



Newsletter of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society

April General Meeting:

Thursday, April 21, 7:30 p.m., Floral Hall at VanDusen Botanical Garden

Program: John Sales, Woodland Gardens

Plant Sales: Sue Klapwijk, Les Clay



Vancouver Chapter

2005 Executive

President: Louis Peterson

Vice President: Lothar Mischke

Past President: Ron Knight

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Secretary: Bill Spohn

Membership: Carole Conlin

Newsletter: Todd & Shannon Major

Program: Louis Peterson & Carole Conlin

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VRS website: www.rhodo.citymax.com

Education: Louis Peterson

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Mary Dorsey

John Sales, Former Garden Advisor To the United Kingdom's National Trust

Having been trained at Kew, and having begun his career with twelve years as a 'lecturer in amenity and landscape horticulture at Writtle College, Essex', in the U.K., our speaker for the evening of April 21st, John Sales, was in 1971 appointed Gardens Advisor to the National Trust. Two years later he was promoted to Chief Gardens Advisor, succeeding Graham Stuart Thomas in the position. Clearly his horticultural qualifications are considerable. John remained Chief Gardens Advisor to the National Trust for twenty-five years, during which time 'he was responsible for advice and guidance in almost 200 historic properties, gardens and landscape parks, coastlines and countrysides in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

'As well as the vitally important continuing advisory work, the gardens advisory team had key roles in restoring many of the Trust's gardens, training gardeners and conserving scarce plants. Over 27 years with the Trust, John Sales pioneered integrated historic researches and surveys of important gardens, co-authored the first-ever, long-term conservation and management plan (of Stourhead, 1978, photo below) and helped develop the technique of formulating these plans for all gardens. He played an important part latterly in developing the concept of establishing statements of significance for all National Trust properties to endeavour to capture and retain the special qualities and spirit of the place.'



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

See "John Sales" on Page 2

John Sales

He retired from his position with the National Trust in 1998. Since then he has acted 'as examiner and external assessor for diploma courses in amenity horticulture for colleges and the Royal Horticultural Society and served on the RHS Examinations Board', as part-time gardens consultant, lecturer, author and Royal Horticulture Society judge for gardens at the Chelsea and Hampton Court shows. (He sent this information to me in haste, as he was rushing off to judge the Chelsea show. I wonder if he would be up to the standards of our judges at the VRS show!) He is undoubtedly kept busy in his retirement, in that he also has a large garden of his own near Cirencester.

John has written numerous articles, published in many journals. His recent book, written with co-author Margaret Willes, and containing many beautiful photographs, is entitled *A Year in the Garden: In England, Wales, and Northern Ireland*. Before that he wrote a book entitled *West Country Gardens*, and he is co-author of two other books: *Rooted in History* and *Recollections of Great Gardeners*. 'He was awarded the Victoria Medal of Honour, the highest award of the Royal Horticultural Society', and the 'International Castles Institute Medal of Honour'.



Charlecote Park

Having an extensive familiarity with probably all of the most important gardens in the U.K., both within the auspices of the National Trust and otherwise, John's



Colby Woodland Garden

lecture to the VRS will be on Woodland Gardens specifically. The lecture will naturally focus primarily on the woodland gardens in the National Trust, but will not be confined to them. The best and most illustrative of woodland gardens throughout Britain will be included, whatever their ownership. Since rhododendrons are especially appropriate in the woodland, the lecture by this extraordinary horticulturist should be one to which we can all look forward with enthusiasm. This is his first visit to the Pacific Northwest.

By Joe Ronsley

A Brief History of the United Kingdom's National Trust

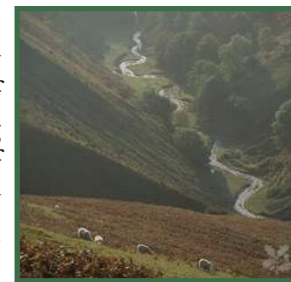
The National Trust was founded in 1895 by three Victorian philanthropists Miss Octavia Hill, Sir Robert Hunter and Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley. Concerned about the impact of uncontrolled development and industrialisation, they set up the Trust to act as a guardian for the nation in the acquisition and protection of threatened coastline, countryside and buildings.



Felbrigg Hall, Norfolk

More than a century later, the Trust now cares for over 248,000 hectares (612,000 acres) of beautiful countryside in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, plus almost 600 miles of coastline and more than 200 buildings and gardens of outstanding interest and importance. Most of these properties are held in perpetuity and so their future protection is secure. The vast majority of their properties are open to visitors and the Trust is constantly looking at ways to improve public access and on-site facilities.

The Trust is a registered charity and completely independent of Government, therefore relying heavily on the generosity of subscribing members (now numbering over 3 million) and other supporters.



Long Mynd, Shophire

How to Prepare a Truss or Plant for Entry in the VRS Show & Sale

Select the species you wish to show, don't be embarrassed, something is better than nothing. Choose what is typical of the flowers for the rhododendron you select. A truss from the top of the plant presents better than a truss from the side of a plant. The cut stem should be at least 3" long. Choose flowers that are just opening, they present better than flowers that are finishing. Water spots on petals are not desirable but sometimes they are unavoidable. Leaves are important, the leaf rosette should be symmetrical and in good condition. Choose a truss large enough to make an impression. A few unopened florets are okay. No flowers on your plant, foliage plants are a category!

See "Preparing a Truss" on page 4

Quick Facts About The National Trust (U.K.)

- The National Trust is the world's leading conservation charity concerned about the long term future of the garden heritage in the United Kingdom.
- The National Trust looks after the largest and most important collection of historic gardens and cultivated plants in the world.
- Over 200 Trust gardens and landscape parks are open to the public throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- National Trust gardens and parks cover an area of over 36,000 acres (over 14,560 hectares) - added together this is bigger than the island of Jersey.
- Currently, seven out of the top 10 visited National Trust properties are gardens or properties with gardens or landscape parks.



Bodnant Garden

- The National Trust employs over 450 skilled gardeners and over 2000 garden volunteers.
- The Trust's gardeners propagate over 370,000 plants every year.
- Over £10 million is spent every year maintaining and caring for Trust gardens.
- National Trust gardens encompass over 400 years of history.

The Changing National Trust

The twentieth century saw the National Trust grow from a tiny organisation with a visionary idea into one of the U.K.'s proudest achievements. Now, with over 300 historic properties and gardens, almost 600 miles of coastline and nearly a quarter of a million hectares of countryside in ownership. The Trust protects some of the U.K.'s most important collections, mansion houses, vernacular buildings, coast and countryside for everyone to treasure and enjoy. In addition they have nearly 40,000 volunteers and over 2.8 million members supporting their work across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.



Giant's Causeway, County Antrim

Thanks not least to that tremendous support, the core purpose, to protect and care for places of historic interest and/or natural beauty for the benefit of the nation, is highly valued by the nation and as important as ever. But Trust's internal structure, designed for a much smaller organisation, has become out of date. In their own words, "We have become too bureaucratic, and we need to be in closer touch with our volunteers, members, supporters and the communities in and around our properties. We need to build on our many successes and strengthen our ability to protect the many special places in our care. That is why a major organisational review was initiated in 2000, and why we are now proposing changes to the organisation."

See "**Aims of the Changes**" on page 4



Glendurgan Garden



Tyntesfield, Somerset



Sissinghurst Castle

The aims of the changes to the Trust are to:

- Strengthen the Trust's ability to protect and care for historic properties and countryside.
- Provide an even better service to volunteers, members, supporters, visitors, tenants, local communities, indeed, all those who care about the Trust.
- Strengthen the internal organisation and improve decision-making.
- Provide more opportunities and resources for staff development.
- Work more closely with people and organisations outside the Trust who share their aims.
- Share and promote their experience and ideas more widely.
- Ensure better representation of their properties at the heart of the Trust's decision-making.
- Improve the way they provide skills and advice to their property managers.

The National Trust has produced a number of position statements, explaining their views on selected issues of particular importance to the Trust. These position papers cover the following topics:

Blue Skies Report, Genetically Modified Crops, Countryside Education, Farming Forward, Field Sports, Forest and Woodlands, Historic Environment, Peat, Regional Governance, Renewable Energy, Soil, Sustainable Tourism, Telecommunications, Time to Act on the Curry Report, Valuing our Environment; Northern Ireland, and Working in Urban Areas.

For more information on the National Trust visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk . All photos and text from the National Trust website.



Cotswold Escarpment, Beacon, Gloucestershire

Preparing a Truss for the VRS Show and Sale

To prepare your truss cut your selection early in the day, crush the stem and place in water immediately. Pick a container to transport your truss to the show. Water additives may provide some benefit. Use sprite, sugar or plant food. To tidy your truss for the show, you can remove bracts, previous year's seed heads, spent florets and remove badly damaged leaves (within reason). Leaf shining is not allowed. One rosette of leaves should remain when you are finished preparing.

If you are showing a plant with no flowers, prepare your plant as follows: tidy the plant the same as you would a truss. Clean the outside of the pot and surface of the soil, remove dead twigs. A plastic pot is perfectly acceptable, there are no points for a fancy container.

When preparing to enter your truss or plant at the show it must be properly identified. If you need help ask a knowledgeable club member. Choose the appropriate category and fill out the show card, ask for help if you are unsure.

By Karen Shuster

we make **rhododendrons** as easy as...

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Choose from a broad selection of rhododendrons & azaleas.

2 EXPERT ADVICE
Our team of local garden experts help to make it easy.

3 FREE FERTILIZER
Free 2kg box of GardenWorks Rhodo Food with the purchase of any rhododendron \$19.99 & up.

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SOCIETY MEMBERS RECEIVE A 10% DISCOUNT WITH MEMBERSHIP CARD.
QUESTIONS? PHONE THE GARDEN LINE: 299-0621 OR CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE: www.gardenworks.ca
VANCOUVER • 8697 GRANVILLE ST BURNABY • 6250 LOUGHEED HWY MISSION • 32270 LOUGHEED HWY.
OCEAN PARK • 2124 128TH STREET NORTH VAN • 3147 WOODBINE DR (EDGEMONT VILLAGE) & MARINE DR AT BEWICKE

GARDEN TOURS 2005

Here is a synopsis of the gardens that will open for your touring pleasure this spring. I hope you, the membership, will take every advantage of the opportunities made available by gardeners and organizations dedicated to the advancement of knowledge not only of Rhododendrons but of gardens and the Art of the Garden itself. The gardens are open during the times indicated but are best viewed with the guidance of the owner. If you are unable to view a VRS garden on a particular day, I may be able to make arrangements for an alternate date. Please see the May issue of the *Indumentum* or our web site: www.rhodo.citymax.com for any revisions or changes in the schedule. If you require more information please do not hesitate to e-mail me at: cindymischke@aol.com. Also refer to our District 1 web site: www.rhodos.ca for links to other chapters and to find scheduled events and tours.

Have a great spring and enjoy your outings!

Lothar Mischke

APRIL 9, 1 PM - 3 PM

UBC Botanical Garden Early Tour:

A tour guided by Doug Justice to savour the early bloomers. Meet at Garden entrance.

APRIL 27 - MAY 1

Victoria's Silver Salute 60th Annual ARS Convention
Over 20 beautiful and spectacular gardens to choose from in the Victoria area along with a dozen speakers, plant sales and much more. Not to be missed! Victoria Conference Centre, 720 Douglas Street, Victoria For more information visit www.rhodos.ca then go to Victoria Chapter link.

MAY 8, 10 AM - 4 PM

The Glades: The annual Mother's Day Tour
561 - 172nd Street, White Rock One of the Lower Mainland's finest gardens, literally a Rhododendron forest.

MAY 12, 5 PM - 8:30 PM

Judy Williams and Rachel Mackenzie
6365 and 6389 Elm Street, Vancouver Two delightful urban gardens back to back in the heart of the Kerrisdale area of the city.

MAY 14, 11 AM - 3:30 PM

Bill and Suzanne Spohn, 2950 Palmerston Avenue, West Vancouver. A wonderful collection of Rhodos, Magnolias and Maples in the idyllic setting of "old" West Vancouver.

MAY 19

David C. Lam Asian Garden at UBC
A walk guided by Doug Justice. See May *Indumentum* for time and meeting place

MAY 21, 10 AM - 3 PM

Lions Bay Open Garden Day:

Joe and Joanne Ronsley, 250 Ocean View Road
Richard and Heather Mossakowski, 155 Highview Place
Tony and Valerie Cox, 90 Cloudview Place

Magnificent gardens on the western slopes above Howe Sound combine incredible Rhododendron collections with terrific "West Coast" views.

MAY 22, Starting at 3 PM

Darts Hill Open Garden: Francisca Darts, Corner of 170th Street and 16th Avenue, South Surrey. No superlatives exist which can adequately describe this treasure and all members are invited to celebrate Francisca's 36 years with the VRS. See May *Indumentum* for more information.

MAY 23, 11 AM - 4 PM

Caron Garden: Ron and Carla Knight, 4622 Beaumont Road, Garden Bay, Pender Harbour. Past VRS President Ron's Sunshine Coast hideaway retreat in a woodland setting, complete with nursery and teaching centre. Caron Garden Open House Day will feature Rhodo enthusiasts from the surrounding area, a Master Gardener to give advice on gardening questions and of course Ron's expertise regarding all aspects of propagating and growing Rhododendrons. For more information see the web site at: www.3telus.net/rcknight

JUNE 12, Starting at 3 PM

Pot Luck Picnic and Garden Tour: Joe and Joanne Ronsley have kindly offered to host our annual Pot Luck Picnic this year. In addition to a congenial gathering of VRS members is the added benefit of an early summer look at Joe and Joanne's woodland paradise.



NEWS AND NOTES

Mini Truss Shows Becoming Popular

The mini show at the March General Meeting (photo below) was greatly appreciated by all!

The “mini truss show” is an opportunity for members to participate in our meeting activities. All members are invited to bring a truss or two to our April 21st General Meeting. Please bring your own vase and label your truss for all to enjoy.



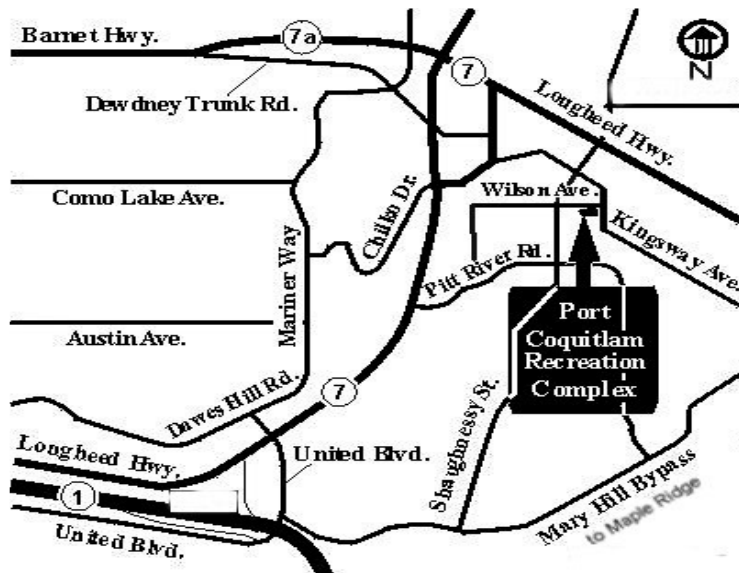
Louis Peterson

2005 Show & Sale

This year's Show and Sale will take place on April 23rd at the Port Coquitlam Recreation Centre located at the corner of Kingsway and Wilson Avenue. Our format will change to a one day only event on the Saturday.

Set up for the growers and truss displays is scheduled on **Friday, April 22nd from 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm** or **Saturday, April 23rd, from 7:30 am - 9:00 am**. For those people who wish to set up on Saturday keep in mind that the Sale and Show officially opens to the public at 10:00 am.

Bill Herbst



Volunteers Needed For the Show & Sale

The annual Show and Sale is our major fundraiser and the revenue generated allows us to offer quality speakers and other benefits to our members. It is important to make this year's event a success in its new venue. Please contact me, Louis Peterson, at 604 921 7260 if you would like to help.

Corrections from the March Indumentum

Several mistakes occurred in the production of the March edition of the Indumentum.

We are not sure who “Mike” is but we know who “Margaret” Trembath is and we apologize for confusing the gender, sorry Margaret.

To Mr. Alleyne Cook, it seems we will be heading to New Zealand to learn English so we can spell your name correctly, sorry Alleyne.

The Show & Sale set up time was incorrectly listed, please see the correct time listed in the article on this page.

Submitted Indumentum Articles

For those of you who have submitted articles to the Indumentum, only to find out later that your work has been edited, we are sorry. We try our best to be sensitive to the writers' creative efforts. However, as the editors, we have a responsibility to make content adjustments in the best interest of the Indumentum.

Todd and Shannon Major

New Director for the VRS

Many thanks to Iain Forsyth for agreeing to fill a vacancy on the Executive and help us as a Director for the VRS!

Contact Your VRS Executive by E-mail

President: Louis Peterson - lpeterso@sfu.ca

Vice President: Lothar Mischke - cindymischke@aol.com

Treasurer: Barbara Sherman - barbaras@sfu.ca

Secretary: Bill Spohn - wspohn4@aol.com

Membership: Carole Conlin - conlin@sfu.ca

Newsletter: Todd & Shannon Major - stmajor@shaw.ca

Directors:

John Priestman - johnpriestman@shaw.ca

Golden Anniversary

As this is our Golden Anniversary Year, announcements of Commemorative events will soon be coming your way. You may have noticed the recurring Golden Anniversary feature in the Indumenta.

Louis Peterson

50TH GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

VRS Golden Anniversary Memories People and Gardens: Francisca Darts

The Early Years

About eighty years ago, Frederik and Hendrika Koster and their three daughters pulled up roots in Den Hague, a seaside town in the Netherlands, and came to the contrastingly different inland city of Winnipeg in Central Canada, far from any ocean.

Francisca, the eldest daughter, was a Dutch-speaking nine year old at the time, and eternally curious. She found herself in a Grade 4 class where English was the incomprehensible language. Now, 80 years later, she warmly recalls the helpful “lessons” of friendly children and devoted teachers, who quickly taught her a necessary vocabulary for her new surroundings. “I must have learned a few other things as well”, she jokingly says, while describing a brief hiatus in an early math exam, immediately corrected by diligent studies that placed Francisca at number four in a class of 40 or 50 students. This early sense of perseverance seems to have characterized most of Francisca’s later endeavours.

After three or four years in Winnipeg, the family moved to Flin Flon, a town lacking a High School. Francisca’s mother, a strong believer in the value of education and whose background included two grandfathers who had been teachers, was not to be outdone. Undaunted, when the time came, she bought all the required High School text books, and arranged for two commendable teachers to spend sessions (perhaps once per month), checking on her daughter’s self-study progress. In two years Francisca completed her High School requirements, no doubt with flying colours. Books and reading have followed her ever since, not only about plants, but also about the countries and cultures from whence they came.

Was Flin Flon a harsh, barren and unforgiving environment for the would-be gardener? Positive in outlook then as now, Francisca says: “Well, maybe, but the native plants were always interesting”.

Photos this page of Francisca Darts pioneering the land. Date unknown. Photos from the City of Surrey’s website for Darts Hill.

Francisca Darts, The Middle Years

In the 1930s, the more benign, Dutch-like climate of the West Coast attracted the Kesters to Vancouver, where Francisca (a secretary) soon met Edwin Darts (an accountant) while playing tennis. They were married in 1943. The pioneering pair bought over twenty acres



of bush in the very rural South Surrey – no water, no electricity. They tackled the prodigious task of dynamiting huge stumps (extreme gardening!) and clearing the land with little in the way of mechanized assistance. No doubt the

strengthening rigours of a Central Canada upbringing served Francisca well, whose preferred mode of transport was a pick-up truck rather than a Mercedes-Benz! Initially an orchard was planted, whose excellent products gained a gold medal for Edwin at the Pacific National Exhibition, the only one ever awarded.

An Alpine Club Exhibition was a seminal event that inspired Francisca’s interest in plants of many different kinds. Books about plants and seed catalogues were to be her constant companions from that day forward. As a self taught botanist and accomplished horticulturist, she and Edwin spent over 50 years creating Darts Hill, a



Garden Park of “horticultural richness unequalled in North America for its rare and precious plants from all over the world, countless species and varieties that would almost require an encyclopedia to adequately catalogue” (quoted from Surrey Parks Recreation and Culture brochure). Francisca became a regular contributor to both VRS meetings and a CBC television program. We affectionately call her presentations the “Francisca Bouquet”, a skillful description of the merits of plants in leaf or bloom at a given time in her garden.

See “Francisca Darts, The Present” on Page 8

50th Golden Anniversary

Francisca Darts , The Present

Francisca, with justifiable pride, displays on her walls two framed citations for her achievements. The Vancouver Rhododendron Society awarded Francisca and Edwin the Bronze Medal in 1982 (the highest that a Chapter of the ARS can bestow), and the Alpine Garden Society of British Columbia awarded an Honourary Lifetime Membership to both of them as well. In 1996 the City of Surrey named Francisca their Citizen of the Year. Other richly deserved accolades include an Honourary Lifetime Membership in the Peace Arch Rhododendron Society, and Honourary Law degree from Kwantlen University College.

Francisca, also with pride, points to a center piece of the Garden, a magnificent spreading Walnut tree, some 80-100 feet high, grown from a seed planted over 50 years ago (Edwin thought it should be pruned to grow straight, but Francisca wisely decided otherwise!). At the entrance gate, a tall Madrona of similar vintage, and also grown from seed, bears witness to the patience and faith of an outstanding gardener. A 12-foot high Ilex hedge, in rich glossy green, and nurtured from tiny seedlings brought from a previous home, protects the driveway (photo above) leading to Francisca's home.



Most of the orchard has given way to specialty rhododendrons, magnolias and companion plants, all carefully and skillfully selected by Francisca. "Never forget the companions, they bring your garden alive with new interests, fragrance and colour, when the rhodos have sedately put away their short season of blooms. And keep on gardening – it is so good for your health!". Excellent advice from a near 90-year old!

In 1994, Edwin and Francisca Darts donated their estate to the City of Surrey to serve as a Horticultural Centre, where amateur gardeners, young and old, and professionals, may view and study "some of the finest and largest horticultural specimens". Members of the public may also join the Darts Hill Garden Conservancy Trust Society and enjoy special privileges. The City now manages and maintains the Gardens in accordance with Francisca's concepts and wishes, while she continues to live in her pleasant home with Angus, a well-fed and super friendly Border Collie, and two somewhat discriminating and private cats, one black and one white, both very lucky! The legacy of Darts Hill Garden Park is one for which we all are most grateful.



By Louis K. Peterson, based on a conversation with Francisca Darts, February 2005.

Photos this page by Chris Klapwijk. All photos from the City of Surrey's website for Darts Hill visit www.dartshill.ca

Hansi's Nursery

Hansi's Nursery invites you to our third Annual Open House on April 17th from 10:00 am until 4:00 pm.

Since the nursery is not open to the public it is a good opportunity to see our plants and the garden. We also will have sweet and savory pastries from Black Berry Hill Farm, honey from Vlad, home made soaps for gardeners and pottery / art on display. If it is anything like last years open house, it will be a lot of fun. I hope you can join us at Hansi's Nursery 27810 - 112th Ave. Maple Ridge, Phone: 604 462 8799, email: hansisnursery@telus.net

Directions: go Lougheed Highway east to 272nd Street, turn north for about 3 miles, turn right on 112th Avenue and look for our address at 27810.

Best Regards, Hansi

March Speaker Takes Us Into The Past

Alleyne Cook gave us a timely review of the development of the rhododendron scene, from difficult early days of 1955 to the present highly rewarding horticultural activity. He acknowledged the part that his "boys" have played in acquiring skills and knowledge, often from major centers in England, and bringing their expertise to the gardening world in British Columbia. Mention must also be made of a scintillating interlude between Alleyne and a long time rhododendronist who made a special visit to hear (and if necessary debate) Alleyne's talk. "The titans were at play".

By Louis K. Peterson.



Members asked the Indumentum, What can I do about notches on the edges of my rhododendron leaves?

The notches found at the edge of the leaf are caused by adult root weevils. Adult weevils can be brown or black in colour and range in size from 5 to 10 mm long. Weevils become active in the spring and remain active throughout the growing season. Adults are nocturnal and feed on a wide variety of plants including rhododendron, roses, viburnum and many other ornamental plants. Weevil adults lay eggs 1-3 times per year, depending on conditions. The eggs hatch in 2 to 3 weeks to produce legless larvae that feed on plant roots. Research from the University of Ohio shows that these larvae survive best in summer soils that are continually damp.

A wide variety of rather vicious pesticides are commercially available to control root weevils although recent research suggests that the bugs are developing resistance. Chemical controls do not yield lasting results, and also pose a health hazard to all life.



Typical Weevil damage on Rhododendron Leaf
Photo By Ron Knight



Cultural controls that interfere with weevil growing habits will likely yield better results for control than chemical control. As an example, a sticky substance called "Tanglefoot" can be painted onto plastic wrap or tape (for stem protection) which is applied to the stem(s), to trap the adults as they climb up the stem to feed on the edges of the leaf. Branches that touch the ground may be pruned to further restrict leaf access. Companion plantings also play a role in weevil control. For example the planting combination of primula with rhododendron results in a food source in two or more seasons for both the adult and larval stage of weevil. The larvae eat and overwinter on roots of primula and then emerge as adults to feed on rhododendron leaves.

Weevil adult & larvae, Photo by J. Davidson, U of MD

Some people place newspapers or other simple traps under infected plants and collect the adults from the trap during the day. The ARS website

recommends biological controls such as parasitic nematodes, which offer some promise if soil conditions are good for their growth. However, experienced rhododendron growers have reported to me that most weevil damage occurs on plants that are under stress. My own observations on wind-stressed plants bear this out and I have solved most of my root weevil problems simply by proper planting, and, if necessary, transplanting severely attacked rhododendrons.

By Ron Knight and Todd Major

Title photo by Ron Knight at his Pender Harbour paradise