



Membership News

March 2011

Vol 2, No 3

President's Corner

❖ The VRS Annual Show and Sale ... Sunday, May 1, 2011

This is, by far, the largest and most important event on the club's calendar. It is the programme item that requires the most volunteer hours to execute, it attracts the largest attendance, and it is a significant source of the revenues that are necessary to support the remainder of the VRS programme. Traditionally, the Show and Sale has been a two-day event but in view of the much smaller attendance and associated sales that we have experienced on the second day, it was decided by the executive that, in May 2010, the next Show and Sale should be a one-day event. We recently discovered that, because of an unfortunate error, the date initially booked for the Show and Sale was no longer available to us. Much effort and consideration was expended by members of the VRS executive during early February, exploring alternative dates and venues. Weighing all factors, such as grower availability, costs and accessibility, it was ultimately determined that the best option was to stay at Park & Tilford Garden but to hold the event on the **Sunday, May 1**.

Two significant facts contributed to this decision; firstly, Park and Tilford graciously gave us a break on the cost, and secondly, we were assured access to the Garden after 3pm on Saturday, April 30. This latter point is crucial to our being able to set-up for the Show and Sale on the following day.

❖ Volunteers

I mentioned, at the outset, the large number of volunteer hours it takes to mount the Show and Sale. As in many volunteer organizations, we typically find that a few members contribute a disproportionately large amount of the time required. If we could have a few more volunteers, the workload could be more equitably distributed, so I urge anyone with an hour or two to spare on the weekend of the Show and Sale, to sign-up as a volunteer. I can guarantee that all contributions will be welcomed and appreciated (particularly by those doing most of the "heavy lifting") and that you



R niveum ... RSB Garden

will enjoy both the interaction with visitors and the camaraderie of working with other VRS members. In general, we need volunteers on Saturday afternoon/early evening, to help set-up tables and benches in the Rose Room for the Show and also to set up tents and tables in the sale area. We will also need help to unload and set out plants. On Sunday morning, help is needed to set up the membership table and tent. This station will also need staffing during the day. Cashiers and helpers are needed for the sale area as well as „experts“ to advise and assist potential buyers on plants. Jacquie Clayton will be our caterer for Sunday, but some relief help of, say, an hour mid-morning, and again in the afternoon, would be appreciated. Lastly, in the late afternoon, help would be appreciated in dismantling both the Show and Sale, and in loading the unsold plants for return to the growers.

There was quite a good response to the volunteer sign-up sheet circulated at the February general meeting, but there are plenty of vacancies. Another sign-up sheet will be available at the March meeting. If you cannot make the meeting, but wish to volunteer, please send me an e-mail at tclayton@telus.net, or call (604) 921-7947.

❖ A Word about the Show

Karen Shuster has kindly undertaken the organization of the flower and truss competition. Karen will be sharing tips and guidelines about entries at the next two VRS meetings, and that information will be made available, both in the newsletter and on the website.

It seems that in the recent past, many members have been either intimidated by the prospect of having their rhododendrons publicly displayed and judged, or were just against the concept of a competition. I would ask VRS members in either of these categories to re-examine their position. The fact is that the Show is a glorious exhibition of the beauty of the rhododendron genus and forms, an essential part of our event. The variety of colour, size and form of the displayed blooms is stunning, to both the casual visitor, and to confirmed rhodoholics. The Show is informative and educational, and is a revelation of the wide variety of rhododendrons that can be grown in our neck of the woods. I encourage everyone to bring blooms to the Show. If you do not wish to compete, that is fine ... you can still contribute to the glory of the display by bringing a few flowers, a truss or two, or perhaps a bouquet (or in true Douglas fashion, a bucket!).

❖ Posters



Todd Major has designed a terrific poster for this year's Show and Sale, and we will have 8 1/2" by 11" copies available at the next two VRS meetings. You can also access the poster at our web site or as a pdf attachment to this newsletter. Please obtain a couple of posters and use them in your neighbourhood to promote the Show and Sale. Public libraries and community centres are good locations. Some garden centres have notice boards where garden club notices can be placed. My final words on the Show and Sale ... Get involved, have fun and help *your* rhododendron club.

... Tony Clayton, President, VRS

Upcoming VRS Meeting

The next meeting will be on **Thursday, March 17**, at the Van Dusen Floral Hall. We generally gather at around 7:00 pm, the meeting starts at 7:30 pm.

The program this month will be given by **Steve Hootman**, Executive Director, Rhododendron Species Foundation and Botanical Garden [the attached photo of Steve was 'borrowed' from the Nanaimo Chapter February newsletter] Steve will speak on



Recent Rhododendron Acquisitions from China ...

Rhododendron faithae, *wumingense*, the true *cardiobasis*, *platypodum* (only one or two clones of this amazing plant currently in cultivation), *nymphaeoides*, *levinei*, *changii*, several new evergreen azaleas and members of subgenus *Choniastrum* as well as a few probable new species that will need to be described and named.

Some amazing scenery and really fantastic plants in this part of the world (Guizhou & Guangxi)

Such is this year's list of collections by Steve Hootman and compatriots; he describes these as unknown or barely in cultivation. Steve has been at the forefront of these types of collections for more than a decade. As enthusiasts of the genus we are fortunate indeed to have one of the world's great repositories for this group of plants within a 3-hour drive ... and fortunate is the **Rhododendron Species Foundation** to have Steve as its director, for it is often the intangible measure of human talent that is an institution's best resource.



[Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden ... Federal Way, Washington ... April 2010](#)

Quoting from his ARS Gold Medal Award,

"You are one of the foremost international plant hunters of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, and one of the most intrepid. You have served as co-director of the Rhododendron Species Foundation and

Botanical Garden where you played a determining role in making this garden one of the premier gardens of its kind in the world. You have facilitated the mandate of the Foundation beyond all expectations, especially in regard to conservation, distribution, and education. You are a lecturer and educator extraordinaire on the subject of rhododendrons and have made significant contributions to ongoing scientific research on rhododendrons. You have also served as co-editor of the RSF yearbook "Rhododendron Species" and are among the most knowledgeable people in the world on the genus"

On a yearly basis Steve has given enthralling, not-to-be-missed lectures to our group, combining plants, cultivation and adventure. Once again, Steve is donating his time and talent to speak to the VRS ... a good turnout would show how much we appreciate his efforts.

Les Clay will be selling plants at the meeting. Don't forget those items for the raffle table, and refreshments table.

... Philip MacDougall

ARS National Convention, Vancouver, Washington

For those of you planning on attending the conference in May, we have received this notice from Maria Stewart, of the Portland Chapter, who is in charge of plant sales ...

Sean Rafferty and I have been talking back and forth about phyto-certificates being written at the 2011 ARS Convention. Yes, we will have a Washington State Department of Agriculture inspector at the convention on Saturday only and he will manually write the phyto-certificates. He charges \$51 an hour plus mileage. Hopefully, the attendees that need phyto-certificates will be willing to help defray the costs by giving a few dollars each. We will need to assemble purchases in a holding area until the inspector writes the phyto-certificates, and purchasers will need to fill out applications before the inspector arrives.

There are some plants that we cannot include in the phyto-certificate process. No conifers may be included and no plants that come from outside the convention plant sale may be included.

We are very much looking forward to seeing our Canadian friends in May ... thank you

... Maria Stewart, Plant Sale Chairman, 2011 ARS Convention

**Gardens of Washington, DC
with Tour Leader Douglass Justice
Associate Director and Curator of Collections
at the UBC Botanical Garden
May 10-19, 2011**

May 10, 2011 Fly from Vancouver in the morning, and have a late afternoon arrival at Ronald Reagan National Airport. We will be met and transferred to our luxury boutique hotel, the Hotel Monaco in beautiful Old Town Alexandria, which is just across the Potomac River and a short drive from downtown Washington DC. The hotel is located in a charming neighbourhood with many nearby shops and restaurants within easy walking distance. See details at www.monaco-alexandria.com



May 11, 2011 Today we will enjoy an introductory city tour to see many of Washington's highlights. We will then visit the United States Botanic Garden, with more than 60,000 plants that are nurtured in USBG greenhouses, and displayed indoors in the Conservatory and outdoors in Bartholdi Park and the National Garden. Noteworthy collections include economic plants, medicinal plants,



orchids, carnivorous plants, cacti and succulents, mid-Atlantic native plants, and ferns. Historic specimens include several that date from the original 1842 founding collection. Across the street are the grounds of the Capitol Building. Over 100 varieties of trees and bushes are planted around the Capitol and thousands of flowers are used in seasonal displays. This evening, we'll enjoy a Group Welcome dinner, and on the way home we will see some of the illuminated memorials and monuments, a sight to see in DC at night time.

May 12, 2011 Our motor coach tour takes us by the impressive mansions of Embassy Row, as we travel to the Washington National Cathedral for a visit of the gardens, grounds and interior. We also have a wonderful private garden visit planned in the neighbourhood.

May 13, 2011 Today, we will have a White House exterior tour with our guide, and then an introductory talk and guided tour of the 'Green Roof' at the headquarters for the American Society of Landscape Architects. Dedicated in 2006, the plan was to create a landmark demonstration project, for both the landscape architecture profession, and the development, design, and construction professions, to help make the green roof concept more mainstream, with landscape architects playing a key role. This afternoon we have a United States Capitol building tour, followed by the Library of Congress and/or the Supreme Court building, as time permits. We will enjoy another group dinner at a well-known Washington restaurant. While driving back to our hotel, we'll have another look at the illuminated monuments.

May 14, 2011 Our full-day excursion today takes us to the United States National Arboretum, where there is so much to see. We can expect our tour to include an up close and personal view of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum, the National Herb Garden, the Administration Building terrace and pool, and the Friendship Garden, and we will learn about the National Arboretum's history, collections, and research. Afterwards, some free time to explore the many other areas ... such as the Fern Valley Native Plant Collection, Azalea, Holly and Magnolia Collections, the Grove of State trees, and the Washington Youth Garden.

May 15, 2011 Private residential garden visits, details to be announced.

May 16, 2011 Today, we have a full-day tour in the countryside of Virginia. First, to River Farm, one of George Washington's properties, which now serves as the headquarters of the American Horticultural Society (AHS), situated on 25 acres of landscaped lawns and gardens, alongside the shores of the Potomac River. We will then visit nearby Mt Vernon and enjoy lunch at the Mt Vernon Inn, and more history of the 1st President's life, at the home of George and Martha Washington

from 1759-1799. Our tour will focus on the gardens and landscape, where we will learn of George Washington's skill as an amateur landscape architect, with time for a visit to the Mansion.



May 17, 2011 Today, we visit the Museums and gardens of the fascinating and extensive Smithsonian Institution on the National Mall. The National Air & Space Museum, the National Museum of American History and the National Museum of Natural History are among the most popular. For those interested in Art, the Freer Gallery and the National Gallery of Art are also well worth a visit.

May 18, 2011 Today, we will visit two historic estate gardens. Hillwood Estate, Museum and Gardens was founded by American collector and heiress to the

Post cereal empire, Marjorie Merriweather Post; it is one of the premier art collector's museums in the United States. The museum features the most comprehensive collection of Russian imperial art outside of Russia, and a world-renowned collection of eighteenth-century French decorative art and furnishings. The collection includes Fabergé eggs, Russian porcelain, Russian Orthodox icons, Beauvais tapestries, and Sèvres porcelain. Encircled by woodlands, the estate provides visitors a tranquil oasis of luscious formal gardens covering 12 acres, including a French Parterre garden, a Rose Garden, a Japanese style garden, and a cutting garden, among other garden rooms that Ms Post created for her leisure and entertaining her guests.

Next, we will visit Dumbarton Oaks, an estate in the Georgetown area. Purchased in the early 1920s, by Mildred and Robert Woods Bliss, who were attracted by its beautiful trees, many of which date to the nineteenth century and still survive today. The Blisses hired landscape gardener Beatrix Farrand to design the gardens. Working in happy and close collaboration for almost thirty years, Mildred Bliss and Beatrix Farrand planned every garden detail, each terrace, bench, and borders of plant material used to create the garden rooms. Urns, vases, and finials marked transitions between spaces, were the focal point of axes, and complemented and enhanced the architecture.

Tonight we will enjoy a Farewell dinner for the group.

May 19, 2011 With our morning available for free time, perhaps a last-minute museum visit at your leisure, or some shopping. We will transfer in the afternoon to the airport, for our late-afternoon flight.

Tour is based on a minimum number of participants, and group size will be limited to ensure a quality experience.

Itinerary subject to change as local conditions require. Tours will involve extensive walking, good mobility is required.

What is included in your tour:

- ❖ Deluxe hotel accommodation at the Hotel Monaco Alexandria, 9 nights, based on double occupancy

- ❖ Daily breakfast, four lunches (boxed lunches are often used to allow more time in gardens and less time waiting in a restaurant) and three group dinners (dinners accompanied by wine/beer/soft drinks).
- ❖ Gratuities and taxes.
- ❖ Daily motor coach transportation, garden and museum entry fees and group tours as indicated in the itinerary.
- ❖ Services of tour co-ordinator travelling with the group from Vancouver.
- ❖ Services of a local Washington guide, and local garden tour guides, as required.
- ❖ Economy class airfare from Vancouver (Air Canada). Can be deducted from tour cost upon request.

Tour Cost

- ❖ \$ 5,980Cdn/person
- ❖ 25% Initial deposit required, balance due no later than 45 days prior to departure [25 March]

Please note space is limited. To reserve your space please contact:

Linda Sim, Tour Co-ordinator
 Renshaw Travel & Cruise Concepts
 2175 West 4th Ave
 Vancouver, BC, Canada
 Phone (604) 733-1074 direct ... or 1-800-317-0464 toll-free
 e-mail lsim@renshawtravel.com

Elsie Watson: The Passing of an Icon

The following item, by Don King, of the Seattle Chapter, was sent to us by Joe Ronsley ...



'Elsie Watson' ... by Frank Fujioka (1977)

Karen Swenson received a call from Elsie Watson's family, to say that Elsie had died during the early morning of February 14. Her daughter Anne was with her. Elsie was 97 years old ... and was a founding member of the Seattle Rhododendron Society (SRS). She was truly passionate about rhododendrons and wanted everyone to be as excited about them as she was. She treasured her friendships made through the Seattle chapter, as well as the Cascade and Whidbey chapters. She was a great friend to many of us. In these days of the internet, news travels quickly. Yasmin Workman (now living in Florida) wrote that she "will always

have fond memories of the time I met her and the years we were together ... I remember that my first rhododendron that bloomed was lousy, but the encouragement she gave me was priceless. I made several thousand more crosses and had some nice ones too. One was named in her

memory – „Mama Elsie“ („Cameo“ × „1000 Butterflies“)[*unregistered?*] - what a huge truss, like „1000 Butterflies“. ... The family hopes to have a celebration of her life at her home in the spring.

... compiled and paraphrased from e-mails, by Don King

Joe & Joanne's Enhanced Woodland ... Part 5 ... by Joe Ronsley



Both the unity of the garden and the natural look of it are strengthened by retaining so much of the native undergrowth, at least the more attractive sort. Native shrubby undergrowth is comprised mainly of deciduous huckleberry (*Vaccinium parvifolium*), Oregon Grape (*Mahonia nervosa* and *aquifolium*), and salal (*Gaultheria shallon*). There is also the odd native flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum*) that is always preserved. The Oregon grape, huckleberry, and salal are retained everywhere except where they are in the way of something else, or where the spot in which they are growing is needed for something I consider of more value. The huckleberry is delicate and quite beautiful, but is very abundant and can cast more shade than one would think. From time to time it is removed to make way for more interesting plants. Still, there are large clumps of it and many individual plants throughout the garden. It is of primary

interest to both the birds and our grandchildren, who all go for the fruit. The *Mahonia* is even more decorative, and very rarely removed; it provides an excellent filler between the exotics all through the garden. The salal is definitely the most rampant and expendable of the three, tending more often than the others to be „in the way of something else“, and has been removed in large quantities, either because of its invasive running root system, or simply to be replaced by more valuable plants. Still, where it does not interfere, it is retained as a natural green groundcover that is typical of British Columbia forests. I have never seen the evergreen huckleberry growing wild on the mainland, but we found it growing abundantly throughout Bob and Jean Rhodes' property on Gabriola Island. We dug up two plants and took a few cuttings of others. The two plants died, but the cuttings thrived and now form a nice clump. There is probably a lesson there.

Also typical, and abundant throughout the garden, are the native ferns - masses of sword fern, deer fern, maidenhair fern, and, on logs, stumps and tree trunks, licorice fern. There are also lady ferns and bracken, which, however, like the blackberries but not quite as aggressively, are freely



Deer Fern ... *Blechnum spicant*

removed. The more desirable ferns are removed when the spot in which they are growing is needed - a rhododendron seems to do particularly well where a sword fern had been growing - they are encroaching on more valuable plants, or in order to expose mossy banks. The deer fern is quite beautiful, but can grow too thickly, especially in the sunshine. In doing so, they lose some of the grace and attractive character that individual plants or smaller groups of plants display. Both the sword ferns and deer ferns can form impenetrable mats, each in its own way, preventing water from reaching the roots of nearby plants. Thinning, then, becomes necessary. When I mentioned this to Tony Kirkham, he replied that he wished he had that problem at Kew! Nevertheless, we must remove sword ferns and deer ferns from time to time, sometimes in large quantities. They are often naturally replaced by maidenhair fern which, although beautiful and a lovely replacement, especially along the creek, can also smother rhododendrons and azaleas, especially when the latter are still small. It should be noted that the ferns proliferate excessively, especially where they are open to full sunshine. In the lightly-wooded areas, which comprise most of the garden, the problem is minimized. But it is important to have the native ferns among rhododendrons and other introduced plants, providing quiet, natural relief, or the woodland would look too much like a garden, or like a collection of rhododendrons. The maidenhair is beautiful everywhere, particularly so overhanging the creek, and the deer fern, when not interfering, can be quite beautiful in itself, while the sword fern at times is huge and magnificent. Despite the removal of many, ferns provide the most widespread groundcover throughout our woods, and nearly as much as the native conifers, proclaim the British Columbia rainforest.



Native Ferns –
Sword ... *Polystichum munitum*
Lady ... *Dryopteris filix-femina*
Maidenhair ... *Adiantum aleuticum*
Deer ... *Blechnum spicant*

Aside from the ferns, there are other native herbaceous plants. There are not so many desirable wildflowers in the northwest as there are in the eastern part of North America, largely because the forest here is mainly conifer rather than deciduous, and the soil not so rich. Nor is it so light and bright in early spring, before deciduous trees leaf out. But there is *Tiarella*, which is quite pretty, wild strawberry that can be rampant and must be removed in some places, though it is retained in others, wild orchids, twin flower, ***Linnaea borealis***, which is always encouraged, the occasional very pretty native columbine (*Aquilegia formosa*), and the odd clump of the strange looking „Indian pipe“, ***Monotropa uniflora***, which appears and disappears from year to year. There is no point in trying to do anything at all with this last. I am simply happy to have it. There is a native *Dicentra*, which can easily be considered a weed - it grows wild and vigorously, and we do pull it out for



Linnaea borealis

the most part. Then there are the little purple veronicas and yellow violas, which, if not very showy, make pretty wildflower groundcovers and are quite charming. Much of the rest must pretty well be considered weeds, though there are other wildflowers that, I may as well admit, I don't even know the names of. Native to the area but not naturally growing on the property, and therefore, like the vine maples and evergreen huckleberry, having had to be brought in, are ***Cornus canadensis*** and *Erythroniums revolutum* and *oregonum*, all of which are in the process of forming quite large natural looking drifts. In fact, having been given a rather large quantity of *Erythronium* seed by Alleyne Cook, I scattered it willy-nilly over large areas of more open woodland. Every seed apparently germinated, even in places I didn't remember having sowed it, so the time should come when great blankets of it will cover the ground in spring, under the trees and between the rhododendrons. I have no objection at all to this happening. It pretty much disappears in summer.



Cornus canadensis

Moving to the lowest level, there is the natural ground surface itself, including tree stumps and occasional logs, whether uncollected by the loggers or natural windfalls, as in any natural forest. We've removed some of the fresher ones, but not all. And naturally too, the logs and stumps are in all stages of decay, anything from sound condition to the verge of becoming soil. Some stumps are enormous - one ancient one, now completely hollow with only an outer shell remaining, measures ten feet across -, and several have notches still readily apparent, where loggers, in order to reach a place above the buttress with their two-handled hand saws, chopped a notch in the trunk and inserted a springboard on which to stand. These stumps with their notches are what I call „heritage stumps“. In Europe there are ancient buildings; here in British Columbia we have large trees, and special stumps - our own archaeological ruins. Left in their natural state to whatever extent possible, they provide their own healthy ecosystems and also contribute to the unity of the garden, and especially to the natural woodland, look. In fact, they *are* part of the natural woodland. They also provide good planting places for epiphytic rhododendrons and *Vacciniums*, for other plants that require very good drainage, and for some that do not. And speaking of decay, in the fall there are lots of mushrooms of many kinds feeding often on decayed wood, none of which I know well enough to eat.



Monotropa uniflora

So there are no „beds“ in the garden ... and no lawn. Generally, soil is not brought in, with the exception of small pockets for the very few plants to which we are willing to cater, and that need something richer than the natural conifer soil. And also when additional soil is needed in planting and I am too lazy to mine it elsewhere in the woods. For the most part, those plants that need a richer soil than what is here naturally are not in the garden, though a good many have been tried. I

have absolutely, for the last time, planted *Meconopsis* ! The natural soil is essentially granular and organic, and very deep, with only roots and rocks getting in the way of the spade. To plant a rhododendron, for instance, all we have to do is dig a hole and plant it; mulch around its base consists of the debris gathered from under the nearest sword fern or simply from the conifer debris surrounding the new plant. As I have said, too, those decaying stumps also provide excellent places for some plants, particularly rhododendrons that grow epiphytically in the wild, *edgeworthii*, *moupinense*, *megeratum*, or some of the hardier *Maddenia* for instance. In fact, there is hardly a large stump, located in enough light, that does not have at least one non-native plant sprawling out of the top of it, sometimes after the huckleberry, salal, or hemlock seedlings that had already been growing there have been removed, and sometimes in combination with them. Even some of the loggers' notches contain rhododendrons if the decay is sufficiently far enough along. The stump mustn't be too small or it will dry out during the summer, but the wet decaying wood of the larger stumps and logs actually holds moisture longer than the soil itself. In place of beds, then, the



Bryophytes

woodland floor is basically kept intact, preserving its natural contours, woodland debris, and in large areas the mossy surface.

Speaking of which, in some places salal and ferns have been cleared to expose the moss - bryophytes, as I have been taught to call them. I have been told by two friends, Veva Stansell and Robert van Pelt, who apparently know about such things, that we have an unusually rich diversity of bryophytes. But even before I knew about bryophytes, I knew we had lots of different kinds of moss, the names of which I do not know. What I do know is that anyone who has visited the temple gardens in Kyoto, particularly Saiho-ji, or Kokedera as it is commonly called there, will understand our enthusiasm for mossy banks, and appreciate the aesthetic value of large stretches of moss, especially when different species of it merge with each other. The moss, of course, is at its best, its brightest green, during the wet seasons of the year - which does give us a rather long season of it.

Azaleas and Japanese maples look wonderful growing out of it with their lower trunks exposed, the moss often creeping up on them. Lichens, which we find beautiful, and which are also bryophytes, are also present on trunks, branches and rocks, evidently a sign of clean air. Unfortunately, there are not many large rock outcrops on the property, except for some in the creek, though compensation comes for this in the deep soil. There are, however, large rocks and boulders, again especially exposed along the creek.

... to be continued

News from South Australia



You have probably heard about Australian weather on news bulletins, just as we have heard about the storms in North America. This has been a summer of extremes but at least the long drought has broken, even if half of the country is, or has been, under water. Here in the Adelaide Hills we have had a cool summer with only 2 days

over 35°C, and today was 17°C. We have had recurring heavy rain each 2 or 3 weeks and the garden is looking respectable for this time of the year.

The rhodos have had minimal leaf scorching and have kept growing and buds are already forming on the early varieties. The old late-flowering Waterer Hybrids have plenty of new shoots and hopefully will start to bud up soon. I have recently started the annual cutting propagation programme, and aim to get a lot of the old hybrids multiplying in our garden and spreading into friends' and neighbours' gardens. The point of this exercise is that these old plants have survived without extra water for 50 or so years and have demonstrated their suitability for our locale & they are not commercially available in Australia. It would be a pity to allow them to die out.

Old plants like this provide other challenges as well. Not only do you have to propagate them, but you have to identify them. I have spent hours looking through books, checking websites and generally trying to convince myself that the flower in my hand matches the one in the book. However, last week a real eureka moment occurred. I was crawling around the grotto cleaning out weeds when I noticed an old and rusty plant label whose wire attachment had broken and it had fallen to the ground many years ago. On examination, it read "Kate Waterer", and thus the most attractive pink with yellow flare rhodo was identified. Only 10 to go!



Rhododendron 'Kate Waterer'

Over the next 2 months, we will see autumn arrive, and it will be time to fertilize the garden, prepare for new plantings, and enjoy the change of season before winter arrives.

... regards, Milton and Chris Bowman

VRS Membership News Survey, 07-28 Feb 2011

Well, the results of the first *Membership News* survey are in. They are interesting ... and a bit disheartening. Just under half of our on-line members responded *...

Response Summary Total Started Survey: 47
 Total Completed Survey: 43 ... out of 100 sent out

Response	Percent	Tally
1 I read the VRS Membership News ...		
<input type="checkbox"/> Always	85%	40
<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	9%	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Never	2%	1
<input type="checkbox"/> VRS Membership News? What VRS Membership News?	4%	2

[this survey was sent to the same e-mailing list as the newsletter, yet 6% of respondents don't read it, or have never even heard of it!? ... one can only speculate what percentage of the 53 non-respondents fall into this category ...]

2 I read: ...

<input type="checkbox"/> All the articles	54%	25
<input type="checkbox"/> Some of the articles	24%	11
<input type="checkbox"/> Varies from month to month	22%	10

3 The information on other Rhodo Clubs is of interest to me

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	84%	38
<input type="checkbox"/> No	16%	7

4 I read the *Membership News*

<input type="checkbox"/> Online	80%	35
<input type="checkbox"/> After I've printed it off	20%	9

5 Comments on what I would like to see more of in *Membership News* (20 responses)

- Summary:
- more garden tours, nature tours, seed-collecting tours [√]
 - more information on plants and siting ... culture and care [√]
 - more reprints of on-line rhodo & azalea group info might be interesting to members who don't subscribe to the lists [*no idea what this means*]
 - more on companion plants [√]
 - more on rhodo history ... plants and people [√]
 - more on VRS happenings [*what happenings?*]
 - more on propagation [√]
 - more on members' favourite plants [√]
 - more pictures [√]
 - **more on members' gardens** [*several responses ... curious, considering the lack of interest in member's garden tours and open gardens*]
 - **more on foreign botanical and private gardens** [√]

6 Comments on what I would like to see less of in *Membership News* (13 responses)

- Summary:
- less folksy stuff [*what? ... no gnomes?*]
 - less on genetics [*what genetics?*]
 - **less on members' gardens** [*see question 5*]
 - **less on foreign botanical and private gardens** [*see question 5*]
 - less pages [*ie less articles, info, pictures ... see question 5*]

* the survey was not sent to our mail-out members, because the survey is managed and compiled on-line, and anonymously, by the "Survey Monkey" website. As always, we would be delighted to hear from any of our mail-out „customers“, with ideas, suggestions, or contributions ... while such input would not be anonymous, any views that we share with the club would be ...



Orphan yaks ...

We recently received the following from Dennis Burns, who lives in East Vancouver ... We have picked up the plants, and will deliver them to anyone who wants one or two yaks, and who has a small-leaved species rhodo to offer in exchange for each ...

I have two beautiful plants that I would like to find homes for. They are both *R yakushmanum*, are in containers and are well taken care of. I live in a townhouse ... they are both getting to the point where they should be planted in the ground but there is no place here where I'm living.



One is about 15 years old and a little more than 4' across [see photo ... note chair, for scale] the other is a bit smaller (about 3' across) I don't want any money for them, just to find a place where they will be appreciated. (or perhaps a trade for something smaller, either way is fine with me). ... Dennis Burns

Investing 101 ...

Snowdrop bulb bought for a record £357 (\$570Cdn)

Determined to shake off months of ice, sleet and rain, one horticulturalist has truly embraced the first signs of spring by paying a record-breaking £357 for a single snowdrop bulb. The anonymous bidder bought the highly prized bulb on eBay, beating competition from other galanthophiles - snowdrop collectors - to secure the pure white flower.



The bulb, an unusual *Galanthus plicatus* 'EA Bowles' snowdrop, was bred from a plant discovered in Myddelton House Gardens in Enfield, Middlesex in 2002. The previous record was set in 2008, when a buyer paid £265 for a single bulb. The unbeaten price comes at a time when other estates around the UK are increasing their security to prevent their snowdrops being stolen. Gardeners at Anglesey Abbey in Cambridgeshire have tagged thousands of bulbs, while staff have been employed to look out for signs of disturbed earth. ... from the Daily Telegraph, 01 Feb 2011

And speaking of *Galanthus* ...



Some of you will remember our mystery garden a while back ...

Stourhead, Wiltshire

In February, the grasslands are carpeted with the brilliant white at one of the most famous landscaped gardens in the world. Follow crisscrossing paths to enchanting temples, enjoy lakeside walks and spot the first signs of spring all around you.

... from The Telegraph 02 Feb 2011

Thanks to the following, for contributing to the *Membership News*: Milton & Chris Bowman, Dennis Burns, Tony Clayton, Barbara & Alleyne Cook, Vern Finley, Don Haslam, Douglas Justice, Karen Justice, Don King, Philip MacDougall, Mary Parker, Sean Rafferty, Joe Ronsley, Norbert & Val Wuensche

Photo Credits

Linnaea borealis, Monotropa uniflora, Cornus canadensis

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki>

Rhododendron „Elsie Watson“ ... photo by Rinus Manders

<http://www.hirsutum.info>

Bob & Jo Wright

Editorial Postscript ... March 2011

It has now been a year since we launched the Membership News, as an experimental participatory, or cooperative, newsletter. At the time, much concern was expressed, because we had no vehicle for notifying members of upcoming events, and generally keeping everyone ‘in the loop’. Although we had our hands full with the membership chair, we decided to get something started, on the clear understanding, and expectation, that the members would see the merits of this approach, and would willingly share in the effort. Over the last year, a number of our members have taken the opportunity to share their love and experience of rhododendrons, and gardening in general, with their fellow members, through contributions to this newsletter. We have very much enjoyed our correspondence with these people, and greatly appreciate their efforts to make this work ... from the bottom of our heart, thank you ...

During the year, we initiated a number of ideas, to encourage you all to participate in the conversation, through an article, a photo, a question, an answer, or just an idea ... no contribution too small to receive our enthusiastic response and gratitude. Among the ideas that we put forward:

- *Members Forum ... most questions, and requests for ideas or information, received no response ... one member asked some questions, a few responded ... a limited success?*
- *'Mystery Garden' Feature ... one or two responses ... even when it was a local garden that most of the membership have visited ...*
- *Members Garden Tours ... only two gardens were listed, no one showed up*
- *Darts Hill Garden Tour ... no response*
- *'In the Garden' Feature ... no contributions*
- *'Link Share' Feature ... no contributions*
- *'Member News' Feature ... no contributions*
- *Proven Performers ... a very time-consuming compilation was sent to every member ... not a single acknowledgement of receipt, or contribution of suitable candidates ...*
- *'Other Chapters' Feature ... safe to say that not a single member attended another chapter's meeting as a result of these notices ...*

A number of members have expressed their appreciation of our efforts, and of those who contributed, and we thank them for this ... but the only thanks that we were really looking for was the participation and contribution of the membership, with a resulting enhancement of the vitality of our group ... by this measure, we would have to say that the experiment has been a failure.

For the moment, we will continue to produce this newsletter, in a markedly 'slimmed down' form ... we had ambitious plans for the continued exploration of the world of rhodos, including photo tours of selected member's gardens; a feature on the upcoming ARS conference, with details about the garden tours; over 60 book reviews, about old, new, and yet-to-be-published titles; a series on artists in the VRS; photo-essays on famous English gardens; a forum on plant propagation, with information on methodology, and sources of materials; and more ... all this effort on our part requiring a corresponding effort on the part of the membership ... it is clear that there is no appetite for this among the majority of the membership ... we can't have a participatory newsletter without participation ... pity.

The above views do not necessarily reflect those of the management ...