

VANCOUVER
Rhododendron
SOCIETY

Membership News

September 2010

Vol 1, No 5

Greetings VRS Members

Well, here we are at the start of another club season, with an interesting program of speaker's and events to look forward to over the next 10 months. Just to confuse things, you will note that, unlike the club calendar, which starts in September, the *Membership News* is on a calendar year basis, like the memberships ... and speaking of memberships [pretty good segue, don't you think?], now is the time for membership renewals. In previous years, the membership renewal process has been a protracted affair, from an initial influx of renewals at the September meeting, to a few stragglers finally „stepping up“ at the May Show and Sale. As the ARS membership deadline in late October came and went, repeated renewal reminders were sent to members, and some had to be renewed with the ARS head office, before they had been received by our club, to ensure continuity of the ARS Journal.

To put things plainly, last year's protracted exercise resulted in significant time being spent chasing members and hand holding on the part of the membership chair, and, in the present circumstance, we much prefer to spend the time more productively, putting together this newsletter ... after all, the garden beckons on a daily basis, and there is only so much time to devote to other things, like eating, sleeping, sending emails, etc. So ... bottom line ... we can either have an efficient renewal process, which is over and done with by the end of October, with more of our time devoted to this newsletter ... or ... we can have an interminable renewal process, and the newsletter will suffer ...

We sincerely hope that everyone will choose the first option. To that end, we have attached a 2011 Membership Form to the email with this newsletter, or as a „hard copy“ for the members who receive their newsletter by mail. Please fill out the form, noting any changes from your 2010 Directory listing, and either

- A ... **mail** it to us at the address provided, with a cheque or VISA number [please note that the VISA number is destroyed after processing, for security reasons], before the end of October ... or
- B ... **bring** the completed form to the September or October meetings, with cheque, VISA, or cash ... our preferred option, since we look forward to seeing you all at these meetings

Please note that there will be no reminders sent to individual members, although we will let you know how things are progressing in the October and November newsletters.

New members, who joined the club in 2010, and, of course, Life members, have already been placed on the 2011 roster, and no further action is needed on your part ... in fact, you can disregard all of the above [except the „welcome back” part] ... until next year ... an email will be sent to these members in the next few days, just to confirm.

Membership cards will be distributed at the January meeting, or mailed out to those unable to attend.

Upcoming VRS Meeting

The next meeting will be on **Thursday, Sept 16**, at the Van Dusen Floral Hall. We generally gather at around 7:00 pm, the meeting starts at 7:30 pm. Guests are always welcome. The following introduction of this month’s speaker was sent to us by Philip MacDougall:

Carmen Varcoe ... Plant Expedition to Bhutan

Carmen Varcoe, a well-known plantswoman in Victoria, will give an illustrated talk on her botanical trip to Bhutan, with slides of the plants, landscapes and people of this remote kingdom in the Himalayas. Carmen is a retired schoolteacher who is a part-time instructor at the Glendale and Woodlands Horticultural School and a key member of the Finnerty Gardens Advisory Board. Carmen describes herself as a “total plant geek and member of many garden clubs in Victoria and abroad.” She is a classroom instructor, lecturer on a wide range of garden topics, design and maintenance of the Hardy plant garden at Glendale Gardens, Advisory Board member for University of Victoria’s Finnerty Gardens, Executive member for Victoria Horticulture Society, Victoria Rock and Alpine Society and the Hardy Plant Group. She teaches the following courses at the Pacific Horticultural College:

Plant Identification LH 104 (Landscape Horticulture Technician program)

Plant Identification LH (Apprenticeship Level 3)

She writes a number of local articles, I’ve included this external link

<http://external.uvic.ca/gardens/newsletters/April09.pdf>

The speakers program for the balance of the year has been created by Philip MacDougall and Joe Ronsley. More detailed information about each speaker and their proposed talk will be given in upcoming monthly Membership News:

Oct 21, 2010 ... **Mike Stewart**, former ARS President, Oregon nurseryman ... „Hybrids and Hybridizers of the Pacific Northwest”

Nov 18, 2010 ... **Charlie Sale** ... subject TBA

Jan 20, 2011 ... Members slides or Popcorn and a Movie

Feb 17, 2011 ... **Carol Dancer**, a member of the Friends of the Gardens at UBC, the Advisory Board at Finnerty Gardens, University of Victoria, and recently, the Garden Advisor at Government House Gardens ... a brief history of the Government House Gardens as told through a slide presentation of a year in the gardens.

March 17, 2011 ... **Steve Hootman**, Director, Rhododendron Species Foundation and Botanical Garden ... subject TBA

April 21, 2011 ... **Malcolm Pharaoh**, Head Gardener, Marwood Hill, Devon, UK
... „Rhododendrons, Camellias, and Magnolias at Marwood Hill Gardens“.

May 19, 2011 ... Walk in Ted & Mary Grieg Rhododendron Garden, Stanley Park.

June 2011 ... picnic ... location and date TBA

Other Chapters

Guests are always welcome at these other chapters, and, as a member of the VRS, you can get a year's associate membership for \$ 10 or 15 ... a bargain !



- **Fraser South** ... Wednesday, Sept 15 ... 7:30 pm
United Church Hall, 5673 - 200th Street, Langley
Speaker ... TBA
Topic ... TBA



- **Fraser Valley** ... Monday, Sept 27 ... 7:30 pm
St. Andrew's Heritage Hall, 22279 - 116th Avenue, Maple Ridge
(off the Haney by-pass)
Speaker ... **Ron Knight**, VRS member and proprietor of Caron Gardens, Pender Harbour
Topic ... *The Development of Caron Gardens*



- **Peace Arch** ... Tuesday, Sept 28 ... 7:30 pm
Cranley Hall, 2141 Cranley Drive, White Rock
Speaker ... TBA
Topic ... TBA

Proven Performers List

There was not enough time at the last meeting for discussion of this subject. All of you should have received the spreadsheet that we sent around with the last newsletter, showing the Proven Performer selections of the other District 1 chapters, along with unpublished lists from Fraser Valley and Vancouver chapters. Hopefully, some of you will get together, and come up with a process to create our updated list, so we can forward it to the ARS ...

New Members

The newest member to join our illustrious group is **Moira Leishman**, who retired recently, and moved from North Vancouver to the Sunshine Coast. We have a particular fondness for Moira, because she taught our son, Jonathan, much of what he knows about computers, and much of this newsletter relies on Jon's support. When we asked Moira to introduce herself, she opted, like a true gardener, to introduce her garden :

Two years ago I moved to the Sunshine Coast and am still in the process of revamping what was already a lovely garden. The first year, I discovered many substantial plants hidden by others, a typical example of what can happen when the mature sizes are not considered. It was a bonus to discover so many wonderful surprises as I weeded and pruned.

A strip along the front of my property was a mix of ferns and salal and I became determined to develop it into a Rhododendron Walk. So far, I have planted several rhodos in that area, trying to space them so they will not become crowded. I added 2 or 3 hydrangeas for summer impact and I am in the process of filling the gaps with smaller woodland plants, such as Bleeding Heart, primulas, cranesbill geraniums and various wild flowers. It will take many years for this to mature into my vision, but I can already enjoy the miniature version. Many of the rhodos already bloomed and I am confident most, if not all, will bloom next year.

Please welcome Moira to our club. Remember that we encourage guest visitors, so please make an effort to invite friends and fellow gardeners to our upcoming meetings. As always, if you give us their names a day or two before the meeting, we will prepare guest nametags, to facilitate their full enjoyment of club hospitality. [*and to ease our work load at the start of the meetings*]

2011 Membership Directory

We will distribute a new 2011 Membership Directory, by either email or post, in January ... updates will be circulated in 2011, as new members are signed up ... we hope that we will see all of you on the directory listing, so that a minimum of editing is required ... hint, hint ...

Member News

We received this note from **Diane Kehoe**, in response to an enquiry, and include it here, with her permission, for all members who would wish her well, but also as a cautionary note ... as gardeners, we are at a higher risk of contracting this disease, and it is in BC ... forewarned is forearmed ...

I sure missed everyone at the show and sale too. It is the first one I haven't been at since 1985! Unfortunately, I am now dealing with the same difficulty as the club president [Horace West] had when I first joined the Vancouver Chapter in 1985 – the results of incompletely treated **Lyme Disease**.

Back in 1983, John and I took a motorcycle camping trip to San Diego to pick up some deerskin leathers to wear on the motorcycle. We passed through the centre of Oregon and ended up camping in the mountains east of San Diego. Somewhere in that area I must have been bitten by a deer tick as I developed the „Bulls-eye“ rash on my right leg and the whole leg puffed up until I couldn't wear my boot. Soon after we returned to Vancouver I began running a fever that pretty much stayed around through the 1990s. While the doctors ran



batteries of tests trying to find out why my glands were swollen, why I was so fatigued, and why I felt sore most of the time, we never found anything clear. After a couple of years, I realized that my symptoms sounded a lot like Lyme Disease but at that time no one thought that there was any Lyme Disease on the west coast. After another year or so there were positive records of Lyme Disease-infected ticks around San Diego – but when I took the tests, the results were negative.

Now I know that both the „Eliza“ test and the „Western Blot“ test give very high levels of false negative tests because after a while your body stops making antibodies against

the disease. Unfortunately, now I'm beginning to show a lot of the secondary problems that arise when Lyme Disease isn't completely killed off. Although there has never been arthritis in my family, I now have really severe arthritis everywhere in my body, especially in my lower back and I'm in continuous pain.

I'm trying to find ways around all the limitations that I have as I would love to be able to continue running my nursery. Right now, my refrigerator is full of wonderful seed that I haven't been able to plant because I have difficulty getting up and down the stairs inside my house, let alone mixing my potting soil and monitoring my seedlings on the heat table in the basement. If some of these symptoms don't improve, I may be asking for help from the club to find someone that would like to take over my nursery: little plants, big plants, seedlings, seed and the equipment to grow them on, like my heat table, pots, labels, etc.

I haven't been able to do more than a couple of days work in the nursery and the garden in the last two years and I may just have to accept that I have gone as far as I can go with rhododendron species. As much as I miss working with the plants, I miss the people involved with rhododendrons even more. I keep a close eye on the Rhododendron list on Yahoo but that's about all that I can do at the moment. Even driving to monthly meetings at Van Dusen has been more than I felt able to take on so the best that I have been able to do is to read the Rhododendron [ARS] Journal and follow the Chapter's newsletter on-line.

Sorry to send you this „tale of woe“ but I feel like I should let people know what's keeping me away from Shows, Sales, and meetings. I had always hoped that someday I could go back on the executive to do more for the Vancouver Chapter. I enjoyed my time as Vice-President and President of the Chapter in the past and hoped that when I retired from social work that I could help out again. John and I have always enjoyed our contacts with Rhodos and Rhodo people and this illness has caused quite a gap to open up in our lives.

Please pass on our best wishes to everyone,
Diane Kehoe, Riverbank, Ladner, BC

[A neighbour of ours contracted Lyme Disease around 1980, while camping in Whistler ... it was one of the first reported cases in BC]

The UBC Tour

Many of you were able to attend the May 20th tour at UBC. We got so wrapped up in the tour that we forgot to take pictures ... fortunately, Justine Murdy came through for us, and so, we offer the following account ...

About 25 members assembled on a warm sunny evening for the annual garden walkabout, this year, lead by Andy Hill, because Douglas Justice was away on a tour of English gardens. Because he said he was not so familiar with the rhododendron species [*though I suspect he was being overly modest*], Andy took a somewhat different approach



Andy Hill with *R. asterochnoum*

to the tour ... he emphasized the philosophy of the botanical garden, along with some of the problems and mistakes that can result. As any experienced gardener can attest, results do not always match expectations in the garden ... I found it interesting, and, in a sense, comforting, to know that even a botanical garden, as well-run and competently-staffed as UBC, can have the occasional „boo boo“.

Anyone who has heard Douglas speak on the garden is familiar with the cases of root rot which result from overly-moist sites, and from past planting practices, using excessive organic material, which resulted in settling, and ponding of moisture around the plants. Andy gave another example of several non-rhodo species in the same genus that were planted in close proximity, so that direct comparison could be made, all plants being in an identical environment ... over time, however, the different species have grown together, so that it is now impossible to separate them with any degree of certainty. It is said that one learns as much from mistakes as from successes ... I definitely learned a lot of practical information on this tour.



*Jim Hall and Heidi Schneider with **R hodgsonii***

Andy also shared with us some of the plans for the garden, including an herbarium, with medicinal plants in the open space just west of the elevated walkway at the reception centre ... and an Asian fern garden ... we look forward to their development over the coming years. A good portion of the tour was, of course, devoted to the species rhododendrons ... noting the differences in habit and structure of numerous species that are well-represented in the garden. Because species rhodos bloom earlier than most hybrids, there were very few flowers left for study, in stark contrast to the profusion of hybrid rhodo blooms throughout the city, which were at their peak ...

Thanks, Andy, for a most enjoyable, and informative, tour ...

Garden Tours

We had three responses to June's mystery garden photo ... Rob Talbot, Brian Talbot [independently] and Jenny Lamb correctly stated that it was **Stourhead**, a National Trust garden near Stourton, Wiltshire, England ...

This month's mystery garden, also English, is a bit trickier [OK, a lot trickier]... This photo was also taken on a rainy day in October 2008, so the landscape garden was not at its best. Jo and I are planning a similar water feature for our front garden.



Closer to home, one of the open gardens that we visited in May was the **Lamont Garden**, at the home of Mark Lamont and Glenda Powroznik's parents, in Surrey. [*many of you will know Glenda and Mark through their efforts, organizing the Van Dusen Plant Sale*]



The 1-acre garden is filled to overflowing with a wide assortment of hybrid and species rhodos, as well as a variety of companion plants. Interesting features include a bridge/arbour crossing a beautifully naturalized water feature [see *photos*], as well as a path through a bamboo thicket. Mark has created an interesting colour palette by grouping together hybrids of similar colour, so, in one area of the garden, we see a range of colour from pale pink to rose to red [see *photo*], while another area of the garden is predominated by shades of purple and blue. One of the most memorable hybrids was „**Papaya Punch**“, by Brockenbrough 1971 ... the pictures in the books just don't do it justice! [see *photo, for more injustice ...*] ... Mark and Glenda have clearly put a lot of effort into this garden ... the result is impressive, to say the least!



Rhododendron 'Papaya Punch'

Thank you Glenda and Mark, and Mark's parents, for your warm hospitality, in sharing your garden with a couple of wayward strangers ...

Propagating Workshop

Ken and Madeleine Webb, of the Victoria Chapter, and Associate members of the VRS, sent us the following note about an upcoming workshop at their home in Saanich, north of Victoria. Anyone interested can contact us, and we will forward your names ... or you can contact Ken directly, at kenwebb@live.ca

Could you guys see if anyone on the mainland is interested in coming to a propagating workshop in Victoria this fall ... late October or early November? Art Lightburn has been trying to get me to do something for a

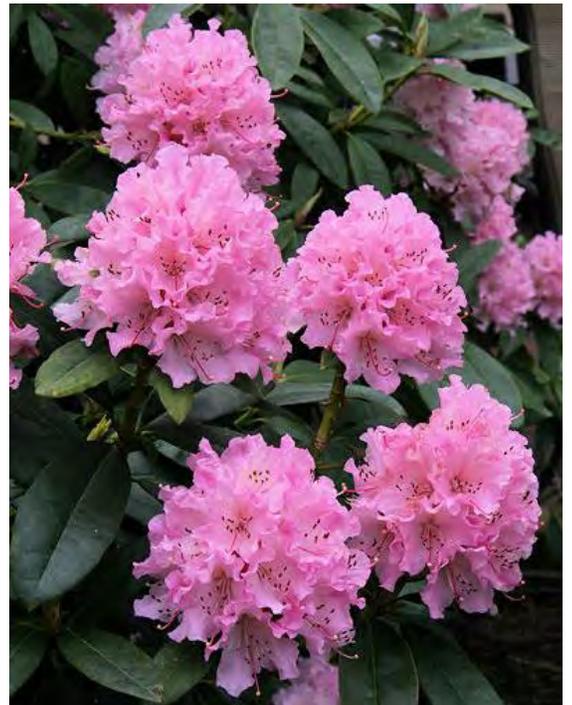
while and the other members of the propagating group here in Victoria have agreed to help. We envision a 1-day workshop at my house where we can do a hands-on propagating session with comments from other successful propagators in the Victoria group. We could give each attendee a row in my propagator and they could get the plants back in the spring. We could also have some input about seeds. Probably we would charge a small fee to cover expenses and generate a few bucks for our club ... supply lunch and coffee, etc. and maybe finish with an early dinner, so everyone could get home that night. See if anyone is interested and let me know.

If there is an expression of interest, we could organize a carpool, to reduce transportation costs ... as you can see, this is at a preliminary stage of planning, so an early „show of hands“ would help them in organizing things ...

Stories from Greig Garden... by Alleyne Cook

When coming to the Ted & Mary Greig Rhododendron Garden in Stanley Park, the first group of rhodos to be seen is *R* „Rosa Mundi“ ... it's rather like „Christmas Cheer“, nothing special, early flowering, pale pink flowers, very hardy, but not good enough for the RHS to give it one star. There were twelve to be planted, and whereas one plant made no show, a dozen were worth having. They were each 18 to 24 inches and they were planted 10 to 12 feet apart ... that, I estimated, would be the area they would need to cover the ground in 30 years. I was spot on ...

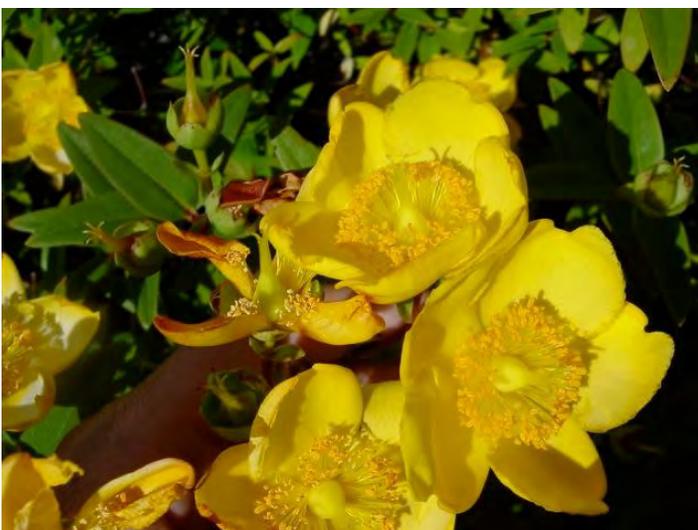
Now, to fill in all that empty ground ... for this I used *Hypericum patulum* var „Hidcote Gold“. It is, I consider, the best ground cover in the gardening world ... it can attain a good-sized bush, it does not sucker, it is summer-flowering, it roots easily from cuttings, it can be cut to the ground and shoots up, it covers itself in bright yellow



***R* 'Rosa Mundi'** photo by Garth Wedemire

flowers, and it is a good ground filler. However, don't go to a nursery and buy one ... they will sell you the most dreadful weed ... a creeping thug called *Hypericum calycinum*, also known as Rose of Sharon, or St John's Wort. Just try and get rid of it !

How far apart do you plant rhododendrons? When I moved the 2000 species from the Greig garden to the new Sino-Himalayan garden at Van Dusen, Roy Forster gave me a free hand to plant as I wished ... that meant guesstimating the area required by the mature specimens. It also meant



***Hypericum* 'Hidcote'** photo by Takashi Tomono

that the prepared area took only the plants moved during the first winter. When I refused (very gently) to cram the remainder in with those previously planted, Roy prepared an equally-sized area, bringing the total to about 5 acres. Now what does an engineer from Edmonton and his assistants from Ontario know about growing plants in the Fraser Valley? One of them had to ask Barbara what a *Hydrangea* was ... so there were problems. All plants being moved had to be valued and charged against the receiver. Bunk! No species were to go from Stanley Park to anywhere. So, every morning we loaded our pickup, waited until all the know-nothings were in the Parks Board office, drove out the Nelson St exit, and made our way to Van Dusen. When the transplanting was finished, Roy then made the great mistake – he invited all those office types to view his new garden. Where did all these plants come from? Stanley Park. So down they came, and because we had prepared for the move, and because Roy had given us some replacement plants, and because we replaced what was left and filled in all the holes, everything seemed normal. They were upset. In the end, Mrs Cook [Barbara] took on the whole Parks Board, Cook [Alleyne], who was moved to another garden, came back, and all supervisors were told not to upset Mrs Cook in the future. As far as we were concerned, the collection was safe – the whole object of the move.

How far apart do you plant a plant? A very important question which has no answer ... or does it? We think that the large-growing rhodos need to be together, the medium-sized in another area, and the true dwarfs in their own space. Plant the latter on a much leaner soil mix of practically no soil, something akin to what they grow in, in alpine regions. I once prepared a bed to take a *Rhododendron forrestii repens* measuring 6 ft x 4 ft that was given to Stanley Park. This bed consisted of only pea gravel, and a layer 6 inches thick was



R forrestii Repens Group

photo by Jens Birck

laid down. The rhodo was unrolled on top of this, and I departed. It was planted. If you ever find a heap of sand or gravel in the sun in the middle of the summer, and remove the top 12 inches, you will find moisture coming up. This was the action that kept *R forrestii repens* in perfect health, with water from below. This specimen, when moved to Van Dusen, fell apart and has now spread over a very large area. This planting was such a success that, some years later, I decided to expand it on a large scale. Six yards of drain-rock had been dumped in the works yard of the pitch & putt. This was presumably to be used in upgrading the drains. Unfortunately for the grounds staff, I found it first. I spent a long time borrowing the lot, to a corner, where I created and covered an area with at least 6 inches of these coarse rocks.

The first and main plants to be planted were the several forms of *R forrestii var repens* that the Greigs had collected, and had, over the years, grown into tidy-sized clumps. *R forrestii* is a rare species which took me 50 years to obtain. Whereas *repens* has green underside to the foliage and is common, *R forrestii* has a red underside. Steve Hootman tells me that in the wild there are always a few *R forrestii* among the *var repens*, and in any sowing of wild-collected seed, the same variation

happens.. The Greig collection (and therefore the Sunningdale Nursery UK collection and the Tower Court UK collection) had not only the prostrate form, but also another which was domed 6 to 8 inches high in the centre, with the outer branchlets flat on the ground. Another form, *R forrestii tumescens*, grew upright for 2 feet, and there was also one upright form with multiple pink flowers. The problem was the extensive collection at Tower Court, where, in a grand-scale horseshoe garden, every collector's seed of this species was planted. As with a lot of wild-collected seed from harsh areas, these outgrew their allotted space. Most of them simply climbed over or through their neighbours, making a tight mass. One day, George Joy and I went up to the collection to dig a specimen for the Sunningdale species collection. The plant to be moved had been selected by Mrs Stevenson. We started in the obvious centre, then teased our way through the neighbours, freeing each runner. When finished, the back of a car was filled. When Dr Chamberlain reviewed this species, he eliminated all the varieties. [Editor's note ... according to Cox & Cox (1997), the occasional specimen with red undersided leaves is an example of persistent juvenility, and is of no taxonomic significance ... the Repens Group is an informal grouping of prostrate forms of the species, while the Tumescens Group includes the more upright forms ...]

To return to the Greig garden ... planting was simple. We scraped a hole in the gravel, large enough for the root, covered it over, and considered it planted. Large clumps we broke into several, thereby probably tripling our total. Because the area was only partly full, we added, with similar treatment, *R radicans*, *R keleticum*, *R pemakoense*, and *R glaucophyllum*. Nothing appeared to suffer. They had no special care. Obviously, the ground moisture moving up from the soil was sufficient. It was also carrying all the nutrients required. Some years later, when we dug them up and moved them all to Van Dusen, we found that our friendly worms had done a good job of mixing together fallen foliage, the original soil, and the gravel.

Pictures of alpiners in the high mountains show fields of them in areas which, in the wet season, must be near to a swamp ... I am quite sure none of these plants are in the water, they are on mounds above. I do think that losses of the true dwarfs come from overfeeding, and the leaner the soil, the longer they live. Also, the more sun, the more they flower ... they don't enjoy the shade.

In the centre of the *R „Rosa Mundi“* bed is a *Davidia involucrata*, also known as the ghost tree, or the pocket handkerchief tree. The great white bracts hang from the branches in spring; the flower is a ball in the centre. There are hundreds of nuts under the tree, but none of them ever germinate. This tree came from an aerial layer of the big tree at the bottom of the Magnolia Walk, which was moved from the Cook garden when the City and BC Hydro decided to upgrade Larson Road. At that time, there was a strip of blacktop down the centre, with gravel on the sides. When the City Engineer came to explain the improvements, we took him out to the corner of the property. We



Davidia involucrata

photo by Douglas Justice

showed him that the front hedge, lych-gate, and the carport, were 10 feet into City property. He walked out onto the road, viewed the situation, then said “if we bend the road at this point, you can keep that land” ... and so it is, as you drive up Larson Road, at 21st, that there is a slight bend to the right. BC Hydro kindly gave us our own transformer!

The actual aerial layering operation ... Cut slivers from the shoot so that pieces have been removed from all four sides. Cover these with a thick wad of damp moss – not too wet, not too dry. Tie this in place. Bind with several layers of plastic to keep the moisture in, and on top with something squirrel-proof. Come back in a year. *... to be continued*

On the Rhody Road [The Grand Tour] ... Part II

When we left you last time, Jo and I had settled in to the hotel in Courtenay, after a 2-day tour of the Sunshine Coast. The next morning, we headed north on the Island Highway, through Campbell River, to **Hidden Acres Rhododendrons**, owned by **Paul and Lynn Wurz**. For more information on their business, visit www.hiddenacresrhodos.com

The introduction from their website sums it up best :

I am a retired school teacher and Lynn has a Bachelors degree in Biology.

We have become full time gardeners since retirement 6 [now 11] years ago.

Our hobby farm, garden and rhododendron nursery have become a passion. We spend much of our time sharing it with our friends, visitors, and garden enthusiasts. Our mission in our small rhododendron nursery is to make as many of the new and specialty rhododendrons available to rhodo fanatics as possible. We select "cuttings" from our best rhodos and propagate approximately 1,500 young rhodos each year. We welcome visitors to our display garden consisting of approximately 1,000 hybrids and species rhododendrons. Besides rhododendrons, our garden consists of many hostas, ferns, dahlias, selected perennials, lilies, and shade plants. We enjoy our small business and the friendships that it brings. Come for a visit, a chat, and a walk in the garden. We will be delighted to see you.



Overview of Rhodo Display Garden photo by Paul Wurz



Paul, with 'Pridenjoy' by Lloyd Newcombe



R 'Jeda' ... by Lofthouse



Gateway to Display Garden

Paul and Lynn have several acres of property, which gives them the space to properly display their rhodos. The front yard is a woodland garden, with species rhodos growing under a coniferous canopy ... the back yard has a wonderful display of hybrid rhodos, arranged in borders and groupings, which are nothing short of spectacular ... they specialize in hybrids by Frank Fujioka and Jack Lofthouse ... see photos of a couple of our favourites, „Starbright Champagne“ and „Jeda“

In addition to their impressive display of rhodos, Paul and Lynn have a wide range of companion plants, including hostas, ferns, *Rodgersia*, lilies, hellebores, trilliums, and of course, maples ... the juxtaposition of formal borders and paved paths, with the natural woodland and surrounding pastures, make for a delightful overall effect. This is still very much a work in progress, as evidenced by freshly-planted beds, containing many new hybrids that have just started to bloom.

We could easily have spent an entire day exploring the many pathways and water features of this beautiful garden, as well as the greenhouses and test beds of the working nursery, but Paul had a truck load of plants to deliver to Victoria, and we had other appointments, so we bid farewell to our new friends, and headed back to Courtenay. After a quick lunch, and a new headlight for the car, we arrived at the **Haida Gold Nursery**, owned by **Harry and Gwen Wright** [we have decided that we may be distant



R 'Starbright Champagne' ... by Fujioka



cousins, both having ancestors in New Brunswick].

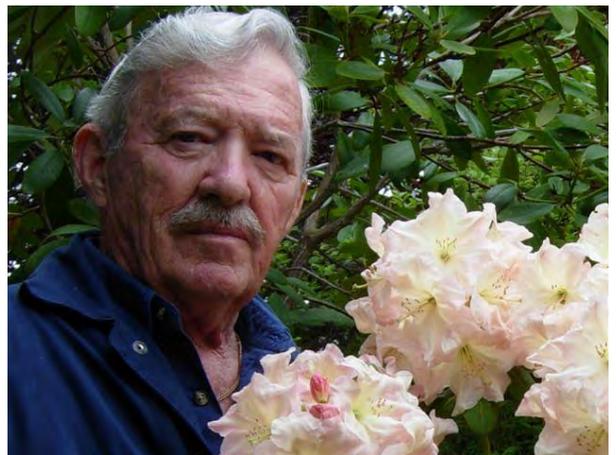
Like the Wurz garden, this property combines a beautiful display garden with a working nursery, with greenhouse and test beds. Their „working“ garden contains an impressive assortment of trees, and rows of hybrid rhodos, many created by Harry. The attached photo shows a row of hybrids of „Haida Gold“, a distinctive yellow *wardii* cross, which was hybridized by Bovee in the early 1960“s, then tested and registered by Bob Rhodes, with the name suggested by Harry Wright.



R 'Haida Gold' ... by Bovee

with a most unusual white and rose-red colour, and dark nectar sacs.

And the best part of all? ... Harry and Gwen have an impressive collection of garden ornaments that give the place a delightful whimsical feel [*and we thought that we were the only people who like garden gnomes!*] ... Harry and Gwen“s „family“ of characters also have a practical purpose ... every Christmas, they decorate the garden with figures and lights, and open it to the general public, for a fee ... the proceeds, amounting to thousands of dollars, have been donated to local charities



Harry Wright and 'Courtenay Queen'
photo by Harry Wright

The plant is so popular that Harry has a hard time keeping it in stock [*we had hoped to purchase one 'from the source'*]

The display garden around the house contains many beautiful hybrids, like „Nancy Evans“, „Mrs Betty Robertson“, „Seaview Sunset“ [a Fujioka hybrid], and , of course, „Haida Gold“ ... clearly, Harry was ahead of his time, as yellow is now the „in“ colour for hybrid rhodos.

The garden also includes an impressive display of species rhodos which, due to the late Spring, were in full bloom ... these included the best *Rhododendron bureavii* that we have ever seen, with leaves and stems covered in a rich cinnamon brown indumentum [*is it still 'indumentum' when it's on the stems?*], and a *Rhododendron cerasinum* „Cherry Brandy“,



R bureavii

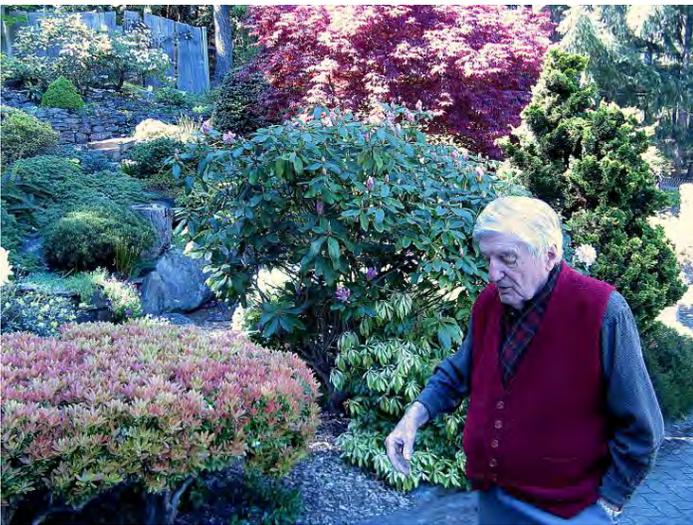
over the years. Their strong sense of community is further illustrated by their support of the Courtenay community rhododendron garden, a project of the North Island Rhododendron Society, which was mentioned in Part I ...

As Harry had to take a batch of rhodos to the Nanaimo sale, we bid him, and Gwen, a fond farewell, and made our way south to Nanaimo, where we stayed with friends who own a bed and breakfast. The next morning, we made our way over to Beban Park, for the sale. Having blown our budget on rhodos from Paul Wurz [*in my defence, it was a small budget*], Jo cast sideways „don't even think about it“ glances in my direction, as we made our way around the tables of the 6 or 7 dealers, including Les Clay, Sue Klapwijk, and Harry Wright. In the end, we reached a compromise, and purchased a beautiful, large *Rodgersia*, and an *Epimedium* ... I think the best budgets are flexible ones ... at least we didn't buy more rhodos ...



R. cerasinum 'Cherry Brandy'

Later that morning, we took the ferry across to Gabriola Island, and after a brief tour of the island [*no, I wasn't lost ... and anyway, Jo is the navigator*] we arrived at the „Steepside“ garden of **Bob and Jean Rhodes**. As many of you will know, Bob had a medical practice in Maple Ridge for many years, and was a stalwart of the VRS. They retired to Gabriola some years ago, and started a new rhodo garden on the rocky shore, overlooking the ferry landing. Most of the soil had to be created on site, because of the cost of ferry transport, and Bob discovered an old sawmill at the other end of the island, with a massive pile of partly-composted sawdust, which the owner was only too happy to get rid of, essentially for the cost of transport. Being on an island, with limited water resources, the garden is not as lush as some we have visited, and

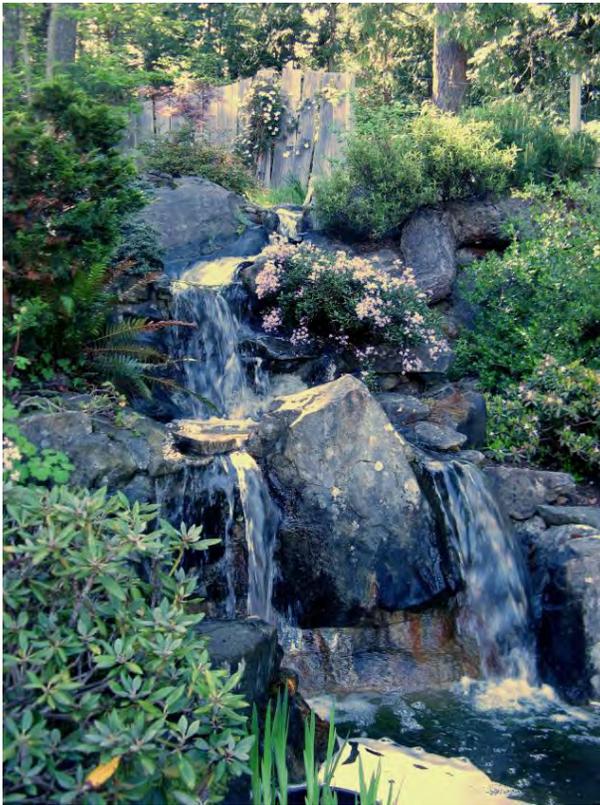


Bob Rhodes, at Steepside



careful attention has to be paid to watering and mulching ... they even built their own water storage facility, at the top of the property, to conserve the excess from the rainy season. In spite of it all, Bob and Jean have managed to create a beautiful, mature garden, full of a broad assortment of rhodos,

as well as *Pieris*, conifers, maples, and many perennials. The centrepiece of the garden is a spectacular water feature, which appears almost natural, so well has it been adapted to the contours of the property.



After a couple of hours in this oasis, we said goodbye to our new friends, Bob and Jean Rhodes, and their son Rob, and made our way back to the ferry. We returned to the bed and breakfast for a BBQ, and a relaxing evening, after our four days of adventure.

..... to be continued

MEMBERS' FORUM

One morning in May, we discovered these spots on a specimen of *R argipeplum*, that we purchased, unblemished, a few days before ... this picture was taken in late June, some 5 or 6 weeks later ... the spots had not changed significantly over that time. Photos were sent to Douglas Justice at UBC, and to Steve Hootman at the RSF [via Joe Ronsley]. The consensus is that this is an example of **powdery mildew**, a fungus, resulting from the cool damp Spring that we have had. The recommended treatment is removal of the infected leaves, provision of adequate air circulation, and building up of the plant's natural immunity by applying liquid kelp and/or compost tea, and trying to keep the plant from undue stress. We have taken these steps, and have isolated the plant, to avoid transmission to other plants.



At the time of writing, this problem has not reappeared on this plant, and, more importantly, has not appeared on any other plant in our garden... phew!!

On the 7th of August, we were returning from the RSF garden party, and decided to console ourselves (because we couldn't purchase plants in the US) by picking up a rhodo or two at Art's Nursery, in Surrey. We were dismayed to find that their entire rhodo stock was piled up in plastic-lined bins, ready for disposal. Apparently, government inspectors found *Phytophthora ramorum* („Sudden Oak Death“) in several plants. We purchased a rhodo from here on the day of the Fraser South picnic, and it seems healthy, but we are keeping a close watch on it ... if any of you have recently purchased rhodos, or other ericaceous plants from Art's Nursery, some caution is in order ... The folks at the nursery assured us that they would be restocking, as soon as they get the „all clear“ from the inspectors.



Maira Leishman (our newest member) recently moved to her new home, and found this growing in the yard. Does anyone recognize it?

Thanks to the following, for contributing to the Membership News, thereby making our job easier : Philip MacDougall, Diane Kehoe, Justine Murdy, Rob Talbot, Brian and Ray Talbot, Jennifer Lamb, Alleyne and Barbara Cook, Douglas Justice, Takashi Tomono [*one of Douglas' students*], Garth Wedemire, Jens Birck, Ken and Madeleine Webb, Paul and Lynn Wurz, Harry and Gwen Wright, Joe Ronsley, Steve Hootman and Maira Leishman ... Garth and Jens' photos were „borrowed“ from the Hirsutum website, which was discussed by Garth in a previous newsletter.

Please send your contributions to: rj_wright@telus.net

or by mail to Box 266, Lions Bay, BC V0N 2E0 ...

or by phone to (604) 921-9370

Attribution will be given for all contributions... which may be edited for spelling, grammar, and length.

Bob & Jo Wright

Editor's postscript ... I was recently looking through a copy of the South Australia newsletter, and discovered a picture of me, editing our newsletter!?? ... I wonder how they got it ... time to check for hidden cameras...

... with thanks, to Chris Thomas, editor of Rhododendrons South Australia

