in the forests for hundreds of years telling the stories of culture, faith and ancestry. The power of Red Cedar was said to be so strong a person could receive strength by standing with his or her back to the tree.



*Elaho Valley,
Old Growth Cedar*